

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, June 06, 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 Members for St. Augustine and Arima, who have asked to be excused from today's sitting.

**CONDOLENCES****(MR. CARLTON GOMES)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have also been recently informed of the passing of Mr. Carlton Gomes, a former Member of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] Since this news is just upon us, Members can express condolences before we take the adjournment of the House today.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Annual audited financial statements of Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2000. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Annual audited financial statements of Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Report of the Princes Town Regional Corporation for the financial year October 01, 2000 to September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Report of the Princes Town Regional Corporation for the financial year October 01, 2001 to September 30, 2002. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers Nos. 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, there are 12 questions on the Order Paper today; the Government is able to answer nine of them. We are asking for a deferral of one week for Questions Nos. 134 and 140.

Mr. Speaker, Question No. 133, which was incorrectly directed to the Minister of Works and Transport, was redirected late to the Minister of Local Government and, therefore, we are asking for an extension of two weeks for that question.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

**Borough of Chaguanas  
(Paving of Roads)**

- 133.** (a) Would the hon. Minister of Local Government provide this House with a list of the names of the roads to be paved in the Borough of Chaguanas?
- (b) Would the hon. Minister state if the Mayor of Chaguanas was consulted in the paving of these roads? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Enterprise South  
Paving of Roads**

- 134.** Would the hon. Minister of Local Government inform this House:
- (ii) whether the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation were consulted in the paving of roads in the Enterprise South Electoral District during the period of January to March 2003; if the answer to (i) is in the negative, why were they not consulted? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**World Bank Loan  
(HIV Aid Prevention and Control)**

- 140.** Would The hon. Minister of Planning and Development inform this House of the following:
- (i) the expenditure to date from the US \$20M loan obtained from the World Bank for the HIV Aid Prevention and Control Project;
- (ii) the names of staff trained for prevention and clinical management under this project? [*Mr. C. Sharma*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**Mr. Speaker:** The Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Hamza Rafeeq** (*Caroni Central*): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 125, which is in my name, is not the question that I posed. In fact, it only remotely resembles the question that I posed a couple weeks ago.

**Mr. Speaker:** One minute, please. Are you prepared to ask the question in your name?

**Dr. H. Rafeeq:** I am prepared to ask the question that I submitted, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no; the Speaker has approved the question as it appears on the Order Paper. Are you prepared to ask the question as approved on the Order Paper?

**Dr. H. Rafeeq:** I am prepared to ask the question that I submitted, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please! Are you prepared to ask Question No. 125, Member for Caroni Central?

**Dr. H. Rafeeq:** I am prepared to ask the question that I submitted to the Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please! Question No. 126, the Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. H. Rafeeq:** Mr. Speaker, I would like Question No. 125 to be answered; the one that I submitted.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Do not ask it!

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, according to Standing Order 18(1)(d):

“No Member shall address the House upon any question...”

What you are attempting to do is to address me on that question. I have approved the question as it appears on the Order Paper; if you do not wish to ask this question, move on to the other question, please. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. H. Rafeeq:** I am willing to ask Question No. 125 that I posed to the Speaker a few weeks ago, not this question that is here.

**Mr. Speaker:** Question No. 125 is the one that is on the Order Paper. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** That is not the question the man asked.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, please, please! I am calling on the Member to ask the following Question No. 126. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Do not answer!

[*No response*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Caroni Central, Question No. 127.

[No response]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Fyzabad, Question No. 131. [Crosstalk]

[No response]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Fyzabad, Question No. 134.

[No response]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Chaguanas, Question No. 133, 134, 135.

[No response]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Fyzabad, Question No. 138, 140.

[No response]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Princes Town, Question No. 154, 155. [Crosstalk]

[No response]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr. Ramnath:** You should never allow this House to degenerate like that!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please!

#### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*The following questions were asked by Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad):*

#### **Mr. Selwyn Richardson (Status Report on Investigation)**

**116.** Would the Minister of National Security please give a status report on the investigation into the murder of former Attorney General Selwyn Richardson?

#### **National Carnival Commission Carnival Celebrations 2003 (VIP Section)**

**117.** Could the Minister of Culture and Tourism provide this House with:

- (a) a list of persons issued tickets by the National Carnival Commission for the VIP section of the Queen's Park Savannah during Carnival celebrations 2003; and
- (b) the total cost of hosting guests and others in the VIP section?

*The following question was asked by Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (Chaguanas):*

**Unemployment Relief Programme  
(Chaguanas)**

- 137.** Would the Minister of Local Government identify the projects and the locality of each project undertaken by the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) in the constituency of Chaguanas for the period October 2002 to April 30, 2003?

*The following questions were asked by Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad):*

**Lifeguards  
(Employment of)**

- 148.** Would the Minister of Local Government please state the number of lifeguards employed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and provide the following details:
- (i) the beaches at which lifeguards work;
  - (ii) the number of lifeguards assigned to each beach and the work timetables;
  - (iii) a list of equipment purchased for use by lifeguards from January 2002 to March 2003;
  - (iv) a list of vehicles assigned for use by lifeguards and the beaches at which these are utilized?

**Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation  
(Grants/Funding)**

- 151.** (a) With respect to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the year 2002, could the Minister of Local Government list all grants/funding and all other assistance provided for the hosting of the following:
- (i) Carnival celebrations;
  - (ii) Steel pan events;
  - (iii) Eid celebrations;
  - (iv) Labour Day celebrations;
  - (v) Hosay celebrations; and
  - (vi) Divali celebrations?

**INCOME TAX (AMDT.) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a bill to amend the Income Tax Act, Chap. 75:01, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, this is a small Bill with four clauses. The purpose of this amendment is to increase the tax exemption and severance benefits from \$100,000 to \$300,000. [*Crosstalk*] Secondly, the Bill seeks to change the institution with which apprenticeship programmes should be registered from the National Training Board to the Ministry responsible for the National Training Agency.

Mr. Speaker, for some time now, the Income Tax Act, at section 5(6)(a) and 5(1) provided relief for severance benefits. The Income Tax Act would indicate that from January 01, 1981, the limit of exemption was some \$85,000. In 1993, that limit was increased to \$100,000. The legislation before this honourable House today is seeking to increase that limit to \$300,000. Mr. Speaker, we are attempting to increase this limit as a signal to the community that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is sensitive to the issue of trade assistance which, of necessity, must result from our forays into the international market. [*Crosstalk*]

At present, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is looking at a complete programme for trade assistance, because we know that as we allow more imports to come into Trinidad and Tobago which, of course, is averse to our quest for markets on favourable terms and conditions, that as a fact, some firms and, therefore, the employees in those firms, may have to make transition to new areas. As a fact, some businesses may die; some businesses may be unable to compete with the imports; therefore, the job of the Government is to provide for an orderly transition from a dying industry to the new growth areas.

It is in this sense, Mr. Speaker, that I want hon. Members to view this legislation. This is merely a symbol, as it were; and the Government expects, rather quickly, to come to the Parliament and unveil a programme of trade assistance to workers and employers, as we move deeper into the liberalization and globalization mode. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, as we engage the international community, obviously, we would have to take the private sector, NGOs and labour, in other words, all the stakeholders along with us. In this vein, I will like to inform the Parliament that

next Monday morning the Ministry of Trade and Industry will be having a first session with major stakeholders. We have been talking with different groups of stakeholders, but on Monday morning, we will be doing a sensitizing session with representatives of the various stakeholders at the Hilton. As part of our cooperation or of working together with our stakeholders, we have already started including members of the private sector on our external negotiating committees.

I am sure Members opposite would recall that way back in 1994 the then government of the day, led by the current Prime Minister, established a standing committee on trade which included government and labour representatives. As a matter of fact, I think that the first labour representative on that committee was Sen. Wade Mark, as well as persons from the private sector. It is clear that as we go forward, as we attempt to integrate the economy of Trinidad and Tobago into the global economy, that it is critical that we carry our stakeholders with us.

We know, as a government, that in the current environment, it is extremely difficult to guarantee the continued employment of any individual in a particular firm. What the Government hopes to do, however, is to be able to guarantee any individual employability. That is why, in our manifesto on which we won the last election, the Government identified four priorities, and the first was education, because in our opinion, it is the only way that we can ensure the employability of our citizens.

In that context, Mr. Speaker, you would note Government's plan with respect to the University of Trinidad and Tobago, which will be based on what is the norm now in developed countries, that of the mature student concept. So that the matriculation standard for mature students will be different, because we believe that a requirement of any government is to take its young people, at whatever level they are, and move them up so that a higher percentage of nationals would have tertiary education.

Mr. Speaker, you would also note, that just about two weeks ago, my colleague, the Minister of Planning and Development, executed a loan with the International Development Bank (IDB) on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, which provided funding in the sum of US \$5 million to assist the Government, in preparing for trade negotiations, to conduct studies and so on, necessary to get us there. Within that facility, we will be getting consultants to assist us in developing what I call our "Trade Assistance Programme", of which this is a very small part.

We know that as we go forward there would be some firms that will not be able to compete and we are putting in place a mechanism to allow for transition

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supported by the Government; that is going to be the Full Trade Assistance Programme. In the meantime, however, we feel compelled to increase the level that is tax-free, with respect to severance, and hence the move from \$100,000 tax-free to \$300,000. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the concept of trade assistance is not a new one. Way back in 1962 the United States implemented such legislation. The purpose then was quite clear; it was for assisting in the special adjustment problems of workers and firms dislocated as a result of a federal policy of reducing barriers to foreign trade. That is the concept: as we reduce barriers, as we move to free trade, as more imports come into the host country, the Government has a responsibility to provide for the transition from firms which may no longer be able to compete. We do that by providing for the retraining of workers and other mechanisms of which we will be suitably apprised or consulted.

I am asking my colleagues to see the legislation in this vein. The other part of the legislation, of course, is simply to change the reference point with respect to the apprenticeship allowance. I think that it was in 2000 that the last government provided for a deduction of 200 per cent of the wages actually paid to persons hiring apprentices. That became effective as of January 01, 2001. The foundation for that deduction was that it would be limited for periods not exceeding six months; in other words, the On-The-Job Training Programme, where we take our young people and expose them to the world of work, the employer would be entitled to a deduction of 200 per cent of the wages actually paid.

However, Mr. Speaker, rule one of the Ninth Schedule of the Income Tax Act requires the apprenticeship programme to be registered with the National Training Board. We are amending this, as the National Training Board has been replaced with the National Training Agency; so that the legislation with respect to that condition, is simply to amend the reference by deleting the reference to the National Training Board in rule one of the Ninth Schedule of the Income Tax Act and replacing it with the words "Ministry responsible for the National Training Agency".

That amendment would allow employers, who have been participating in the Government's apprenticeship programme, such as the On-The-Job-Training Programme and other related programmes, to receive a tax benefit as a consequence of their investment in the programme.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*



**Mr. Gerald Yetming** (*St. Joseph*): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, in giving his explanation for the amendment to this legislation talked a bit, not a lot, about trade assistance and facilitating companies in this new trade liberalization era. He also spoke about the global economy. I think that explanation for this increase in the tax exemption for severance was a little dishonest.

First of all, I did not understand it, because if you are increasing tax exemption from \$100,000 to \$300,000 for individuals, it is for the individuals receiving severance to, hopefully, take home a little more money on being severed; but the Minister put it in the context of facilitating companies. So if a company has to send workers home, this measure is to help them in adjusting to this new trade liberalization era.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, I think we can check the *Hansard* record; I never said that. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. G. Yetming:** It shows a difference in the focus. This Government's focus is on companies. We have no fundamental problem in providing assistance to companies in meeting the needs of this new world economy, trade liberalization and what have you, but to say that they increased the tax exemption on severance as a mechanism to help companies in this liberalized era, is a little dishonest. The focus has to be on individuals.

It is also dishonest because in February 2003, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago dealt with a note covering the Voluntary Separation of Employment Plan (VSEP) to Caroni (1975) Limited. In that note the Minister of Finance was directed by Cabinet to get legislation to Parliament to increase the severance tax exemption from \$100,000 to \$300,000. [*Desk thumping*] That is the reason for the amendment to this Bill. [*Crosstalk*] The amendment to this Bill to increase the tax exemption on severance from \$100,000 to \$300,000 has to do with Caroni (1975) Limited. It has to do with the offering of VSEP to Caroni (1975) Limited as a means by which they would attempt to provide some incentive for the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited being offered VSEP, to take it. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, in excess of 10,000 people are being offered VSEP, but this \$100,000 to \$300,000 increase in severance will only impact upon approximately 3,000 people, about 1,000 of which would be in the daily paid category. The majority of Caroni workers will not benefit from this increase. Therefore, as a mechanism to "buy" the workers of Caroni into accepting VSEP, if I can use that word, it will not relieve the trauma and terror that is being imposed on the 10,000 workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. [*Desk thumping*]

The fact of the matter is that the offer of VSEP to Caroni workers, the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, was done on the basis of a conceptual report prepared by a team of people. In fact, the reason Government cannot come to this House or, at least, even if it does not want to come to the Parliament, that it does not have a detailed report covering the closure, divestment or whatever action it wants to take on Caroni, is because no detailed report exists.

About two or three weeks ago, I read somewhere the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources talking about a Caroni report that would soon be ready. The cart was put before the horse. On the basis of a conceptual report, you are prepared to send 10,000 people home; traumatize them, terrorize them, and I would go so far as to say, brutalize them. If you are talking about downsizing the production of sugar and you want to create the sugar manufacturing company of Trinidad and Tobago, you want to cap the amount of sugar produced to, let us say, 70,000 tonnes, and you want to use cane farmers' cane alone, before you offer VSEP to 10,000 people and traumatize and terrorize them, why could you not put in train the sugar manufacturing company of Trinidad and Tobago and ask the 10,000 workers: "How many of you are prepared to work in this new company?"

If you want to take on 1,300 people, why not offer jobs to 1,300 workers from Caroni (1975) Limited in the sugar manufacturing company of Trinidad and Tobago. At least, eliminate the trauma and terror on 1,300 people and only impose it on 8,000, if you want to be so bad. If you need more cane farmers' cane to produce the 70,000 tonnes of sugar, could you not offer Caroni lands to those workers who may wish to cultivate cane before you offer VSEP, to relieve the terror and trauma on some more people?

If you have 20,000 acres of agricultural land that you want to put into other areas of agriculture, before you offer VSEP, why not offer the 10,000 workers the land that you want to be made available to them and help them in the transition from workers of Caroni to independent agriculturists, and, at the end of the day, relieve the trauma and terror that you are imposing on these people? When and if the Government ever produces its final report on the plans for Caroni, one would expect that it would produce the feasibility of the sugar manufacturing company of Trinidad and Tobago. One would also expect that it will tell us what level of subvention this new downsized sugar manufacturing company would require from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on an annual basis, thereafter.

I will not be surprised if this sugar manufacturing company will require subventions to the tune of \$300 million to \$400 million per year. The result of the "traumatization" of 10,000 people is that you are prepared to reduce your

subvention to Caroni (1975) Limited, as it stands now, from \$600 million to \$400 million a year in the new sugar manufacturing company; so for \$200 million you are going to brutalize 10,000 people. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the cost of VSEP, excluding the topping up of the pension shortfall, as I understand it, is about \$400 million. This Government is prepared to brutalize and terrorize 10,000 people from Caroni, a few more tens of thousands of their families, entire communities in south and central for \$400 million one time and, in the same breath, talk about spending \$400 million a year on CEPEP. Where is the equity and social conscience of this Government?

This Government is fast getting the reputation of utilizing the resources of the State, financial and otherwise—not PNM resources—to brutalize the people in this country. [*Desk thumping*] I will give you a few examples, Mr. Speaker. Look at what happened outside the National Flour Mills with a few disabled people, where a known PNM security person brutalized these disabled people.

You had Peakes, Mr. Speaker, a major manufacturing company in Trinidad and Tobago, the same company that the Minister in Ministry of Finance wants to help with this trade liberalization, a company manufacturing for exports in many countries of this world, having to place a full-page ad in the newspaper, over many days, talking about the open and excessive use of force by the Chaguaramas Development Authority over a minor matter of rent. That a landlord and tenant would have a problem with rent, and the landlord, as an agency of the Government, is prepared to send in armed guards to brutalize these people to the point where this company had to put full-page ads in the newspaper to bitterly complain to the population of what this Government is doing to it. And they talk about wanting to encourage manufacturers in this country!

Take the example of the article that appeared in the *Sunday Guardian* of May 18, 2003 which was referred to in this House before. I want to refer to it again. The article talked about the gangs in place for the women's Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). If I wanted any evidence of discrimination by this Government; if I was prepared to accept that this Government was treating everybody in this country equitably, and I just wanted one bit of evidence that they were discriminating against some people, I only needed to read the *Sunday Guardian* of May 18, 2003 where it was reported that in every single UNC constituency, bar three, the gangs being offered to the women's URP programme was half than in every single one of the PNM's. Why is that? In every single UNC constituency, Mr. Speaker, with the exception of St. Joseph, and we know why; with the exception of San Juan/Barataria, and we know why; and with the

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exception of Fyzabad—that is using State financial resources to brutalize and discriminate against half the population in this country.

If you wanted more evidence, Mr. Speaker, let us talk a little about the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). I am quoting from an article written in the *Newsday* of Sunday, May 11, 2003. This is not the UNC speaking; this is an editor of a newspaper writing in this column of Sunday, May 11:

“...CEPEP, was contrived to cultivate only one crop, the Balisier. ...You do not have to be a clairvoyant to predict that dependence on the Balisier for survival makes a vote for the People’s National Movement an imperative.

A perusal of the list of people to whom CEPEP contracts have been awarded is further proof of the PNM’s pastoral project. The lucky recipients were, in the majority, loyal members of the Balisier bunch.”

Mr. Speaker, this is using State money to favour your own, to discriminate the other half of the population. [*Crosstalk*]

Then, of course, we have this still current case with the land in Curepe, which was bulldozed without notice by the National Housing Authority, an agency of the State, for housing. The headline article in the *Sunday Guardian* of May 18, 2003 was: “State violence on farm lands”. Mr. Speaker, this country will not accept, tolerate or sit quietly for too long, while this Government continues the discrimination. I have evidence; the brutality of a people; Caroni being one of them, CEPEP and so on. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*]

We are being shamed everyday. We only have to look at what happened with the BWIA planes in Miami. We do not seem to know who is in charge. One day we have the Minister with responsibility for state enterprises, Hon. Valley; state enterprises being taken away from him, given to a new minister and yet, according to the newspaper report, Minister Valley retains BWIA and Caroni (1975) Limited. I do not know whether it is to protect Minister Sahadeo, that Valley is to retain BWIA and Caroni (1975) Limited. While at the same time, the Chairman of the interministerial team for Caroni (1975) Limited and the Chairman of the interministerial team for BWIA is Dr. Saith. So I ask the question: “Who is in charge?”

**Mr. Manning:** Standard practice in our Government.

**Mr. G. Yetming:** Then, of course, you have Vision 2020 being taken from the Minister of Planning and Development and given to Minister Valley, who is

responsible for state enterprise; so now the Minister of Planning and Development has no planning to do. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] That is all part of the intrigue of the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, to the point where last Sunday in the *Newsday* another columnist said that this administration is the most inept of our country's history. [Desk thumping] That is not the UNC speaking.

There is so much confusion taking place on the other side inside and outside of Cabinet, that a senior member of the PNM, Mr. Joe Laquis, had to threaten the leadership of the PNM against going into Diego Martin Central to cut Minister Valley's throat. We see the lack of respect Minister Valley is now receiving from his own people, because we came here for a Finance Committee meeting at 11.30 a.m. that could not start until 12.30 p.m. because of the shortage of Members on the other side. [Desk thumping] They do not regard him anymore. They do not know whether he is going to be a minister today and not a minister tomorrow. The point is that this is affecting the performance of the Government and governance in this country. [Desk thumping]

The justification for Minister Sahadeo, which was really an excuse to cut Minister Valley, was that it was easy to go into a ministry and play politics and give the impression that you are doing fundamental work. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] I do not know whether he was talking about Mottley, Jacelon or Valley. Nobody seems to know to whom he was referring, but his justification for increasing his ministers in the Ministry of Finance from three to four, was that those ministers only want to go there and play politics. In the same breath he says for doing that, "Valley, yuh go be downsized and I go bring Sahadeo inside." [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk]

If a few ministers are playing politics in ministries and these few ministers are going in to pretend that they are doing fundamental work, what about the Ministry of National Security? What about the Ministry of Education? Those ministries probably need four ministers. [Desk thumping] The state of crime in this country is such—and other people will speak about that—crime is everybody else's problem, but the Government's. It is not Chin Lee; it is now Chavez. [Laughter] [Desk thumping] Chavez is so powerful a man that he sits in Venezuela and creates crime to increase in Trinidad and Tobago. [Laughter] [Crosstalk]

I take the opportunity to congratulate Minister Sahadeo on her appointment. I do not think that many people in this country understand the sacrifice that people make, particularly when they were in the private sector, to leave the private sector and come into government. Very few people in this country, I believe, can understand and appreciate it; therefore, for Minister Sahadeo to make that big step, she can only be complimented. It does not matter on which side she moves.

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I want to warn Minister Sahadeo that she has got to be very, very careful with the portfolio she is holding in the state enterprise sector, because she is going to be dealing with divestment. I am not too sure what her departure from Neal and Massy was all about; whether it a resignation or some temporary leave. She has got to be very careful that she is not seen to be on the strings of a major enterprise in this country.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for St. Joseph for giving way. It is a pre-requisite that Members who sit in the Cabinet hold no arrangement with any business organization outside of the Government; therefore, I can assure the hon. Member for St. Joseph and other Members that Minister Sahadeo completely resigned from her position in Melville Shipping.

**Mr. Ramnath:** What about Rahael, did he resign? Taking all Caroni land and giving Syrian people! [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. G. Yetming:** I thank the Prime Minister for clarifying the point.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr. G. Yetming:** I only want to caution her that she needs to be very careful, because those who pull the strings may not be some private sector company. She has also got to be careful of her political bosses who could be pulling her strings.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is about public relations. This Government is not about substance at all; little is happening in the economy. We keep hearing about the completion of negotiations for Train 4 of the LNG plant; we do not know where that has reached. Apart from that, we are hearing about nothing; whether in the oil.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members for Laventille East/Morvant and Nariva, if you wish to converse in overtones, would you exit the Chamber, please. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. G. Yetming:** This Government is all about public relations. Businessmen are complaining that there is nothing happening to instill any confidence in them. In fact, with the crime situation, a lot of businessmen are re-assessing their position in this country, and while that is taking place, it is only public relations that is happening on the other side. Whether it is the launch of Anaconda or dead dog retrieval—[*Laughter*—every week now we are seeing ads.

Just about a week ago, we saw the Ministry of Legal Affairs put out a full-page spread. This Government came into being in October of 2002, so just nine months have gone, and there is this big full-page spread by the Ministry of Legal Affairs talking about all the great things it has done in the nine months. And there

is competition, Mr. Speaker; the Ministry of Trade and Industry also had ads in the newspaper. The Minister of Works and Transport attended a board meeting at the port and, we had a big ad appearing with a picture; it is all about public relations. Mr. Speaker, I really do not know whether they believe that this public relations is going to give confidence in the people that they are performing; that they are being equitable in their dealings and what have you.

While, on one hand, they keep talking about this one big family, as the Prime Minister had to describe in one of his recent public speeches on Indian Arrival Day, anytime the question of discrimination is raised in Parliament, Members on the other side defend their action, not on the basis that what they are doing is correct, but they point out what they believe used to go wrong with the UNC.

Mr. Speaker, here is the Prime Minister, again, as part of his public relations; in the *Express* newspaper of December 08, 2002 an editorial reads:

“Prime Minister Patrick Manning made all the right noises when he addressed chairmen and directors of State-owned enterprises (SOE) last week...

Mr. Manning told the directors Government can no longer tolerate inefficient management practices and irresponsible governance among State firms.

‘lack of trust in our institutions will damage our country and lead to the demise of the economy’.

...the Prime Minister himself must recognise that it will take more than a speech at a one-day seminar to treat with such an important issue.

A first step in this process must be the implementation of a good governance programme...

The first obstacle, however, that the PNM will face is one of credibility. Even as Mr. Manning last Wednesday spoke of the need to ensure transparency in the recruitment process to ensure staff at SOEs are the best for their jobs, it is obvious that like the previous administration, the PNM has not been backward in positioning party hacks in significant positions...”

A *Newsday* editorial, Mr. Speaker, talked about:

“...a warning to the present People’s National Movement Government that they should play close attention to what the public is viewing as cronyism and wasteful spending.”

This is not the UNC speaking; this is a *Newsday* editorial. The article goes on to say:

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“Successive PNM administrations had themselves indulged in naked cronyism, patronage and waste until removed from office in 1986 by the National Alliance For Reconstruction.

It is this same approach that the present administration, while in Opposition, had in essence attacked...Were the exposures and condemnation genuine...”

This is a question from the editorial.

“or were they merely political ploys aimed at assisting in removing the UNC from office?”

The public, which can do without the tasteless exhibition of double standards is growing increasingly cynical at what it is seeing and hearing.”  
[*Crosstalk*]

This is in the reputed PNM newspaper.

“The public, which can do without the tasteless exhibition of double standards is growing increasingly cynical at what it is seeing and hearing.”  
[*Crosstalk*]

Then there is another editorial in the *Express* newspaper talking about the latest issue with the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) and so on.

This is what I refer to when I speak about this Government being about public relations. While, on the one hand, the Prime Minister talks about seeking accountability and so forth from the state enterprise sector, you have the obscenities going on at WASA, and not a finger has been lifted to deal with the manner in which Mr. Grimes’ salary was increased or with the fact that he got an increase without ministerial approval. Absolutely nothing has been done to that board. [*Crosstalk*] So you meet with the chairmen and directors on the board, you preach all these nice things and then when the time comes to act, you do absolutely nothing.

I was here, Mr. Speaker, in the case of the Waterfarm issue. The Prime Minister said, “I am hearing all of this for the first time; I will investigate it,” but because a call was made for Lindquist, the Prime Minister now is hiding behind the non-appearance of Lindquist in this country. So for weeks the complaint was laid and placed before the Prime Minister; he responded immediately, for public relations purposes, “I will investigate it,” but instead of sending the Fraud Squad, Piggott and whoever else, to begin the investigation, to seize records, to check bank accounts, he said, “I am waiting on Lindquist”. Ria Taitt questioned him. [*Interruption*]



**Mr. Manning:** Will the hon. Member give way? [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind my good friend from St. Joseph, that it was the very distinguished Member from Caroni East who raised the matter and who indicated the kind of solution to which the Opposition would subscribe. It was his suggestion that be investigated by the firm of consultants Lindquist. [*Interruption*] It was you who used the term “Lindquist”. In fact, the response was immediate and vigorous, and when we responded the way we did, we got a positive reaction from the Member for Caroni East. It is very unusual to hear, at this time, the allegations being raised by the Member for St. Joseph. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Panday:** You are lying.

**Mr. G. Yetming:** Mr. Speaker, that explanation cannot be bought. The fact of the matter is, you do not say, “You asked for Lindquist and, therefore, you will get Lindquist.” You are the Prime Minister; you have the responsibility to govern the country. If you hear of a case of fraud to the tune of \$30 million, you do not say, “You asked for Lindquist; I will give you Lindquist.” You send the people that you have to do the job, and if Lindquist comes into this country four or eight weeks later, let him do what he has to do in conjunction with the local police. You just do not do anything.

We heard nothing about Mr. Piggott questioning anybody or seizing records. When they heard about some millions of dollars in Carlos John’s account, they ended up in the boy’s home and seized all kinds of records; nothing like that happened.

**2.30 p.m.**

Quite frankly, I do not know why and since when would the Prime Minister take the advice of the Member for Caroni East with respect to Lindquist. He should have used the best resources that he has available to him immediately, and internationally—the best—because Lindquist comes two months after the charges were laid and he now begins to ask questions. Two months have passed and nothing has been done. Records were changed, damaged, destroyed, what have you, and we now have the Attorney General, the most incompetent Attorney General we have ever seen, [*Desk thumping*] speaking out about the quality of evidence. I want to warn this country that there is a massive cover-up involved in Waterfarm [*Desk thumping*] and the Lindquist Report will produce nothing, because of the time that has been allowed to elapse between the charges being tabled in this Parliament and the time that action was taken.

The entire investigation, Mr. Speaker, has been contaminated, and when that report is tabled, laid, wherever, this country is going to see the most blatant,

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massive, corrupt cover-up we would have ever seen in this country. [*Desk thumping*] The evidence, to me, is clear: Consultants say pay 11 to 13, legal and technical, and you pay 51. Let me see you justify your paying 51.

To come back to this tax matter, I am not too sure what this increase in exemption from one to three will cost us in terms of reduction of tax revenue. I do not know what it is going to cost. But in the context of the revenue stream of this country, I am concerned about the Revenue Stabilization Fund. In the year 2000, as a result of the policy of the UNC government, \$400 million was put into the interim Revenue Stabilization Fund, and in the year 2001, \$600 million was put into this fund, to the point where the fund now has a balance in excess of \$1 billion. We can say that maybe in the year 2002—because post-September 11 the price of oil dipped severely, and maybe the price of oil might have averaged around \$22 a barrel, which was the budgeted price in 2002—so maybe we can understand why no moneys were put into the fund in 2002, but in the year 2003, with an average price around the \$30 mark, with a budgeted price of \$22 a barrel, my expectation is that there is in excess of \$1 billion of additional revenue accruing to the Government as a result of the increase in the over budgeted price—\$1 billion—which should mean that on the basis of the UNC’s formula for the allocation of moneys into the Revenue Stabilization Fund, in excess of \$600 million should be put into that fund this year.

I believe the Prime Minister had stated in the budget speech that the Revenue Stabilization Fund legislation would be coming to Parliament this year. We do not know whether it is going to come. We have heard nothing about it. Neither have we been hearing about the surplus moneys that are accruing to the Government. In fact, I read in some newspaper report what I consider to be an incredible comment from one of the Ministers in the Ministry of Finance to the extent that he cannot quantify the additional revenues due to the Government as a result of the increase in the price of oil.

Mr. Speaker, until such time as the Government provides the accurate figures for us, I have to use what my computations tell me, that this year you ought to have in excess of \$1 billion in additional revenues going into the Treasury. What I would like to know is what does Government intend to do with that money. You see, because, when we were putting aside money in the Revenue Stabilization Fund we were ridiculed for it, because we were saying—

**Mr. B. Panday:** We should spend it.

**Mr. G. Yetming:** Apart from “you should spend it”, “you only putting the money there but you are borrowing”. They are not putting the money in the

Revenue Stabilization Fund but they are still borrowing, and they are borrowing at a rate not any less than we borrowed.

The Government has not stated its policy position on the Government's debt position. We stated quite clearly that the Government's debt should not exceed 50 per cent of GDP and we were working it down from the 60 per cent to the 50 per cent. I do not know where it is at, at the moment and I do not know what is Government's policy position on that. We would have expected that in coming to pass this bit of legislation that we would have heard a lot of things: It is an income tax matter; reform is supposed to be taking place; we are supposed to be maximizing revenues from the reform process. Nobody is hearing anything about it. We hear about the review of the fiscal regime in the oil and gas sector. We announced it in 2001; they announced it in 2003. But one would have expected that for a matter like that they would come and tell us something. Instead everything is being kept very quiet and we are hearing about increases in the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) to \$400 million and what have you. Because we need to understand whether this country could sustain an expenditure of \$400 million a year, not only when you add CEPEP to the National Housing Authority (NHA), to all the other programmes. One is not against social programmes; one is for social programmes that make sense.

We were talking about a serious training element to the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), which is why we named it ETP. The URP continues unabated. All the money is still being channelled there, probably for ghost gangs and what have you, and you create a new CEPEP, increasing to \$400 million to pay a new breed of people, all, according to the *Newsday* editorial, to PNM members.

While we are not hearing anything about the Revenue Stabilization Fund, the Prime Minister goes off to Jamaica next month to talk about the Regional Stabilization Fund. The Prime Minister is more concerned about stabilizing the region than stabilizing Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] But that is not surprising, because when BWIA started to give trouble, there was a poor response from the Government: "Let them go into liquidation; let them fold up." The Prime Minister of St. Vincent comes here to talk about Liat and immediately they get the help—immediately; overnight. I noticed in the supplemental finance matter that came before us, \$40 million for Liat. I guess there would be a lot of time to talk about it.

I think the Prime Minister's focus is all wrong. There is no problem in trying to help the economies of the region. We understand that clearly. The major part of

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our exports goes into the region. We must protect them; help them, so that their economies could remain strong, but you cannot be rushing off to Jamaica to talk about a Regional Stabilization Fund and the Revenue Stabilization Fund, which is intended to stabilize us so that we do not have to go through the difficulties of the '80s, you totally ignore; you have no interest in, and you are not telling anything to the population about it.

The same Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines comes here and you are talking about this new regional integration—again, the focus is all wrong. You want to talk about St. Vincent and Grenada. Between 1991 and 1995 you spoke about Guyana and Barbados. Something went wrong with that and now it is Grenada and St. Vincent—St. Vincent with an unemployment rate of 30 per cent.

The justification for political union with St. Vincent cannot be that Prime Minister Gonsalves was his university partner. We cannot run the country like that. While you want to deal with the 30 per cent unemployment in St. Vincent, look at what you are doing with Caroni (1975) Limited. You are sending 10,000 people home from Caroni (1975) Limited. Not only are you trying to impact upon Caroni (1975) Limited, but you are even ignoring the people in Sea Lots. The Minister of Local Government went into Sea Lots and he had to run from them because of jobs.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Joseph 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. G. Yetming:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So while we are talking about regional integration and facilitating the economies of the region with the Regional Stabilization Fund and trying to deal with the 30 per cent unemployment in St. Vincent; we are not dealing with the Revenue Stabilization Fund for Trinidad and Tobago; we are not dealing with the jobless in Sea Lots; and we are trying to create joblessness in Caroni (1975) Limited. The focus is all wrong.

We have no problem supporting the measure, the increase in the tax exemption for severance from \$100,000 to \$300,000, but I would continue to urge the Government that the reputation that is developing very fast which is not limited to UNC members, is that this is a most inept Government; not only inept, but we are now adding to it, corrupt; we are now adding to it, visionless. [*Crosstalk*]

I just want to caution the Government that the economic and social stability of this country is being severely threatened by their actions and I want them to listen, not just to what we have to say, but to what others in the community and in Trinidad and Tobago are saying.

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

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. John Rahael):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Bill to amend the Income Tax Act, Chap. 75:01.

The purpose of this Bill is to increase the severance benefits from \$100,000 to \$300,000 for those persons who will accept their severance package, their Voluntary Separation of Employment Package (VSEP) and so benefit tremendously.

The hon. Member for St. Joseph said that we are doing this for the Caroni (1975) Limited workers. That is very true. It is not only for the Caroni (1975) Limited workers, but all workers in Trinidad and Tobago would benefit from this Bill that we are putting forward. Every dollar in excess of \$100,000 as it is today, you would have to pay approximately 30 per cent in taxes. So that if you receive \$150,000, you would have had to pay—or you will have to pay now until this Bill is approved—30 per cent on \$50,000, which is about \$15,000. If it is \$200,000, you would have a benefit of \$30,000 from this action that a caring PNM Government is putting on the table this afternoon. If someone gets \$300,000, that person will then save \$60,000 that he would not have to pay in taxes.

So that the benefit of what we are doing is, yes, part of the package that the Caroni (1975) Limited workers are going to benefit from, but so are all other workers in Trinidad and Tobago. The hon. Member for St. Joseph talked about over 2,000 would benefit, but that is 2,000 persons that would benefit—2,000 families. That is all part of a holistic plan that we have for the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited.

Before I go into what we are doing, let us go back and look at what transpired in the sugar industry and in Caroni (1975) Limited over the years. Since 1975 there have been many reports on Caroni. You had the Spence Report in 1978; the Rampersad Report in 1980, the St. C Report in 1982, the Dookeran plan, and plan upon plans. In 1993 there was a Tripartite Agreement between the government of the day—and at that time the honourable colleague of mine for Diego Martin West was the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources—together with the trade union representative from the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union, now the hon. Member for Couva North and Leader of the Opposition.

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That Tripartite Agreement that was made among the company, the union and the government of the day talked about rationalization of the sugar industry and Caroni (1975) Limited.

At that time Caroni (1975) Limited was owing in excess of \$2.4 billion. The PNM government then took the decision to write off that \$2.4 billion and that the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago would stand the bill for the \$2.4 billion, and that Caroni (1975) Limited would get a new balance sheet so that they would be able to go and do what was necessary to ensure that they do not find themselves in that position in the future. That was in 1993.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you are aware that in 1995 the PNM demitted office and in came the UNC. What did they do? Or rather, what did they not do? Just to give you some figures: In 1996, Caroni (1975) Limited's operating performance—that is just the operation—was in a deficit of \$175 million. So that in 1996, after getting a clean bill of health, Caroni (1975) Limited incurred a loss of \$175 million. During the period 1996 to 2001, under the UNC administration, Caroni (1975) Limited moved from an operating loss of \$175 million to \$367 million, more than double from 1996 to 2001.

What did they do? On July 21, 1999—and I am going to be quoting from this document which is the Implementation Plan for Caroni (1975) Limited, prepared by the Cabinet-appointed committee. I am going to quote from some of the minutes of that plan. This was a meeting between representatives from Ernst & Young and present were the officers of Ernst & Young together with the representatives of all the unions; the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union and the other unions. In Caroni there are about seven unions in all representing different categories of workers.

Let us see what was said based on the minutes of that meeting dated June 30, 1999. Again, this was prepared by Ernst & Young, a reputable accounting company in Trinidad and Tobago.

“Retrenchment/VSEP

The Union believes that any VSEP plan must represent an enhancement of the current VSEP plan contained in the Collective Agreement. The union is also not averse to a plan whereby workers receive part of their VSEP or severance in the form of a land lease.”

So that part of the VSEP package would have been the value of a land lease. I continue:

“If land is to be given as part of a severance package, the union feels that landowners...”

will benefit.

Mr. Speaker, this is what the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union was saying with respect to VSEP. Let us examine what some of the other unions were saying. The Cane Farmers Association of Trinidad and Tobago (CFATT) is the farmers’ union. The representative of CFATT “agrees that the payment system has to change towards quality.”

So here it is that CFATT is saying that they have no difficulty and they agree that the payment should be changed towards quality. The Sugar Boilers Association:

“There was a suggestion to separate sugar processing from cultivation, as is the usual model in other countries.”

The Sugar Boilers Association again:

“Caroni should get rid of cultivation, and leave it to the farmers.”

The Association of Technical Administrative and Supervisory Staff at a meeting held on July 02, 1999, with representatives from Ernst & Young said:

“The union is in agreement with a VSEP plan.”

All the unions, Mr. Speaker—the Sugar Industry Staff Association:

“SISA thinks that measures to deal with the possibility of losing existing sugar quotas should be implemented. They suggest consulting the Spence Report which recommended a production target of 70,000 tonnes.”

This is again coming out of the minutes of the union together with representatives from Ernst & Young and the company, Caroni (1975) Limited.

I can go on with all the minutes with all the unions, where the management believed that retrenchment was inevitable. This was in 1999. But did the UNC government agree to this plan? No. Because in comes the hon. Member for St. Joseph as Minister of Finance and at that time in his capacity as Minister of Finance, he discarded this plan of offering VSEP to the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. Listen to what they did.

In the year 2001 they formed a working committee again—and that is why you would not see a Rahael plan; you will see a Rahael implementation and successful transformation plan. [*Desk thumping*] That is what you would see. So that all these plans—if I were to bring all those plans and all those studies and all

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that was done for Caroni (1975) Limited, I would have had to borrow a pickup to bring all those documents to the Parliament.

Let us look now at what the UNC administration of 2000/2001 was going to do. [*Interruption*] Do you want to know who was going to do that? Again, I am quoting from a plan—and I want to quote properly; let me get it well—the Working Group Report Recommendation VSEP. On page 36, listen to the recommendations—and this is under the Member for St. Joseph and at that time, the super Minister of Trade, Industry, Enterprise, and Minister of Tourism, et cetera. I see that he is throwing stones at my friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central, talking about downsizing. At least he is here and you are there, and as long as the Member for Couva North is there, the Member for San Fernando East would be on this side.

Let us now look at the recommendations of the committee set up by the former Minister of Finance in the UNC government. I quote:

“The Sugar Industry in Trinidad has long outlived its usefulness and has no place in a modern knowledge driven economy.”

**Mr. Manning:** Who said that?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** The UNC. I repeat for the benefit of those who did not hear me.

“The Sugar Industry in Trinidad has long outlived its usefulness and has no place in a modern knowledge driven economy.”

Do you remember the 1,000-room hotel that was going up on Caroni (1975) Limited lands, and all the big industries that were going up on Caroni (1975) Limited lands, because of Inncogen? Where is the glass plant factory that we talked about? Where is that 18-hole golf course? So many holes you need; you need more than nine. Let me continue:

“The major stakeholders of the industry have become entrenched in a dependence syndrome...” [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, please, the Member is asking for the House to be a bit quiet. He is in possession of the House. Please, let us hear him.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** I will continue to quote. Listen to what they said:

“The major stakeholders of the industry have become entrenched in a dependency syndrome while the industry itself has become irreversibly uncompetitive.”



This is Yetming's report. He said:

“Long term and sustainable development can only be achieved through closure of the industry.”

“Closure of the industry”, Mr. Speaker. No VSEP—closure of the industry.

**Hon. Member:** Who say that?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Yetming!

**Mr. Yetming:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister is quoting from a report prepared by a working committee. That report was never approved by the Minister of Finance at the time, neither was the report ever approved by the Minister of Industry at the time. It was a report submitted by a working committee that never saw the light of day until somebody leaked it.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the intervention from the Member for St. Joseph because there is a lot more I could say about what the report had in it. Let me make the point about what the hon. Member for St. Joseph got up and tried to mislead this House on. I will now read again from the report.

“‘Working Group Report—April 24, 2001’, and on May 15, 2001 at a meeting with the Minister of Enterprise Development, Foreign Affairs and Tourism and the Minister of Finance...”

Who was the Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Valley:** Yetming!

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Yetming.

“After discussion it was agreed that: [*Desk thumping*]

- An objective analysis of both the internal and external environment confirms that the local sugar industry cannot become financially viable.”

He agreed!

**Mr. Valley:** Read it again. Read the whole thing!

**Hon. J. Rahael:** I read it again:

“...on May 15, 2001 at a meeting with the Minister of Enterprise Development, Foreign Affairs and Tourism and the Minister of Finance. After discussion it was agreed that:

- A total shutdown of the sugar industry is inevitable.” [*Desk thumping*]

He said that “fallouts...are inevitable” and they went on to talk about how they were going to manage it, the public relations they were going to put in place and how they were going to deal with the closure of the industry.

So that this question about the PNM—throughout this document it talks about the shutdown of Caroni (1975) Limited’s operations. So I think I have developed the point that the UNC plan was to shut down Caroni (1975) Limited. There is no doubt whatsoever.

**Mr. Singh:** Would the Member lay that document in Parliament?

**Mr. B. Panday:** Lay it! [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, please, we cannot have Members shouting across the floor. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Members, please!

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After accepting the portfolio that I was given the honour by the Hon. Prime Minister to head, it was brought to our attention in March 2002 that the budget of 2001/2002 provided funding for Caroni (1975) Limited up to the end of March 2001. So in addition to all that they have done, they also budgeted only up to the year March 2001. So that Caroni (1975) Limited came to me, cap in hand, for \$277 million to have completed that financial year.

We then started to look at what is the best way possible to restructure Caroni (1975) Limited. I took my time; I did all the research that was necessary. There was no need for any new plan because there were enough plans. There was no need to reinvent the wheel. Every single report, from 1978—the Spence Report—talked about, one, purchasing cane by quality; two, you have to rationalize the work force in Caroni (1975) Limited. You also have to divorce the cultivation of cane from the processing and manufacturing of cane; that the farmers should be the ones responsible for growing, harvesting and cultivating cane.

When I met with all the farmers’ associations, they all said that they were prepared to undertake and supply all the cane that Caroni (1975) Limited needed, and that they were selling the cane to Caroni (1975) Limited at \$170 per tonne and it was costing Caroni (1975) Limited over \$500 to produce a tonne of cane.

So that part of the losses for Caroni (1975) Limited was the fact that the business acumen was not in place to deal with it. Instead of producing in-house a tonne of cane that would cost you in excess of \$500 per tonne, it would have been

more economical to give it to private farmers so that they can supply you at \$170 per tonne.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Who say they would supply that?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** The canefarmers, and they have been supplying and they would continue to supply. It was also stated that instead of buying cane by weight, we should buy it by quality because the ratio of TC to TS, which is the ratio of tonnes of cane to tonnes of sugar, is the highest in the world in Caroni (1975) Limited, because it is 13 tonnes of cane to one tonne of sugar, while the norm is between nine to ten tonnes of cane to one tonne of sugar.

We also saw that all the divestments that Caroni (1975) Limited entered into from way back, in every area they continued to lose money, whether it was in beef and cattle, in citrus, in rice, whatever investment Caroni (1975) Limited entered into, there were losses. So it meant, therefore, that Caroni (1975) Limited had become too cumbersome. Caroni (1975) Limited has under its portfolio—

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, would you please take your seat.

**Mr. Valley:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Caroni (1975) Limited has under its portfolio, 77,000 acres of land. So we looked at all of that and we said: What is the best way of proceeding, not to close down or shut down Caroni (1975) Limited, but to give the sugar industry an opportunity to survive. That is what we are doing. We have not taken the position that we are going to shut down the industry; we have taken the position that we need to do certain things to allow the sugar industry to survive in Trinidad and Tobago. Everyone else was saying that we should get out of sugar, including the Members for Couva North and St. Joseph. They were all talking about shutting down the industry. We said we would restructure the industry so that we would give sugar a chance to survive and compete.

How are we to do that? We felt, instead of producing 100,000 tonnes of sugar—because we cannot compete on the international market and our export market is going to come to an end because presently we have an agreement with the European Union to sell them approximately 50,000 tonnes of raw sugar, a guaranteed price with a guaranteed quota, and it is anticipated by the year 2006 that guaranteed price that we are getting from the European Union for the quota of 50,000 tonnes will come to an end, similar to what happened with the banana industry.

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So it is not something of which we are not aware. It is staring us in our faces and, therefore, we have to take action immediately. Therefore, in restructuring the sugar industry, we decided that we should produce approximately 70,000 tonnes of sugar. We also felt that one factory would be able to grind the cane that is required by purchasing cane by quality and that we would be able to produce 70,000 tonnes of sugar in the Usine Ste. Madeline factory.

Just in case someone would jump up and say that factory cannot produce 70,000 tonnes of sugar, let me bring to the attention of hon. Members that in 1994 the Usine Ste. Madeline factory produced 74,917 tonnes of sugar from 786,042 tonnes of cane, a ratio of 10.48. That was done in 1994. But again the PNM government demitted office in 1995 and everything fell apart. Therefore, in looking at that, we decided that we would close down the Brechin Castle factory and keep Ste. Madeline operating. If we need to improve some of the machinery in the Usine Ste. Madeline factory we would do that, to make it more efficient, so that you would use less cane to produce a tonne of sugar. Because you have to be efficient not only in growing the cane and the quality of cane that you grow, but also the factory must operate efficiently, and that an independent laboratory that would have representatives from the cane farmers and from the company operating independently, would test the quality of cane and determine what price the farmers would get.

Mr. Speaker, we are now putting a business structure in place that would give the sugar industry an opportunity to survive, and in doing that, we also recognize that Caroni (1975) Limited has a workforce of 9,700 persons, and we said, we need to deal with this in a humane manner. So we started to address all the needs of all the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. We did not take the interest of one particular group. We interacted, and there were meetings and discussions with all the unions—I repeat, all the unions—and also with the workers directly, and the management, so that we would have been able to address all their concerns.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You met the workers?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Yes, I did meet the workers myself. In meeting these workers we decided that one of the things we would do, instead of shutting down the industry and paying them according to their collective agreement, we would offer them a VSEP, a voluntary enhanced package, and the offer of VSEP, which is an average of 30 per cent across the board, is the highest—I repeat, it is the highest—and the best package that has ever been given to any worker in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is what the PNM Government is doing for the

people of Caroni (1975) Limited and Central Trinidad, and that is why the hon. Prime Minister could say it “go be licks for all yuh there too”.

We then looked at those who are above the age of 40, 45 and 50. They would get an enhancement of up to 50 per cent in addition to what the collective agreement called for. So there are some of them who would be getting \$500,000; some of the monthly-paid would be getting as much as \$1 million.

**Mr. Ramnath:** How many?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** It does not matter. It was something that we addressed that the unions themselves—the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union—are the ones who made the proposal to us to increase the severance tax free benefit from \$100,000 to \$300,000. We did that. We also took into consideration that there would be land available for agriculture and for cane, because you must remember that presently the private farmers are supplying Caroni (1975) Limited with approximately 650,000 tonnes of cane. To produce 70,000 tonnes of sugar at a ratio of 12 tonnes of cane to one tonne of sugar, we would require 900,000 tonnes of cane. So therefore it means that an additional 250,000 tonnes of cane would have to be produced by private farmers. So we said to the workers, “You would be given preference and the first opportunity to lease land to cultivate cane to supply the sugar industry.”

That was the offer that was made to the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. We did not stop there. The UNC plan was to divest 3,000 acres of citrus to one investor—one of their friends—and 2,100 acres of rice, again, to one of their friends. They called it business units, and they were looking for investors. So that one investor—one of their friends—would have had the opportunity to lease 3,000 acres of land to grow citrus; another 2,100 acres for rice, and so on. We said that we would not do that. What we would do is that we are going to provide, again, the displaced workers of Caroni (1975) Limited with plots of land for the various types of crops that would make it viable for them to be successful as farmers.

We are putting in place a business entrepreneur office which would give business advice to those farmers. That office is now established on Caroni (1975) Limited lands where workers would be able to go in and see a map of 1,000 acres of citrus that is going to be sub-divided in 50-acre plots because 50 acres would be able to provide a decent living for a farmer. He does not need 1,000 acres and he requires more than 10 acres. The optimum amount is 50 acres with respect to citrus. So if you have 3,000 acres, that is 600 new farmers that you are going to create.

So what we are doing is providing—again, it is documented in their offer of VSEP that they would be given preference to the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited for farming and for agriculture. That is what we are doing. They are going to be given the first opportunity. [*Crosstalk*] Well nobody trusts you; that is why you think they do not trust us, but we are delivering. Part of what we are doing today is part of our pledge. That is why they trust us.

Mr. Speaker, that is dealing with one concern that some of the workers at Caroni (1975) Limited have with respect to what are the opportunities for them if they wish to remain in agriculture. We also said that “there are some of you who may not wish to remain in agriculture and you would like to get opportunities for other things.” So we have put in place \$25 million for training and re-tooling of the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. We said, under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources we are going to provide training and opportunities for those who are interested in the production of sheep and goat, in rabbit production, cocoa production, pepper. And as I say, pepper, let me tell you now that we are exporting all the pepper that we can produce in Trinidad and Tobago. As a matter of fact, we are now into two of the popular supermarkets in Florida, Publics and Winn Dixie. We have now formed an Agriculture Export Association. For the very first time you have people who are in farming getting the kind of support that they never got before. They are getting the support by encouraging them through NAMDEVCO to produce the right type of crops and ensuring that there is a market for it externally.

When the PNM came into office in the year 2002, it was brought to our attention that we could not have exported our fruits and vegetables to the Caricom countries; we could not have exported watermelon to Grenada or Antigua/Barbuda; we could not have exported all the food crops. I could not understand that they were there for six years and they did nothing about it. One would have believed that they would have represented their constituents in a manner that would ensure that they would have benefited from it. But not one farmer could have exported those types of crops to Antigua/Barbuda and Grenada. What we did, we contacted our colleagues in those islands and we have signed protocols now with Grenada, Barbados and Antigua/Barbuda. Very shortly we will be signing with St. Kitts/Nevis and we are providing opportunities for our farmers to export their produce outside of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Agriculture Export Association has been formed; it is operating and we are looking to give them the support they require with respect to better prices for freight leaving Trinidad and Tobago, packaging material. As a matter of fact, next

month we are going to open the new packaging plant at Piarco, so that they would be able to carry their produce there where it would be properly washed and packed in proper packages for export: Made in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we are doing.

So not only have the Manufacturers Association, the Chamber of Commerce or the Downtown Merchants Association formed themselves to give support to their membership, but for the first time there is an Export Agriculture Farmers Association.

Again, those who are interested in pursuing courses in safety, health and environment process control systems and application, could apply to the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology, National Energy Services Centre and the Government would assist them. The PNM Government is going to help the Caroni (1975) Limited workers who are displaced and who wish to further their abilities and skills in all these various categories to attend the University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies in programmes such as business management, professional secretariat, marketing, computer literacy. All of these are programmes that the Government has put in place so that the workers would be able to access.

I spoke about the office that would be established by the end of next week in respect of entrepreneurship and business. This office would facilitate and provide employees wishing to set up their own business with a wealth of relevant information and advice. We are giving the support so that they would be successful. The people of Central are resilient people. So with the kind of support we are giving them, they are going to benefit even more.

We also talked about those workers who presently do not own their own homes. Again, we took our time and made sure that we are going to address every area and concern of all the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. We said the Government's thrust to build 100,000 houses over 10 years, part of it is going to be built in Caroni, Curepe, Toco, Moruga, Couva and Chaguanas. All over Trinidad and Tobago the Government would be building houses. [*Desk thumping*]

Just to let you know, the lands have been identified. The lands that are suitable for agriculture, those areas would remain in agriculture; the lands that are for commercial projects, for residential, all were identified. So again the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited who presently do not own their homes would be given preference to own their homes. They would be leased a parcel of land so they can access the low interest mortgage facility that we have put in place so that they can build or purchase one of the homes that is being built.

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Here it is, again, when I say that the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited are being well treated—in fact, the package that is being offered to them, is the best package that anyone has ever received in Trinidad and Tobago. Not even the UNC which came from the bowels of Central and Caroni, has made such an offer to any of its supporters.

We did not stop there, because, again, we wanted to ensure that we took care of all the concerns of all the workers. What about those workers who are presently living in Caroni (1975) Limited's houses?

**Mr. Ramnath:** How many?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Over 150 of them.

**Mr. Ramnath:** That is all?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Whatever the number is; it might be more, but here it is that you had families living in Caroni houses, in some cases 10, 15, 20, 30 years and they have been employed in Caroni (1975) Limited. We did not tell them to vacate the houses and give them—

**Mr. Ramnath:** You putting your friends in it.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** That is what the UNC would have done, certainly not the PNM. What we said was that those who are residing in the houses in Caroni (1975) Limited will be given the opportunity to continue to live there and purchase that house, again, looking at every area of need for every person and every worker of Caroni (1975) Limited. We said whatever is the value of the house—and the value has been determined by a valuator, Raymond and Pierre—if you have been living there for 20 years and more, you would get a 20 per cent discount on that value. If you have been living there for 10 years, you would get a 10 per cent discount.

So that we are treating with every worker. I want the Member for Couva South to understand that what we are doing is ensuring that there is a human element in everything that we do. We have a human face, and we are treating all our citizens in Trinidad and Tobago equally. [*Desk thumping*]

So when Members come here and talk about CEPEP (Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme), I can cry discrimination. In the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, there is one contractor. In the areas of Chaguanas and Fyzabad, there are three contractors. So that there are more workers in their area than there are in Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.



**Mr. Partap:** You are misleading the House.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Misleading the House in what way? Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has one contractor. Diego Martin East has two; you have three. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please! Order! Order, please!

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Mr. Speaker, instead of representing their constituents, what do they do? There is a situation in Oropouche where seawater was coming into an area that is suitable for farming.

**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 [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and hon. Members.

I was referring to a situation in Oropouche. In the year 2002 we commissioned construction of these sluice gates to ensure that the salt water would no longer continue to come into the lands which are suitable for agriculture. For years the farmers there had been crying out for this type of protection. We were able to commission the construction of those gates sometime, I believe, last month.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You made repairs.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** No, brand new gates. [*Desk thumping*] It came in on time and within budget. We made sure that we invited the representative for Oropouche. I recall when they were here they would never invite the Member of Parliament, but we are way above that. We made sure that the Member for Oropouche was sent an invitation so that he would be able to participate in this exercise, where 20,000 acres of land would become available in his constituency for agriculture and farming.

**3.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Ramnath:** That was as a result of the sluice gate?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Yes, as a result of the sluice gate, but talk to the farmers. [*Interruption*] You are not the representative. Let the representative for Oropouche deny that. He did not even attend the function. Mr. Speaker, do you know why he said he did not attend the function? He said that his leader, the Member for Couva North, banned all of them from attending any function, whatsoever. [*Laughter*]

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The Member for Chaguanas and the Mayor went to attend the opening of the Bank of Nova Scotia in Price Plaza in Chaguanas. When they heard that the new Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo, was coming to cut the ribbon, they took off; they run like run never run! Do you deny that Member for Chaguanas? You made sure you left before the Minister in the Ministry of Finance arrived. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, instead of the Member of Oropouche coming and inter-mingling with his constituents; instead of coming to ensure that his constituents get the kind of representation they deserved—

**Hon. Member:** They have no shame!

**Hon. J. Rahael:** No shame is right. They have no shame. They are not representing their constituents under this action of civil disobedience. Mr. Speaker, to tell you the extent that they are not representing their constituents, the ministry embarked on a Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA), a very innovative and creative proposal. We have realized that the people in agriculture are aging and we needed to introduce young people into agriculture. We came up with this plan where we would give young men and women, from the ages of 17 to 27, the opportunity to access farms; for farmers to open their farms so that they would allow those young people to come and actually dirty their hands, so to speak, and to get on-site experience. We are also providing training for those young people and in doing all of that, we are exposing them to agriculture. Mr. Speaker, if we get 10 per cent of them remaining in agriculture, it would have been a successful programme. Some of those young people already have jobs with those farmers. We are giving each of them a stipend and the cycle is for six weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I came to this House; I walked with the application forms for the YAPA; I gave them to Members on the other side; Member for Couva South, Member for Chaguanas, Member for Nariva; quite a number of Members, where there are a lot of agricultural farms. I brought it to this House and I gave it to them. Not one form came back! They did not even give their constituents the opportunity to partake in Government's programmes from where they would have benefited. [*Interruption*] Do you believe that, Mr. Speaker? Shame on you! Shame on you! This is an opportunity that you still have! I implore you and I encourage you to go to your constituents and let them participate in this programme! [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Nariva, you sit there in your seat and you keep hurling remarks.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** I want injury time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, if you want to join the debate, you have 75 minutes.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Mr. Speaker, do you believe that here it is we are giving young people an opportunity—[*Interruption*] One minute we are taking away farm lands and we do not want to encourage people to grow food in Trinidad and Tobago; the next minute, when we are encouraging young people to get into agriculture, the Member is talking about barracks and Slavery. Mr. Speaker, they are not representing their constituents.

As a matter of fact, I want to single out two Members on that side who have shown some interest, and I am working with them in order, not only to get young people on the farms, but also to establish farms for them as well. They are the Member for St. Augustine and the Member for Tabaquite. [*Desk thumping*] They are the only Members on that side who took up the offer. What we are doing now is that when those young people—after they have gone through the cycle of being exposed to agriculture—if they are interested, then there is another cycle, which is more intense. If they say that they want to remain in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, we would provide them with a five-acre plot of land so that they could develop and become farmers in their own right. We would do it by holding their hands. We would ensure that we give them the encouragement, the seedlings and what is required: what they should produce and what they should not produce.

We are doing all that and yet Members come here and cry discrimination and they ask for lists of persons who get jobs and that sort of thing. If I were to come to this honourable House and bring lists of persons working in certain areas, they may cry discrimination in the reverse order. Let us work together to develop Trinidad and Tobago. Let us work together so that we could get more people involved in farming and agriculture. Let us work together so that we could provide food security and safety for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, coming back to the question of Caroni (1975) Limited, let me once more reiterate that what we have done is that we have given the sugar industry the opportunity to survive. Instead of shutting down the industry, we are giving it an opportunity to survive. We are going to have a new company, a sugar manufacturing company that would be responsible for managing the Usine Ste. Madeleine Factory and the refinery.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Yes, keep them in indentureship.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** We are going to have an independent laboratory testing the quality of cane that the farmers are going to provide. All the cane is going to be

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purchased by quality. As a matter of fact, next week Sunday, June 12, 2003 we are meeting all the cane farmers to hold discussions with them as to the way forward. We are ensuring that the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited, who are interested in remaining in agriculture, whether it is in citrus, rice, beef and cattle or cane farming, would be given an opportunity to lease the land and become farmers in their own right.

We are empowering the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We are empowering the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. We are, in fact, removing them from this dependency syndrome that they talked about in their report. Mr. Speaker, just to confirm again, in this report they talked about 14,700 persons who were going to be displaced that is when I asked: how did they arrive at 14,700 persons when Caroni (1975) Limited has only 9,700 workers? But, Mr. Speaker, if you are getting out of the sugar industry and you are shutting down the sugar industry, you would have 5,000 workers who are also going to be affected! That is how they came up with the figure of 14,700. In more ways than one the evidence is clear that the UNC government was going to shut down the sugar industry of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear! [*Desk thumping*] The Member for St. Joseph had the gall to get up—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Give them copies of it.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Yes, give them copies of it so that—[*Interruption*] We are making copies of your own report available to you! Mr. Speaker, again, all the workers are going to benefit and there was consultation with all the unions. [*Interruption*] Not all of them would agree. To show that we are committed to what we said we are going to do, this afternoon we are here in this honourable House to take measures to do one of the things that we are committed to do and that is to increase the severance benefit that is not taxable from \$100,000 to \$300,000. [*Desk thumping*]

Again, as I have already said, that benefit is not only for Caroni (1975) Limited workers but all workers would have access to that benefit. [*Interruption*] Member for Oropouche, you should be ashamed, you turned your back on your own constituents! You should be ashamed! And you had the gall to put it in the newspapers! I did not know that you put it in the newspapers. Since you are no longer going to get any deputy position, I can understand how you are feeling.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You would hear more.

**Hon. J. Rahael:** I would hear more? I would like to hear why you did not show up! Mr. Speaker, 20,000 acres of land would now be made available for his constituents to get involved in farming; 7,400 hectares to be exact.

**Mr. Ramnath:** One sluice gate; that would make 20,000 acres of land available?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Couva South does not know what he is speaking about he should shut up!

**Mr. Ramnath:** You do not know!

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member—

**Hon. J. Rahael:** He should stay quiet. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Again we wait on the implementation of all the programmes. The workers are already clamouring for the union to remove the injunction and they are very satisfied with the efforts and the work that we have done.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity this afternoon.

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche):** Mr. Speaker, whether it was my intention to speak today or not, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West made a very kind request that I respond to some of the statements that he has made. I want to join this debate on the Bill to amend the Income Tax Act, Chap. 75:01, which deals with two issues: the issue of severance payment and the issue of the change to which responsibility is going to be assigned from the "National Training Agency" to the "Ministry responsible for the National Training Agency".

Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon me to respond to statements made in this honourable House by the last speaker, the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, on several matters raised, including Caroni (1975) Limited, the policy of the United National Congress as it relates to Caroni and, on a matter dealing with the constituency of Oropouche. Before I get to that, I want to say that events taking place today, both in and outside of this House, are a fitting end to a depressing and traumatic week for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Today they scored a century. One hundred murders, five months into the year! This is their century! They should take a bow! One hundred murders in five months! [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, Order!

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Take a bow! That is PNM for you! This week the Attorney General revealed that she is in direct contact with an ongoing investigation on corruption in the Government, relating to a matter at WASA and involving her colleagues in the ruling party. She admitted in the newspaper that she received reports on a daily basis.

This week the head of Government is confirmed as a national comic! The head of this Government is nothing more and nothing less than a national comic

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when he told this population that Venezuela is to be blamed for the crime! That brute Chavez, the President of Venezuela, is responsible for crime in Trinidad and Tobago! The head of Government assures our population that it is really Mr. Chavez who is responsible—not him—for their safety! I expect he would dispatch a ministerial committee, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and former ministers Padmore and Donaldson and so on to go to Caracas to admonish the President for causing crime in Trinidad and Tobago!

This week as well, a national newspaper had cause to publish for our citizens, kidnapping prevention tips for Trinidad and Tobago. One hundred murders! Kidnapping tips available in the mass media! President Chavez is to blame! The Attorney General is in touch with an investigation on corruption! What an end to the week! It is one thing to ask questions in Parliament and not to get answers but it is something else not to ask questions and get questions. What a week!

**Hon. Member:** What is he saying?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** This is a fitting end to this week. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is a congenital and pathological—

**Hon. Member:** Liar.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** What?

**Hon. Members:** Liar.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I cannot use that word; it might be unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker. He is pathologically alien from the truth. He went to Oropouche to open the floodgate and it was a flood of woos and illness that he was spreading there. [*Interruption*] They invited me and, for the record it is very important; he raised the matter. I was invited; he is very correct. That is the only thing he has said that is the truth. I was invited to attend and to speak at a function in Woodland. And I wrote, Mr. Speaker, for the record on May 26, 2003:

“Mr. Swallay Mohammed  
Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources  
St. Clair  
Port of Spain

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your invitation to attend and speak at the opening ceremony of the rehabilitated...gate...at Woodland in the constituency of Oropouche on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2003 at 10.00 a.m.

While I am pleased that this new floodgate system, initiated by the government of the United National Congress...”

[*Desk thumping*]

“has finally been completed and will benefit the residents of Oropouche...I am however unable to summon the hypocritical disposition necessary to attend this function and to welcome and fraternize with PNM government ministers who have been instrumental in devising and implementing plans to destroy Caroni (1975) Limited,...”

[*Desk thumping*] Do you hear the reason? Let me continue.

“...retrench 10,000 workers and place such workers and their families on the breadline and within the poverty-stricken. This level of discrimination is startling and cannot be condoned. My presence among such politicians, old and new, who are responsible for the unparalleled level of discrimination and divisiveness existing in this society will cause me severe moral and spiritual distress.”

[*Desk thumping*]

“I might add that while the UNC initiated floodgate brings relief to the people of Woodland, the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited will affect thousands of residents of that very district who will face severe social and economic hardships in the aftermath of the destruction of the sugar industry.

In light of the above, I am unable to attend this function.

Yours faithfully,

/s/ Dr. Roodal Moonilal”

You wanted the reason; I gave you the reason I was unable to attend.

[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, I have no interest in going to that issue; I have spoken. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, please! Members, the Member for Oropouche is in possession of the House; listen to him in silence. Please, Members even on the Opposition Benches; please listen to the Member, and Members on the Government Benches, listen to him.

**Mr. B. Panday:** [*Inaudible*] Chair, Member.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I was not going to mention this but the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West wanted to get his reason and he got it. I hope he is happy now. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. B. Panday:** I do not know what Parliament he belongs to.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Moving along—

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, please wait. The hon. Member for Couva North, please—[*Interruption*]

[*Mr. B. Panday leaves the Chamber*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please continue, hon. Member.

**Mr. Ramnath:** “Doh waste time nah man—”[*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have also recommended that the proceedings of this House be transmitted live on television and on the radio. Had the national population been listening or looking at the proceedings today they would have really seen the difference between the PNM and the UNC. [*Desk thumping*] They would see the difference and they would hear the difference. There is a very serious problem here of vision and priority on the part of the Government. While we focus on the next generation, they focus on the next election. While it is the vision of the UNC to put a computer in every home, it is their vision to put a brush-cutter in every home. I also want to add that while the UNC was about “water for all”, under this Government, it is “condoms for all”. That is what the difference is. It is a difference in governance, in focus, in priority. So this is fitting that this event would take place today.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West recited the same speech on another occasion. He came to this House with documents in his hand. On that day, I also brought documents concerning Caroni (1975) Limited—which I did not bring today—and I stood and explained to the Member, to this House and to the nation that the Member was quoting from technical reports by professionals and technical people. He was not quoting from a government policy document, from a Cabinet Minute. [*Desk thumping*] So therefore when you ascribe certain views to the UNC government you are wrong and misleading. You should apologize for misleading this House.

The Member for San Fernando East who speaks about behaviour and conduct in public office and so on should take note that the Minister is continually



misleading this House by holding up a document in his right hand and lying. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you—

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you cannot say the Member is holding up a document and lying.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Member is holding up a document and not telling the truth, forgive me, Mr. Speaker. When we called on this Member to lay the document in this House, he played hopscotch; he jumped into a box and said something and then jumped out. Every time we ask him: Could we get the document? We are told we could get the page. When we ask could we get the page—I was going to say the sneaker—[*Laughter*—he wants to give us the paragraph and not the page. Mr. Speaker, if they lay the document in this House they would discover that it is a technical document, done by the professionals, the technocrats and so on. It is not UNC government policy and whatever the Member for St. Joseph or the former Member for Tunapuna, for Toco/Manzanilla, or whoever had to say, they could say it. That is not UNC policy.

Mr. Speaker, we have spoken at length, in fact, I am personally tired of explaining to this Member the difference between UNC policy and what he is quoting. But he would continue to mislead this House. One fact which is beyond doubt—no one could question—is that from 1995 to 2001 not one employee of Caroni (1975) Limited lost his or her job as a result of UNC policy. [*Desk thumping*] That is beyond doubt. They could argue anything they want but nobody lost his or her job. Those are the facts.

Mr. Speaker, this Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West as he continues to mislead this House, again, is making the comment that the UNC government did not put enough resources into the budget so that Caroni (1975) Limited, at some time after the budget, would face a shortage of finance. But he would not tell this House the truth, that is how one budgets. They did it too, so Caroni (1975) Limited had to go to them in 2002/2003 for more money. You budget a certain amount for Caroni (1975) Limited and as the year passes, you meet the Caroni (1975) Limited officials, their management team and the board of directors to discuss further funding. That is how the process of budgeting is done. You do not budget \$500 million for Caroni (1975) Limited during your budget statement. He would not say that. The Member would continue to suggest that the UNC government had some plan to close down Caroni (1975) Limited. But I challenge him now to tell this House how many workers lost their jobs at Caroni (1975) Limited because of UNC's policy? How many lost their jobs?

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Again, Mr. Speaker, they spoke about setting up industrial estates and so on. This Member has developed a particular reputation—second only to the Member for Diego Martin East—about being very far from the truth. So whatever high-sounding plans they may talk about; nobody believes them. The Member for St. Joseph quoted from the newspapers; there is a complete lack of confidence in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. So they could say what they want about Caroni (1975) Limited, nobody would believe them, whether it is Caroni (1975) Limited workers or the national population, because they lack the confidence. Mr. Speaker, in a very short period in office—their track record is there; naked, exposed, vulgar with discrimination, nepotism, inequality and racism against all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This is why we cannot believe anything, whether it is getting access to land; getting access to “HAPA”, YAPA, “DAPPA” whatever.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about distributing land according to guidelines where those who really need it would get it, and those who are in the best position to develop agriculture would have access to lands. I want to read from the *Trinidad Guardian* dated Thursday, June 05, 2003, which says:

“Engineer heads company to handle Caroni lands.”

Mr. Speaker, the newspaper report gives the names of the directors of the Estate Management and Business Development Company that would handle distribution of lands. The Chairman is one Mr. Rao. We do not know about him, where he came from, what he is doing, nothing.

“Commandore Anthony Franklin (deputy chairman, Chief of Defence Staff)

Francis Charles (director of Lands and Surveys)

Onetime PNM Pointe-a-Pierre candidate Farad Khan”

**Hon. Members:** What?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** So the PNM candidate Farad Khan would sit on a board of directors to give out lands according to guidelines on equality, equity and deserving cases and so on.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Would you be so kind to give way? Are you aware that Mr. Farad Khan was dismissed from the board of Petrotrin by the present Government?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I am not so aware. We would be eager to understand why he was fired. Was it because he was “thiefing” boots? In fact, the Government would be interested to know why Mr. Khan—if we believe the Member for Couva

South, which I do, I have no reason to doubt him—the former candidate for Pointe-a-Pierre was fired.

“Wilma Henry, (Comptroller of the Treasury Division Finance Ministry)

Vernon Ramsaran (geography, mathematics graduate) of mathematics)”

[*Interruption*] There is Vernon Ramsaran in the newspaper. If you wish to correct the newspaper you may do so. [*Interruption*] We are saved, Mr. Speaker, he is a graduate of mathematics and geography. The point I am making is that the national population is expected to support the Government when it puts its candidates—PNM cronies—on a board to distribute lands. We are expected to support that and to accept the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources’ statement on fairness and equity, and to accept his invitation and so on.

Mr. Speaker, the matter of Caroni (1975) Limited has to be dealt with in this light. We are waiting for the PNM Government to present a policy document that spells out its plan for Caroni (1975) Limited. To this day the Government cannot tell us what are the plans. We hear it by press conferencing; every Thursday there is a post Cabinet press conference. That post Cabinet press conference is developing a reputation as the press conference held by the Iraqi Minister of Information. [*Laughter*] That is how it is now being seen. While they bomb, they declare that all is well. But, in fact, the Opposition may have to address Mr. Chavez, now that we know he is the cause of crime here. Mr. Speaker, no one has faith in the press conference method. We are asking for the document that spells out the PNM’s policy on Caroni (1975) Limited. In fact, we have been reading a document that spells out 2020 vision. To this day we do not know what is 2020. Have we past 2020? Could 2020 appear in 2010? What are the elements of this vision? But that is another matter.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of crime—the burning issue of the day—would be addressed by others more qualified in the United National Congress when we host our Monday post Parliament meeting live on radio. It is very instructive that the Minister of National Security is now the focus of the country in terms of the handling of crime. The Prime Minister assures us, in today’s newspaper, that this thing is nothing to worry about; the average citizens are not at risk, so we need to print T-shirts to say that we are average citizens. We cannot be kidnapped or murdered; we are average. If you are not average you are in trouble. If you are below average or above average, as a citizen, you might be in trouble but average citizens, no. I tell you he is a national comic!

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Security announces that we should be in fear but the Prime Minister says there is nothing to fear. While all that is

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happening the real Minister of National Security was issued a number plate at the licensing division PBP 4. It is instructive that PBO 4 is the Cabinet Minister of National Security and PBP 4 is the real Minister of National Security. It is the practice that the first 20 numbers would be reserved for Members of Cabinet and high Government officials and so on. That is another matter and again I would not deal with that, but it is instructive that we are finally reaching—

**Hon. Member:** Could you say that number again?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** PBP 4, the real Minister of National Security. They could go and check it. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, in addressing the Bill before us, there is an attempt to amend:

“The Ninth Schedule to the Act, is amended in rule I, by deleting the words ‘National Training Board’ and substituting the words ‘Ministry responsible for the National Training Agency.’”

This is clause 4 of the Bill but there is a particular history that I would like to raise and discuss. This did not drop from the sky. This matter has been before the previous government where—

The Member for Arouca North is involved in a local government campaign and I would get to him in a few minutes, let me just return to the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, they are on a particular track where—they are right, you know—When the UNC returns to power the Treasury would be dry. There would be no money in the Treasury; CEPEP would clean up the national Treasury at the rate they are going. This clause is designed to enrich their party supporters, the contractors.

Mr. Speaker, previous to this, it was the policy of the United National Congress government, as spelt out in a Cabinet Minute, that the work that was done by the National Training Agency, that agency would absorb the functions of the National Training Board. There was a National Training Board which was disestablished in 1994. That National Training Board was responsible for registering businesses and firms to benefit, by way of tax credits, for apprenticeship programmes. It was the policy of the UNC government, by way of a Cabinet decision, that the National Training Agency should be the agency responsible for registering those businesses to benefit from tax credits. In all the documents the National Training Agency is the agency with responsibility. Why, therefore, we ask, does this clause speak about the “Ministry responsible for the National Training Agency” and not the National Training Agency?

What they are going to do, and it is clear for all to see, is that they are going to use the ministry, not the agency, to register the contractors in the CEPEP, in the

URP and in the HYPE, their party friends, to benefit from tax credits. Mr. Speaker, they are stealing money one way and they are not paying taxes the other way, so it is the same process. I am not going to call the names yet. The Members on the other side know the names. This is a device so that their friends and campaign managers and high party officials could register firms and then go to their buddy, their friend, who is the Minister responsible for the National Training Agency, to get a tax credit for having a six-month or less training programme which could be CEPEP and so on. This is what they are about. It is a conspiracy to defraud the State of money. *[Interruption]* My naive friend from Toco/Manzanilla said he never thought about that. You may not have thought about that but certainly those on the other side are not waiting for your advice. *[Laughter]* They are moving full speed ahead. This is just another method to steal and to drain the Treasury dry. This is corruption of the highest order.

The National Training Agency is the State's agency that has the human resources—the technical and professional resources—to register businesses according to predetermined criteria, guidelines, rules and regulations and so on. They have bypassed the National Training Agency to go straight to the Minister's door; so businesses that want to qualify for tax exemption should just line up at balisier house and they would get their tax exemption. That is the policy now. Move away from the professions in the field and move away from the National Training Agency; corruption, nepotism and campaigning.

This is not a coincidence that the Bill is here weeks before the local government election. They would do their business quickly, overnight. This is how they operate, Mr. Speaker. They thief in the night and go to church in their Sunday best outfit in the morning and pray and invoke God; the *Bible* and so on. This is how they steal and this is how they campaign. On a previous occasion the Member for Arouca North, Minister of Local Government came to this House and announced that he was in Ramai Trace in Debe in the constituency of Siparia and two hundred persons came out to hear him and he was so surprised. My friend the Member is here; he is sitting in the very big seat of the Member for San Fernando East. I did not see him there. When he told me this I was shocked. Personally, Mr. Speaker, I was shocked, two hundred persons in Ramai Trace to listen to a PNM Minister, and worse, to listen to the Member for Arouca North? I told him: "My friend, I am shocked; you should have had 600/700 persons." Mr. Speaker, one of the criteria to get a job in URP and CEPEP is to attend PNM meetings. That is the criteria. In fact, he should fire everybody in the URP in Penal for that.

In that area, they would lose; they would be beaten soundly; it is very clear. In Barrackpore, during the last campaign, the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro was distributing water tanks—which he took back—[*Laughter*] This time in Ramai Trace they are distributing oil sand—so it is oil sand politics in Ramai Trace—in everybody’s yard. They are distributing oil sand to private citizens. They are faxing the menus for when they go there. These Ministers are looking for whisky and duck when they come to Oropouche. I want to assure them on the evening of the local government election, when the results are coming in they would get plenty ducks. That is the vulgarity with which they are campaigning, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant could you take your seat please?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, I would leave him alone. I was unfair to him earlier. This is how they plan to campaign for the local government election and to try to con the population in certain areas. Mr. Speaker, they are talking about licks like peas and so on. I want the Member for San Fernando East to know that he should not be too hurry to look at the UNC when he talks about licks like peas because there is a particular Minister on that side who may be using his campaign manager to campaign against the Member for San Fernando East—not the UNC. I said for him to be careful when he says licks like peas—because the CEPEP workers may also be used for their party elections, which is also coming up. I am not calling any names. I do not know how many managers of the Ministers are involved in the CEPEP. What we can say, however, is that we know of the campaign manager of one Minister; the minister of billboards—every time you see this Minister on television he is pulling down billboards. The first billboard that should be pulled down is the billboard, which says: “For Better Minds Vote Hinds”. [*Laughter*] Now that billboard should not be pulled down because it is distracting anybody. No, it is not distracting anybody. It should be pulled down because it is wrong! It is inaccurate! It is a lie! It is false! The Minister of billboard, whoever that may be, would have a campaign manager who is a contractor with CEPEP. So when you sit on the CEPEP board giving out contracts, who are you giving contracts to and for what purpose?

To this day, Mr. Speaker, the particular Minister has yet to state publicly that he has no financial interest in the contracting firm being run by this campaign manager. The national population does not know whether this is also a method for a Government Minister to be earning money through CEPEP contracting. The Minister has not stated categorically that he has no financial interest in that company managed and formed by his campaign manager. A particular Member—

holier than thou—said on the last occasion that those of us on this side—he referred to the Member for Couva North—half his government is in jail and the other half waiting by the courthouse. I do not know how they are counting but if that is how they count to get half, it is no surprise the country is in the mess in which it is now. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I do not want to interrupt the Member for Couva South when he is interrupting me but he would have his turn. This Bill is nothing more or nothing less than corruption, nepotism and discrimination. To this day we are waiting to get a question answered—well we may get questions answered but it may not be the question we asked—a question we legitimately asked, on the companies that were established by NEDCO. We are waiting for the answer because you would get a correlation between those companies and CEPEP, and those companies applying for tax credits. The answer was due in February; the question was asked sometime in January, but we are waiting, Mr. Speaker.

There is a connection between what is happening there and what is happening here. This is to facilitate the companies established by NEDCO and by CEPEP so when they go to their friend, the Minister at balisier house, they could say we have formed a company and we have workers and so on; our contract is for half a million dollars, we are paying tax but you need to help us with a tax break so register us as a training firm. Mr. Speaker, people would be training to cut grass or training to paint stones, we do not know. That would be the training undertaken by this Government. If you stand one place in this country the CEPEP would paint you over. If you walk you could be kidnapped but that is only if you are not an average citizen. If you are an average citizen you are okay. If you stand, they paint you. If you walk, they kidnap you. *[Laughter]* This is Trinidad! The UNC government put up streetlights for you to take a stroll in the evening, under the PNM you cannot walk in the night. This is the reality of Trinidad and Tobago. But we will deal with Mr. Chavez on another occasion because we understand that he is the problem here.

Mr. Speaker, on the authority of the Member of San Fernando East—whom we have no reason to doubt as well—he would tell the population that Chavez is to blame and would come to the House to ask for approval to reduce the funding to the Ministry of National Security; the funding that would have been going towards more vehicles, upgrading human resources in the police service, giving them tools and equipment that they need to protect the citizens of this country. We are reducing the budget to national security because Mr. Chavez is really the man to blame. *[Crosstalk]*

When we were in office we took pride in protecting the citizens of this country by setting up radar, by giving more equipment, boats, IT equipment to the

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coast guard and so on. We took pride in doing that. That was how we protected our citizens. We took the final action to get rid of drug lords and so on. Under this Government we are hearing nothing about equipment for the coast guard, about more tools for the police.

It is also fitting that under this Government a police station in Gasparillo has moved into a school. It is fitting that they would take a police station and a school and synchronize them. That is happening under the PNM. Children would now go to school with jail cell on one side and police charge room on the other side. They could not find the resources to build a police station in Gasparillo, to provide vehicles for the police in St. Margaret, Ste. Madeline, Debe, San Fernando to protect our citizens but they found \$400 million for CEPEP. Mr. Speaker, anything they put their hands on they are prone to corrupting processes.

We are told and I am sure, those on this side would speak further, that vehicles were purchased for the army, the price moved from \$10 million to \$110 million just to make a minor modification to the vehicles; vehicles imported and distributed by prominent supporters of the PNM. The Member for Caroni East has a passion to expose those matters so he would deal with that. Mr. Speaker, the shame is that they are decreasing the allocation to the Ministry of National Security to the sum of \$1,490,000. How much motorbikes could you buy with that? How much motorbikes and vehicles could be bought with that?

Mr. Speaker, no ambulance in the country today, they blame Chavez for that too. It is an interesting point because before the UNC was to be blamed. We have a crime problem in Trinidad and Tobago; the UNC is not supporting the Kidnapping Bill so it is to be blamed. We have a problem in the health service; well it is really the doctors to be blamed. We have a problem with guns in the country; it is Mr. Chavez to be blamed. This Government never assumed the responsibility for governing this country and while they do that they pilfer, on a daily basis, the resources of the State through an intricate web on conspiracy: setting up companies for benefits, campaign managers, campaign officials. In a weekly newspaper:

“Contractors payment and wages summary: Fyzabad PNM activists Charmaine Cummings one company...”

This really reads like the roll call of the general council of the PNM. This is a roll call of a party meeting, it is just that they put the names of firms and how many contractors they get. But I imagine this was just taken from the general council's attendance record.

Mr. Speaker, as if that was not bad enough the population heard that they are lowering the standards to get jobs in this country. While the UNC raised the



standard to get jobs they have lowered it. The UNC would have to return to that issue as soon as we are returned to office to govern this country, in the very short term, before 2007.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of young people with Grade I and Grade II certificates who cannot get a job in the public service; they cannot get a job to teach primary schools—entry level jobs. They have A'levels, Grade I's and Grade II's; they have studied hard and have passed their exams, now they could wake up in the morning and look in the newspapers and see somebody with Grade III would now be appointed and not those with the education and training. They are destroying the human resources of their own country because the talent of this country would go to waste and the people would migrate with that pattern of discrimination. [*Interruption*]

It is the pattern because they lowered the entry level to get into the Cabinet as well. We are told that a Minister—the fame of this Minister was experienced in the private sector working at Melville Shipping, whoever that Melville is. The Member for San Fernando West, my good friend, who was President of the Chamber of Commerce in San Fernando, unparalleled, two terms, a businesswoman, a leader; a captain in the private sector cannot make it to the Cabinet's door?

**Hon. Members:** Oh, oh. Oh, oh.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** But somebody from Melville Shipping reach—

**Mr. S. Panday:** This is the respect we are talking about—Diego Martin West—no respect for the Member for San Fernando West. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** That is the point. They have lowered standards to get into Cabinet. How could you explain the Attorney General collecting notes from investigators on a daily basis—and proud of it? How could you explain that from the Attorney General and other Ministers? This Attorney General said to the press that she is in touch with investigators. If she was not telling the truth she should be fired and if she was telling the truth, she should be fired. [*Desk thumping*]

In fact, in the last incarnation the Member for San Fernando East fired people by fax. He should now fire by text message. He should put all his Ministers on speed dial so if anything vibrates on their person it could be their letter of dismissal. [*Laughter*] He should really have a letter of dismissal as a template on his mobile phone and fire by text message through speed dial.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying all this to tell you that standards are falling in the public service; in the Government; in what it takes to run the country and this

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measure is designed for the collapse of standards. Those genuine employers, firms and business establishments that are engaged in legitimate and authentic training of our young people, may find no favour when they have to go to the Minister's door because maybe they did not contribute to oil sand or water tanks.

**Mr. Speaker:** The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired. Before I move the extension, by agreement, we would now take the condolences with reference to Mr. Carlton Kenneth Anthony Gomes, who died on Tuesday, 3rd June, 2003.

**CONDOLENCES**  
**(CARLTON KENNETH ANTHONY GOMES)**

**The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Mr. Speaker, Carlton Kenneth Anthony Gomes died on Tuesday last. He was a Member of Parliament and was first appointed to the Senate in October 1969 as a Parliamentary Secretary. Some of us here would remember that following the events of April 1970 when portfolios were realigned in the Government at that time, Mr. Gomes was appointed Minister of Education, in May of that year.

Prior to his advent to politics, he was a teacher and Research Officer, in the Educational Planning Unit, first in the Prime Minister's Office and then in the Ministry of Education and Culture. He actually spent 22 years in the public service. In the Ministry of Education and Culture, he was Secretary and Administrative Officer of the Board of Teachers' Training and National Examinations Council for Vocational and Technical Education. Later, he became Secretary of the Central Coordinating Committee of the ministry and, subsequently, editor of the ministry's monthly newspaper.

He is one of the gentlemen who was associated with the formation of the People's National Movement in 1956, when the Late Dr. Eric Williams first came on the scene. Carlton Gomes was relatively young at that time and was associated with those momentous events. He, therefore, has had a distinguished record within the political party also and the PNM owes him a debt of gratitude.

He was elected field officer of the movement in 1964 and he became, eventually, a member of the general council of the party and then a member of the party's central executive. He also served the PNM as a member of the disciplinary committee, a member of the entertainment committee and a member of the central elections committee. [*Interruption*] This was his contribution to the political life of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker.

When I came into Parliament in 1971, as a young man then, Mr. Carlton Gomes was the person on whom I relied for guidance and assistance. He was

always available in those difficult years when the politics within the PNM was a little more competitive than it is today, in some respects. Mr. Gomes is someone on whom I could have relied for advice, inspiration and guidance. The pitfalls that lay in the path of young politicians were many and so I developed a relationship with Mr. Gomes who, incidentally, was a contemporary of my father.

When Mr. Gomes left Parliament, I think it was in 1981, he pursued a life in publishing—he became a publisher of books; faithful to that education cause in which he served so many years of his life. I think that the politics of Trinidad and Tobago was enriched by the advent of Mr. Gomes to it and by the time that he served.

I would like to, on behalf of my colleagues on this side and I am sure I can speak for Members of this House, record our appreciation for Mr. Gomes, his life, and his contribution to the political and therefore economic and social development of Trinidad and Tobago.

May God bless his soul.

**4.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, we on this side join with the hon. Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East in extending sincere condolences to the family of Carlton Kenneth Anthony Gomes.

The hon. Member for San Fernando East has outlined the career of the former Member of Parliament Carlton Kenneth Anthony Gomes and, based on the record in the parliamentary library, it seems to indicate that Mr. Gomes was a research officer from 1964—1969 in the office of the Prime Minister. He was appointed a Senator in October 1969, a parliamentary secretary to the office of the Prime Minister in 1969, an ambassador to Jamaica in the 1980s, a Minister of Education and Culture from 1971—1974 and also from 1970—1975; and appointed a Minister in the Ministry of Finance, 1975—1976. Within the portals of the Parliament, Mr. Gomes was a Member of the House Committee in 1976 and 1978 and it appears he piloted many parliamentary bills during this period.

I merely want to indicate, to the appreciation of all, that Mr. Carlton Gomes, from my youthful recollection of him, in 1981, was closely tied—I think as an advisor—to the Organization for National Reconstruction. He was a close advisor to the then leader of the ONR, Mr. Karl Hudson-Phillips. It seems that he had seen the wisdom of leaving the PNM because they had abandoned the pathways of the 1956 model. Therefore, in his later years, he repented and sought forgiveness for his early period of involvement in the PNM.

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It is clear that having a very distinguished career in the public service, having a very solid family because he was married with four children—three sons and one daughter—Mr. Carlton Kenneth Anthony Gomes ended his later years in glory.

On behalf of all of us on this side and on behalf of the national community, we extend sincere condolences to his family in their bereavement.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair would also like to extend condolences to the family of the late Carlton Kenneth Anthony Gomes and I now invite Members to stand for a minute's silence in honour of his memory.

*The House stood.*

**Mr. Speaker:** The sitting of the House is now suspended for tea and will resume at 5.05 p.m.

**4.33 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.06 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we will now move the motion for an extension of time for the Member for Oropouche.

*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.

Before the tea break I was discussing the matter before us—a bill to amend the Income Tax Act—with two substantial provisions dealing with severance benefits to workers and the change in the responsibility for registering businesses for the purpose of being granted tax credits for training and apprenticeships systems and so on.

I made the point that the motive behind clause 4, to amend the ninth schedule to the Act by replacing the words “National Training Board” with “Ministry responsible for National Training Agency” is inconsistent with earlier policy directives from the previous government, which sought to replace “National Training Board” with the “National Training Agency” as the key institution with the human and technical capacity to register firms that provide apprenticeship training and so on for tax credit.

Just to trace this issue: it was in April 2002 that the government of the United National Congress agreed that a draft bill entitled The National Training Agency

Bill, 2000 would be submitted, for consideration, to the Parliament and noted that the draft bill sought to vest the assets of the Board of Industrial Training in the National Training Agency and to repeal the Industrial Training Act, Chap. 39:54, under which the said board was established.

In all official documents, for example a letter dated October 05, 2000 sent to Mr. Oliver Flax, Chairman of the Board of Industrial Training, the government of the day, the Minister of Training and Distance Learning informed the chairman that Cabinet had approved the Bill entitled the National Training Agency Vesting Bill, 2000; agreed that the Bill would be introduced in Parliament and noted that the Bill sought to provide for the vesting of property assets and rights of the Board of Industrial Training in the National Training Agency and to repeal the Industrial Training Act under which the board was established.

In July 2001, the then UNC Cabinet took a decision and agreed that the ninth schedule of the Income Tax Act, Chap. 75:01, be amended by changing “National Training Board” to “National Training Agency”. At no time did the then government consider that the responsibility for registering businesses and firms be placed in the hands of the minister. The policy was that the National Training Agency would take over from the National Training Board and there is a Cabinet decision to that effect. Now we are faced with this amendment that removes that authority from the National Training Agency to the Minister with responsibility, thereby politicizing the registration of firms and the issuance of certificates for the purpose of obtaining tax credit.

It will now become a political process where persons and firms will approach directly a politician, to benefit from that tax credit. The evidence suggests that this will lead to further corruption of the system, further discrimination, a further waste of money and it will undermine the delivery of training in Trinidad and Tobago.

The issue of training and education is a very serious one. In fact, the UNC should claim copyright on education. The government of the UNC was paranoid about education and training, making the necessary investment into school construction, changing the curriculum, dollar-for-dollar policy, education for all and the school-feeding programme. I am informed that in some schools in this country they have reverted to the bad old days where Hindu children are forced to stay without a meal because all the meals being served in schools in some localities are not appropriate. That is a matter I wish the relevant Minister would take up and not joke about it. As he is not a Hindu, he may laugh, but it is a very serious matter. The Minister with responsibility for that should look into it.

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The UNC placed a lot of emphasis on resources in education and training because they saw the role of education and training in an expanding economy, in creating a labour force that will take advantage of the new jobs that will come on stream by further industrial development in the energy sector, in the technology sector and in manufacturing. The country remembers us well for education for all; remembers well the technology. Under the UNC administration there was an expansion in our capacity to communicate and in the use of computers. We believed that IT was very important for the labour market and so we invested heavily in computers; we invested heavily in rural areas. Under the administration of the UNC, we built 25 new primary schools, more than 17 new secondary schools; 46 early childhood care centres.

In the sphere of telecommunications, in dealing with education and training, the UNC made major achievements. Telecommunications is a true indicator of national progress. As a growing nation, that reflects the expansion in our economy and economic growth.

Under the United National Congress, in November 1995, TSTT had 100 Internet customers. When the hon. Member for Couva North was sworn in for his second term in December 2000, there were 25,000 customers at TSTT—and that is TSTT alone, not the other providers.

In November 1995, 5,000 persons had cellular phones. When the Member for Couva North renewed his mandate in December 2000, 117,000 of our citizens had cellular phones. That tells us the achievement of the then government in creating and facilitating an environment for the growth of the telecom sector and training is integral for that sector. If we subject the processes that deliver training to young people to the politician, to political abuse, corruption and nepotism, we will not develop the labour force required in the new knowledge-based economy that we all talk about. It is a serious problem when they abuse training processes for political means—for kickbacks and so on. They undermine the delivery of training; they undermine the quality of the labour force and they undermine the whole thrust towards economic growth. That is a serious problem and one that I fear will emanate from the passage of this type of legislation that the Government brings to us. There is no transparency there. A person applies to the Minister.

I am eager for the Member for Diego Martin Central to explain to the honourable House why the change was made from National Training Agency to Ministry responsible for National Training Agency. It could not have been a legal issue. The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs had already vetted the policy. It could not have been a technical issue. The National Training Agency

has the technical capacity. Therefore, it must have been a political issue. We await that explanation.

The other issue revolves around the severance payments and benefits from tax credits. The Member for St. Joseph was at pains to point out that that is connected to Caroni (1975) Limited and an attempt to buy out the workforce down there by the appearance of another credit. This is also an opportune moment for the Government to come to this House and state its position clearly on matters dealing with severance payments, termination of employment, working conditions and so on.

Under the United National Congress, we understood well the limitations and constraints of the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, No. 32 of 1985. We understood the problem associated with that Act, which led to workers being retrenched and being unable to claim benefits. And so it was under the Ministry of Labour and particularly with the very good work of the Member for Nariva that the UNC government attempted to deal with this issue of severance payments and termination benefits by preparing and drafting a bill to repeal and replace the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act—a termination of employment Act.

We were drafting and redrafting and taking comments from the social partners and so on to present to the House a bill to address the weaknesses of the 1985 Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act. That is what we were about.

This an opportune moment for the Government to state categorically its position on the retrenchment and severance benefits. It is one thing to offer a tax credit to more workers of Caroni (1975) Limited to ship them out of Brechin Castle, but it is something else to address the plight of workers throughout Trinidad and Tobago who are today exploited, victimized and have no benefits to receive.

The Government should be telling us about their position on the Termination of Employment Bill, what changes are necessary, a timetable by which it will bring legislation—they need a legislative agenda, I guess, but there is none. Apart from all these amendments, there is no legislation coming forth. This is an opportune moment for the Government now to formulate an advanced policy on severance payments and retrenchment.

A lot of work was done on that bill by way of consultation, technical work at the Ministry and so on. The Bill sought to establish a fund for severance payments whereby employers would contribute towards a pool and, if circumstances are such that workers would be retrenched, they could access money from the fund. This is still a burning issue in Trinidad and Tobago that the Government must address.

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As the Member for Diego Martin Central admits, with all the plans for globalization and trade liberalization, they are planning for retrenchment and severance. It is no secret that people are losing their jobs all over this country, whether at BWIA, Caroni (1975) Limited, Port Authority, WASA—it appears now in the Cabinet room; wherever, they are losing their jobs. That is the sad realization under the PNM. That will happen under the PNM; we understand that.

The only employment that has been created in this country is within the community of criminals. That has expanded and if they would do some studies, they would see that they have created a lot of jobs in that sector—in drug trafficking, murder, kidnapping and so on—and they continue to attack us on not supporting the Kidnapping Bill.

Mr. Speaker, you ask the question, between 1995 and 2001, where was the Kidnapping Bill? What caused kidnapping? As I have said before, kidnapping is a PNM-made offence and they will have to deal with it and not blame Mr. Chavez. Severance payment to workers is a very serious matter and the Government should take stock of the increasing degree, in the labour market, to which workers are retrenched and made redundant. We expect that more and more workers will lose their jobs in the near future. There is a spillover effect from the job loss in the sugar industry. We do not expect the supermarket owner to be hiring a lot of attendants if the sugar workers who patronized the supermarket do not have money to shop there. We do not expect the service sector that supports sugar workers in different villages to be getting much work. Therefore, they will not hire many people and it would be left for the Government to play politics and discriminate by way of an array of public sector make-work type programmes.

What we are seeing is the “CEPEPization” of the labour market at all levels; not only at the lower level of cutting grass and painting stone, but at the highest level—make work—four Ministers of Finance, whereas before there was the Member for St. Joseph, one Minister of Finance. That is a make-work system at all levels. These are the matters before us.

There is no purpose in coming to the Parliament and seeking to mislead us with this discussion and report on Caroni (1975) Limited and what the UNC was going to do and not going to do. They should focus on what they are doing. For a moment, they should forget the UNC and what it was going to do or had planned to do. What are they doing? Do not mislead the House with all sorts of reports that the UNC wanted to close down.



Reports are dangerous. It is very dangerous to be quoting from reports because we do not know who are writing the information. We should be quoting from government policy documents, not from all reports. I have in my hand a report and if anybody wants to see it, I will show him the report. It says, at 4.30:

“The names of a number of small dealers and peddlers...”

—It deals with agriculture produce, Mr. Speaker—

“The names of a number of smaller dealers and peddlers throughout the country have been given to the Commission and these are recorded hereunder:”

and the first name:

“Unidentified young Syrian—owner of Queensway Store in Port-of-Spain purchases 1 kilo per month from Dole Chadee.”

When you read from reports like this, the names of a number of smaller dealers and peddlers throughout the country have been given to the commission and there is a long list of names—I will not read it. This report is dated 1987.

**Mr. Speaker:** Which report is that?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Extent of the Problem of Drug Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago, House Paper No. 2 of 1987.

The report states an unidentified young Syrian, owner of Queensway Store in Port of Spain, purchases one kilo per month from Dole Chadee. You cannot rely on reports. People can say anything in a report. That is the point I am making. There are dangers in just pulling a report and quoting left, right and centre. People can say anything, so we must be very careful in quoting reports. Quote from documents that are official; that are Cabinet documents, government documents and policy papers. Quote from newspapers as well. We can verify that. These reports that we are pulling from all over and cannot show, there is a danger in that.

I do not know any unidentified young Syrian. Mr. Speaker, you know that I am not at that level. The danger of misquoting reports and misleading is the point I wish to make. I say no more. I think the Member will think about that carefully.

What the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West also failed to inform the House was that Caroni (1975) Limited lacked the resources in its administration, in its Lands Division, to supervise the distribution of land to police squatting and so forth. This led recently to a scandal in the media of a very wealthy pastor taking possession of Caroni (1975) Limited's lands.

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The hon. Member for San Fernando East attended and launched his book and it is my understanding that when officials of Caroni (1975) Limited approached the pastor, he told the officials that they should ask his friend, the Prime Minister, how he got the land and that led to the entire problem. The Member for San Fernando East will speak about that himself.

This is the danger facing Caroni (1975) Limited. They do not have the manpower to police the lands and because of that, each week they have situations where people are going on their lands and squatting and they cannot move them. Unless they are bold enough to say that the Prime Minister put them there, then they go. They cannot supervise it.

We have a situation where they are now putting in place a committee made up of PNM candidates to distribute the land and they ask us to be reassured that it will be distributed in a fair and free manner and that those deserving will receive. The better method would be to invite the trade union they talk about so much—that they are always offering drink—the other stakeholders in agriculture, to be part of the board that will sit, consider and make decisions on land distribution. That would have been the sensible thing to do—not to put their candidates on the board. It would have been sensible to have all the stakeholders participating. That much you and I and the rest of this country will never see. They will never do anything to promote transparency, decency and ethics.

They will never implement the Equal Opportunity Commission. The purpose of the commission is to protect citizens from the PNM. They would not do that. At every point they will take action. Whatever they do, rest assured it will lead to some form of corruption and kickback.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture, responding to some questions admitted that some contracts awarded at Caroni (1975) Limited for a media campaign, were awarded to companies like All Media Projects, for example, headed by Astra Da Costa—I am reading from the *Newsday*, Thursday, May 22, 2003—and Alfred Aguiton.

I have had the good fortune to see the call card of Mr. Alfred Aguiton. He is Special Communications Advisor to the entire Government of Trinidad and Tobago, operating out of Whitehall. His firm just got the contract for public relations at Caroni (1975) Limited to put ads in the newspaper—another Lazarus. This is a pattern and we are a few months into their term of office. Local government election is upon us and the population will have the opportunity now to state clearly its position on this Government. This is a referendum on their lack of performance. They think they will go into the communities and put some oil

sand and water tanks here and there and get votes and then bring the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and PBP4 to terrorize voters. That is what they are about. But the local government election will speak for itself and state categorically whether we should blame Chavez or the Member for San Fernando East.

They have a lot of bravado. They go into Caroni and Chaguanas and speak about “licks like peas”. It is clear that they will be beaten badly in the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, in the Chaguanas Borough, in Sangre Grande, in Siparia and we have a surprise waiting for them in San Fernando. The people of San Fernando did not take too lightly to their member being bypassed for that appointment, so we expect to be returned there and we will, on election day, be celebrating a victory there.

Let them concentrate on giving oil sand in Ramai Trace and Soomai Trace and forget what is happening in San Fernando. They will get a rude awakening on the evening of the local government election. Those people, whom they were able to con prior to October 2002, have changed their minds. Let them continue to talk about UNC corruption. Every time they talk, Mr. Speaker, you would think they press “rewind”. They go back and start talking about 1987, 1997, 1999. People want to know about today. They do not want to know about 1995, 1996 and 1997 and increasingly, as they are exposed by the Opposition, the press and the national community, they are losing electoral support.

The Member for San Fernando East is himself carrying a few electoral handicaps on that side of the House. While they are doing that, Mr. Speaker they are losing support on the ground from members of their own party who are now up in arms and cannot accept the level of corruption in their own organization. I am confident that in the local government election the United National Congress will be returned with control of more corporations and more seats in all the corporations. I am very confident that the PNM will be resoundingly beaten in the local government election.

**Mr. Manohar Ramsaran** (*Chaguanas*): Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much. I am pleased to join this debate as the Government tries to increase the tax exemption and severance benefits from \$100,000 to \$300,000 and also to change the institution by which apprenticeship programmes should be registered from the National Training Board to the Ministry with responsibility for the National Training Agency.

When the Member for Diego Martin West presented this Bill, we listened to find out the reason for having the Bill and why it was being presented at this time.

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What is the spirit of the Bill and what does the Bill hope to achieve? I heard him ranting and raving about some businessmen having tax exemption and then the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West stood and spoke about Caroni (1975) Limited and the exemption.

I would like to ask a few questions and maybe at the end we could have some answers and then we will know what is happening here. When we look at what has happened since this administration has been in office over the last 18 months, we have seen the hiring of friends and relatives of the PNM and we wonder if this Bill is to prepare for their retrenchment.

If we look at the meaning of the words "tax exemption", the dictionary will tell you that it is "freedom". Maybe one day the people they have hired would be freed from the public service or they would not be liable for taxation, which is what this one would mean; and severance benefit is when you are separated from or divided from, cut off or you break off. I do not know which one would fit that Bill.

I want to go through some of the people hired by this administration to see if there is a link between this Bill and when the people would be gotten rid of from office. If we just go back a bit, we will see that the Public Relations Officer of the PNM, Rose Janniere, was appointed to the unadvertised post of Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. Her monthly salary is over, I am told, \$15,000 per month. When she is leaving that office, perhaps this Bill would attend to that.

When we look at the other one, we have jobs for husbands. Fritz Regis, husband of the Minister of Legal Affairs, Camille Robinson-Regis, has been appointed Security Consultant at WASA. I am trying to help the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central. When the Bill is passed and becomes law, there will be a channel to have a nice handshake at the end of their contracts.

We have ministers being appointed. I congratulate the Ministers appointed from those who are elected here. We feel sorry for the Member for Laventille West, the Member for Tunapuna, the Member for Tobago West, the Member for San Fernando West, the Member for St. Ann's East, the Member for Tobago East and the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. When we have the wife of the Prime Minister being appointed Minister of Education. When this person is leaving office, the person has to have this handshake. *[Interruption]* I do not know. I am trying to find out.

Then, we look at the other Ministers. *[Interruption]* I am asking questions. When he gets up, he will reply. We have other Ministers coming into government;

they, too, having not faced the polls. We have to feel sorry for the Member for La Brea. This Bill would have been piloted by him had he been retained as Minister for Tertiary Education, but he is retired.

We go on. We look at jobs for the boys. We have ex-minister, Overand Padmore, Special Advisor to the Minister of National Security. I do not know if he is still there. Maybe this Bill has come to make sure that when he leaves he too will be given that golden handshake.

There are ex-PNM minister, Cuthbert Joseph, Ambassador Extraordinary and Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs; ex-PNM minister, John Donaldson; PNMite Jerry Narace, and we can go on and on. Can the Minister explain the spirit of this Bill? What are we hoping to achieve? Maybe the questions are not relevant, but I think they are. PNM Deputy Leader, Nafeesa Mohammed, advisor to the Attorney General; ex-PNM minister, Barry Barnes, Government Advisor on energy matters.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am not sure where you are going. I do not think this has anything to do with the Bill. If you can establish your link, I will hear you.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, had you been listening to me, you would have heard me say that this Bill seeks to increase the tax exemption and severance benefits and these people were hired. Had the Minister explained the spirit of this Bill maybe I would not go through this, but I am asking if this Bill was created for these people to be given a golden handshake when they leave.

The ex-PNM advisor, Ken Julien—a name that has haunted us for many a year—is back; the ex-NAR minister, Herbert Atwell; ex-PNM mayor, Ashton Forde and we can go on. Today we come to Noel Garcia from NHA, Malcolm Jones from Petrotrin, Errol Grimes from WASA—I hope I can make the connection—these people came into office appointed by this administration, with hefty salaries. In most cases, these jobs were not advertised and they are not only being paid hefty salaries, but their departure has been planned for. Are there only a few people who benefit from the fat salaries being paid by the current administration?

We go on: ex-PNM mayor, Ashton Forde; PNMite, Alfred Aguiton; PNM executive councillor, Roodal Lalman employed by WASA. I hope that this will show the way forward as I continue my contribution.

We heard the Member for Diego Martin Central in his presentation say that they won the last election. We will never accept that. The last election was stolen by the people on that side. When we see the results of what they have done; when

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we see them reaping the whirlwind, we have to ask whether Trinidad and Tobago deserves this. Do we deserve headlines like “Ambush in the Night”, “One dead, Two Wounded: Blood in Movie Towne”? But more than that, there is blood on the hands of the PNM and the Prime Minister because it is known now by everybody that this religious organization was part of the PNM campaign at the last general election. They did not campaign peacefully as you and I would do. They used violence. They used everything at their disposal. We were told and we have good reason to believe that they were in Ortoire/Mayaro, San Fernando West armed to the teeth and debarring the people whom they believed would vote for the UNC.

We have to understand that this blood must fall squarely on the hands of the Prime Minister and I make no apology for saying that because we have not yet heard his condemnation. As a matter of fact, he said that the people are sorting out some personal thing that would end and the other people in the country would have nothing to worry about. Is this something that can give confidence to our society? When we come as parliamentarians and want power at all costs, this is dangerous. What is coming out today—murder.

I think that this has been, as my colleagues described it, a “Week in Review”. Over the last two days, I have heard two of the worst statements ever attributed to a Prime Minister in this country. One is that the average citizen has nothing to fear and, secondly, that guns came into our country when there was unrest in Venezuela. There was unrest in Venezuela, so guns flew through Trinidad and Tobago

Mr. Speaker, I know you would have some good friends who would have a party next door. If they are drinking next door, you have to get drunk home, so we have to be careful about that. That is a dangerous thing to say and Members if they do not condemn those statements publicly, they have to do so privately. I am sure that President Bush, whose statements have been quoted from time to time in the various newspapers, would look like a rose when compared to the Prime Minister. He must be careful about his statements.

I can only say that these statements come from a desperate and an incapable Prime Minister. He has now shown that he does not have the ability to lead. How could he blame another country for what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago?

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not see the relevance. That kind of argument was raised earlier in the debate. Please get back to the Bill.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** I heard so many things in the debate this afternoon, and I was taking note, so that if I go to respond to all of these, it will show you from where I am coming.

I listened carefully to the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's East. I am not criticizing your ruling, but everything was on Caroni (1975) Limited and the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA) and I am just responding.

Let me go quickly into the "bad Johnism" and the introduction of some of these same programmes that the Minister spoke about, for example Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). I want to put this on record in case people misunderstand us—as they do from time to time. We have nothing against the CEPEP workers. I did some mathematics based on the figures that we are seeing in the newspapers and admitted by the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's East. He has one CEPEP gang in his constituency. One contractor who, maybe, is getting \$400,000 handles that gang. When I did my mathematics, the normal CEPEP gangs, four in a constituency, receive \$1,400—\$700 per fortnight. Multiply that by 10 persons in one gang, that is \$14,000. Multiply that by four for four months, that is \$56,000. Multiply that again to make sure that the correct number of persons are paid for, \$158,000. The average money being paid per contractor is \$400,000.

Where is the balance of money going? That is the question. When the Member for San Fernando West talked about entrepreneurs and businessmen, they were trying to fool the public. They are the businessmen. Far from the truth, the people who are stealing the Government's money are the contractors.

I want to go to *The Probe*. *The Probe's* investigation disputes the Minister's claim. The Minister said that this is a fair selection process and the next time—this is what is frightening about this Government—they will do it again. They have no regard for the way people feel in this country. They do not understand that people have worth. The Minister said that this is a fair selection process and the next time they are recruiting contractors, they would do the same thing. Mr. Speaker, is this not scary? Let me go through some of the contractors.

#### **5.50 p.m.**

We have to let you know we are not against the people in blue. Again, my friend alluded to it; that a police station and a school are in the same building. The Government has these people in blue clothes. When you go to my friend's constituency in Arouca North, people who reside there also wear blue clothes.

Mr. Speaker, what are we preparing our nation for? Just to be prisoners? You can see people in blue all about the place. The first time my constituents saw CEPEP gangs they came to me and said they have to congratulate the PNM. I said to them why? They said the Government has the prisoners working real hard. This is the signal they are sending to people?

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Let me go on to some of the contractors:

“Environmental Enhancers Ltd. – Horace Gordon”

We all know who Horace Gordon is. I want to put this on the record. This is a newspaper of today's date. I am sure in a couple of days this would be history, but the contents would be recorded in the *Hansard* of Trinidad and Tobago.

“Environmental Improvement Company Ltd. – Fyzabad activist Charmaine Cummings, chairman of PNM Naparima constituency, \$387,533.51

G.P. Maintenance Limited – St. Clair Williams, San Fernando East activist, \$404,691.18

High Place Enterprises Ltd. - Stanley Butcher,...

A good friend of Dr. Fuad Khan of Barataria/San Juan.

“\$569, 500.40

A.E. Rasolli Maintenance Services Limited—”

I am sure you are hearing this for the first time, Sir because you do not want to read *The Probe* so I would read it for you.

“Marva Bostic...”

A popular person. She is a television star.

“San Fernando West, \$542,173.37

Answer Maintenance Limited – Ainsley Matthews...”

Again, San Fernando West. No reason the Member for San Fernando West got up and left.

“\$404,606.29

Beckles Environmental Services Limited – Lionel Beckles, \$503,688.76

Benchmark Environmental Services Limited – Brian Beckles, \$409,616.95...”

Two Beckles in a row. Someone mentioned to me that they are the father and brother of the Member of Parliament for Arima.

Mr. Speaker, when these things happen in a country, this is what leads to anarchy. When we get up here to speak, we want people to listen. We are not here to criticise for criticism sake; we are here to make sure that we do not hear statements such as: “This is a fair selection process and the next time we are



recruiting contractors, we will do the same thing.” This must change. Someone must get up and say it will change.

“Cut-Clean And Clear Maintenance Services Ltd. – Kathy Ann Cardinal Austin, PNM Sando West activist, \$410,633.64”

Mr. Speaker, have you realized how many San Fernando West we have heard already? I am sure in your time you never heard about this.

“Danavin Company Limited – Alvin Reeves, S’do City Councillor, PNM, \$427,149.17”

The Member for Port of Spain North has only one CEPEP contract and I am sorry for him. Maybe he does not care about his constituents otherwise he would have had more.

“Divya Enviro Ltd. – Prakash Persad, Manideo Persad’s brother, \$320,824.85”

That was the smallest so far, but still he, too, is sharing in the wealth.

“M/S Community Maintenance Limited – Mac Donald Padmore, PNM Barataria activist \$365,399.33”

Do you know what is happening? The Member alluded that when it is in our constituencies somebody on our side would benefit. I want to tell the Member that the UNC Members of Parliament have been told, especially by the Member for Arouca North, that URP is his property and we must not even come too close. He, too, cannot go close. He tried to go to Laventille and he was chased.

Let me move on:

“Marryshow Maintenance Services Limited – Jennifer Marryshow, PNM Councillor, Marabella \$393,342.09”

**Mr. Narine:** Would the Member give way?

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, I continue to show—

**Mr. Speaker:** Are you asking the Member to give way?

**Mr. Narine:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not know if he is giving way, so—

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** When I am finished I will sit and you will talk.

“Patchiff Industrial Services – Patrick Clifford, Sando East activist, dad – ex-mayor, Sando, \$349,168.55

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Roopy's Contracting Services Ltd. – Roopchand Balliram & Phillip Salazar, Siparia Regional Corporation councillors,”

We heard the Members for Port of Spain North and Diego Martin Central say they won the last election. The Members for Port of Spain North and St. Ann's said they are coming to win the Chaguanas seat. With this? They have to come better than that. I am putting on record that the constituents of the Members on this side know what it is to have determination. The Member said it this evening; we have guts. We are going to make sure that nothing such as this could come in and take our people.

“Sarah Maintenance Company Limited – Jameel Mustapha, Nafeesa's campaign manager, gave evidence against Fuad Khan at EBC, \$423,010.44”

Pay back time.

“South West Development Agency – Beville Simotette, activist/dad former general secretary, \$366,139.87”

**Mr. Sharma:** Shameless! Racists!

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** “The Maintenance Advantage Co. Ltd. – Peter Marine,”

I heard that name recently.

“PNM Mayaro activist, \$386,007.63”

Recently, he was caught in some wrongdoing and the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro allegedly went to the police station and freed him—

shades of Patrick Solomon.

“Thompson Loney Maintenance Services Ltd. – Sharon Thomas-Loney, secretary of Sando West constituency,”

San Fernando West is way ahead, they have six contracts. They have to look at themselves. Maybe it is not good to be in a safe seat.

“\$336,340.15”

Mr. Speaker, when Members get up and talk about these social programmes, I have to respond. Social programmes are not to keep our people in captivity. They are not to let our people remain in bondage. As my colleague was alluding all evening; we have passed that stage of being immigrants or enslaved. We have to be freed. To be free we must be freed from these programmes.

Today I saw, to my dismay—we spoke about them in the budget, they now have new names, but a soup kitchen is a soup kitchen. The Government is condemning the people to a life of handouts. The Government wants to talk about pride and getting out of poverty, but there are soup kitchens? CEPEP workers are paid \$1,400 per month. I would give the Member for Port of Spain North \$1,400 to buy groceries and he would realise that he cannot do it.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission I want to just read one or two more lines, please:

“Rennie Dumas may just have to eat his words.”

Of course, that is the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment. This is an interesting one.

“All CEPEP contractors registered by: Boynes & Co. Market Space Ltd.”

I do not know if that has anything to do with my friend from Toco/Manzanilla.

“Stanley Butcher (The name Stanley Butcher is listed as the principal of High Place Enterprises Ltd., which has also received a CEPEP contract of \$569,500).

Market Space Ltd. principals include:

Jackie Lazarus;”

I want the Member to listen to this one because I know he was a young Syrian a few years ago. Now he is a good strong Syrian.

“Jackie Lazarus; Charmaine Baptiste – also reportedly has \$800,000 a year contract for paysheets for all 110 companies”

**Mr. Sharma:** What is the PNM doing to this country?

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** When contacted on that issue, Lazarus refused comments, referring all ‘media queries’ to her managing director, Charmaine Baptiste.

“Lazarus is a top ranking PNM activist and campaign manager for Diego Martin East MP, Dr. Keith Rowley, who was labelled The Corruption Buster, after he swore to go after wrongdoing in public office during the United National Congress (UNC’s) tenure in office.”

Mr. Speaker, this is what I am worried about. This was the UNC’s corruption buster and today he is as corrupt as anybody on that side. I am sure when history is written, that person would join the ranks of the late John O’Halloran. This is why I fear people who talked about corruption when they were on this side. I always say to myself: an evil mind sees evil. Today I am convinced that the

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Member for Diego Martin West is as guilty as they come with this contract. Today he is given the opportunity to get up and say that he has nothing to do with his campaign manager and her corrupt dealings. Of course, he did not say anything; he kept his seat.

When the Member Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about winning the election and coming to Chaguanas, I want to tell him whenever he is coming to Chaguanas he has to come clean. He has to tell the people why he did nothing for 47 years. Why suddenly he wake up and now remember Chaguanas and Central Trinidad? I would not go there?

I am told by my colleagues that a plot is going on in the back there. There is a private meeting of the Members of Parliament for Laventille West, Diego Martin East and Diego Martin West in the Chamber. I want to compliment the Member for Arouca North when he spoke about the social programmes. The Member of Parliament for Arouca North was seen on national television telling some youths: "All yuh do something better nah, all yuh want to dig drains de rest of yuh life?"

I want to commend the Member for Arouca North, because this is what the UNC was doing for the last six years. He has been a good student. What the Member did not say, and I would say it for him this evening—he could have gone to the people and said: "I cannot give you any URP jobs because they are all ghost gangs, controlled by my gang leader friends of the Prime Minister."

**Dr. Khan:** Community leaders.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Community leaders, friends of the Prime Minister. He would have been exonerated, but he attempted to take the blame as a giant. He was almost manhandled as we saw on the television because he was trying to save face of his political leader. This is what is happening in this country. This is why I tell him—he gave me an answer today. He said that there were eight or nine gangs in the Chaguanas constituency—that these are gangs in name. This is what we call ghost gangs.

Maybe if the Member told me that this Bill deals with all the massive retrenchment that is taking place in the country, I would not have been on my leg. When we debated the topic of severance—I want to draw this to the attention of the hon.—I do not know who is the Minister of Finance because when papers are laid we see the hon. Prime Minister and we would see the Member for Diego Martin Central who, it is said, is a junior minister. We now have Christine Kangaloo who is a minister—I am confused. We are debating the topic of severance. I wish to draw to Members' attention to how this Government

operates: on March 31, 2003 40 data input operators at the Customs and Excise Division were viciously and suddenly given marching orders prior to any warning. This callous action has thrown several families on the breadline.

Mr. Speaker, these workers have not received one cent of their severance, nor any form of intended re-employment. I also wish to inform you that the same day the workers were sent home, the computer system at the Customs and Excise Division crashed. This is another issue; related, but another issue. This is a strange coincidence indeed; we subsequently heard that the manual system is more efficient than the computerized system. This is the PNM. They talk about encouraging people to study with the computer. Here we have the Customs and Excise Division, which was one of the first divisions in the country to be computerised. The Member for Caroni East, Mr. Ganga Singh, worked with us temporarily in the early 1980s. He was there when computers were introduced in that division. This shows how long we have computers in that division. Today, the Government wants to tell me that the manual system is more efficient than the computerized system. How could the Minister explain that? I would give way if the Member could explain that. He is pretending that he is not hearing. These workers continue to suffer since they have not been re-employed. I am speaking about the 40 data input officers at the Customs and Excise Division who have been fired and sent home. This clearly demonstrates that the PNM is anti-worker and does not really care about the people.

If the Minister says there is mass retrenchment in the country and we have to introduce this Bill, I have no problem with that. We heard that 1,000 out of 9,000 Caroni (1975) Limited workers would benefit from this Bill. The next 8,000 would not benefit, so it cannot be the Caroni (1975) Limited workers. The Minister is not interested in 1,000 Caroni (1975) Limited workers so as to prepare a Bill for them.

Mr. Speaker, what about the BWIA workers? We read in today's newspapers that the BWIA workers were told by the Minister—we get conflicting reports—when things are going in a certain way at BWIA, boo we will hear the Minister say BWIA is a private organization and the Government has nothing to do with that. Last night I heard him say that they fired the CEO and someone else would be put in charge of operations and accounting. Suddenly he is back in charge. I want the Minister to explain what he meant when he said that the Government has to cut the staff.

Mr. Speaker, I got a note from Petrotrin which was hurriedly written. This is what happened today: Mr. Agard, the Vice-President of human resources who is

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also of WASA fame has been victimizing all East Indians in Petrotrin, Trinmar and Santa Flora. Mr. Agard who is also the Deputy Chairman of WASA said that he is responsible for ethnic cleansing.”

That is what he said.

**Mr. Speaker:** Could you name the document from which you are quoting?

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** As I said, it was briefly written. This is not my handwriting. He said he is responsible for ethnic cleansing. People who have been purported to support the UNC have been put on notice that they will be removed. As we speak, new measures are being instituted to have these individuals terminated from their substantive posts. Some of these names are: Peter Mckayal, Suresh Bachan and Suresh Lackan.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister came to this House to tell us that they are putting the tax exemption and severance benefits because they want to lay off people all over the country. They want to make sure they are given marching orders so that they can clean the country of persons who support the UNC. We will quarrel but we accept it. The Government cannot come here and disguise—once something is disguised today; the people will find out tomorrow. As fate would have it, I got this note this afternoon so that we can know what is happening at Petrotrin.

Mr. Speaker, we looked at what is happening in the different areas of BWIA. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West spoke a lot about agriculture. He used the word “shame” 21 times. Under his watch, and the watch of previous Ministers of Agriculture in the PNM, we saw where—my friend alluded to it—election is first, everything else comes after. There was house padding in St. Joseph. Under his watch, there was the transfer of prime agricultural lands to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and the National Housing Authority. There are persons who are displaced and protesting for their lands that they use to do agriculture. They are being imprisoned and arrested. They claim there was a line—I remember in the old days, if one crossed that line they would be in trouble. This is what we are seeing. One person crossed the line, maybe without knowing, and that person was arrested. What do we hear from this side? Nothing.

The Minister is talking about agriculture. The best lands along the East-West Corridor are now being turned away from agriculture into housing. Let me remind the Minister of what he said: there are 300,000 acres of land belonging to Caroni (1975) Limited. There are areas such as Carlsen Field, Wallerfield and other areas which are not productive areas. The Minister could build houses there and encourage the country to grow. What are we seeing? It is a question of house

padding. It does not happen in St. Joseph. We were reliably informed that between the constituency of Chaguanas and Caroni Central, there is a huge expanse of land which would be used for the next housing development. I want to warn the other side that the game is coming to an end. We are seeing what is happening. The people of this country will not sit by and allow this to continue. We have a modern media. We have many daily and weekly newspapers and television and radio stations. No one will sit by and allow the PNM to come into their territories and bring people from other parts of Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere to pad in our constituencies. We will make sure—we are asking everyone to be on the alert. If the Government could succeed with its housing development in St. Joseph, let the people from St. Joseph be the ones to get the houses and we will support you. Everyone would have to sign that because we cannot trust one minister.

I have a problem with the fact that a minister is given the responsibility for the National Training Agency. Had it been the Member for La Brea, who was in charge of the National Training Agency, maybe we would think about it, but we do not know who the minister would be. The Explanatory Note says:

“This Bill seeks to change the institution with which the apprenticeship programmes should be registered, from the National Training Board to the ministry responsible for the National Training Agency.”

We are giving all these apprenticeship programmes—the Minister boasted that he gave out forms. Suppose we have a Minister who is biased. Let us say it is the Member for Arouca South; this is just an example, I do not mean her personally—and we have all these apprenticeship programmes being brought to her attention. Let us say she does not like persons south of Caroni or east of Tunapuna and she says no to these registrations, what happens to our young people? I object. We have to be careful of giving ministers all this responsibility especially in today’s world. We have to be careful of who we hand power to. A board appointed by Cabinet is good enough, but once it is given to the hands of a minister—we have seen their track record. Despite all the allegations of corruption, we have Minister Dumas saying this is a fair selection process and the next time they are recruiting contractors they will do the same thing. Are we blind? Are we that foolish to tell another minister to handle the registration for our young people? The Government thinks we would just come here and applaud that? The Government cannot be trusted. We cannot allow them to come to this House and take advantage of us.

Mr. Speaker, if I go back quickly to the Customs and Excise matter—I want to put this on record—there was a meeting with the PSA, I have all the documents

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here, where the President, Mrs. Baptiste-Primus, was at the meeting and announced that the new Comptroller of Customs would be Mr. Fitzroy John. He is midway on the customs seniority list. The Customs and Excise Division is one department where seniority would work. When the officers asked her how is it that someone that low on the list would be appointed the Comptroller of the Customs and Excise Division, her answer was that Mr. Manning said so. They said if the Public Service Commission would appoint the first person, who is Kemkharan Jagram, Mr. Manning will veto it. As we go down the line there are other names, but Mr. Manning would reject them. With that kind of rejection, four years would pass with no comptroller. It is a long process to go through over 100 names. *[Interruption]* I did not have to go through any. I chose my field. I came here and faced the electorate. I did not bully anybody or pull political strings. *[Interruption]* I came into politics and here I am in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, thanks to the people of Chaguanas. I did not climb anybody's back.

Today, when I speak to you, I am not beating my chest. For the last three elections I have received the largest number of votes in Trinidad and Tobago. It is my name, I could claim it. I want the Minister to tell this honourable House that they would go according to the dictates of the Public Service Commission and appoint the comptroller, as recommended by the Public Service Commission. That is how it is done. When Mr. John's turn comes, he would be the Comptroller of the Customs and Excise Division. We have no problem with that, but we cannot have this political patronage throughout the country, whether it is at Petrotrin or WASA. I think the Government is overstepping its bounds by going to a public service-appointed position and trying to buck it because the Prime Minister has veto power. Whenever we are talking about retrenchment and severance benefits we have to understand that. This is on record.

Mr. Speaker, this is the circular memorandum which advertised the position of Comptroller of Customs which was dated.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have given you extensive coverage. I have listened to you but I am yet to see what the Comptroller of Customs and Excise Division has to do with this. Please, could you get back to the Bill. You have two minutes left of your normal speaking time.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Maybe I misunderstand what severance benefits are. If I am deviating I want to apologize. This has to do with the retirement of our present Comptroller of Customs and Excise Division and the filling of the vacancy. It also has to do with termination of services. That is why I put on the table that the meaning of severance is when one is separated, cut off, broken off or put out of a



division. I checked the meaning of the word in the dictionary. That happened to our present comptroller of customs and a replacement was needed. I thought it could be linked. If I am mistaken, so be it.

The final point I want to put on record is that this circular was dated March 27. The closing date for the application was April 30 and this document was received by the Customs and Excise Division on April 30. No one in the Customs and Excise Division applied for this job because this application came too late. As far as I know, only one person applied for the job. Is this not discrimination and interfering with the laws of our country? I want the Minister to tell me when he is winding up this evening. I want him to put the record straight. If I have any fears that are unfounded, he can tell me that. I could talk to the customs officers and tell them that they have nothing to fear.

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

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

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** I got away this time, but I do not think I would be using the full 30 minutes. Mr. Speaker, I jotted a few points while the Members on the other side were speaking. When people say they do not trust us on this side, I, too, have the same problem, I cannot trust the Members on that side. I cannot have this Bill dealing with the National Training Agency managed by a minister. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about "I truses nobody from the UNC". I thought this was very interesting. We also have a certain language coming from the Minister of Education. I would not repeat that word. This evening we have the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West talking about "truses".

I want to ask one or two questions before I take my seat. I want the minister to answer me. Again, these are questions that are bothering the people from Caroni. How many houses did the Government give to John Williams? We know the answer. How did he qualify to get these houses that belonged to Caroni (1975) Limited? *[Interruption]* I do not want to go into questions this evening because things have been going quite well in the latter part of the evening.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources spoke of our boycotting a function where the Minister was supposed to attend. I was invited to this function at the Bank of Nova Scotia at 6.30 p.m. for an official ceremony. The invitation indicated that it was a short ceremony which would be completed by 7.30 p.m., followed by cocktails. I got there at 6.45 p.m., thinking I was late.

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The Mayor came a couple of minutes before me. We sat together, only to be told that the Minister was in the Senate and would be arriving very late. We waited, people milled around. When persons come to this House and mislead people, we have to understand what is their integrity. How could they make such accusations? I had another appointment at 8.00 p.m. We left there at 7.55 p.m. and the goodly Minister, Christine Sahadeo, did not arrive at the people's function. The function started—[*Interruption*] Is there no one else? We have other Ministers of Finance. That is the disrespect the Government shows to the people of Chaguanas and they want to win this seat.

**Mr. Speaker:** I fail to see the relevance. The Minister spoke about something in the constituency of Oropouche. He was talking about that in the context of agriculture. What you are referring to is the opening of a bank. What is the nexus?

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, I am answering directly. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's East said the Mayor of Chaguanas and the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas ran away when they heard the Minister of Finance, Christine Sahadeo, was coming to open the bank in Chaguanas. Check the *Hansard* you will see that. I am responding to him.

**Mr. Speaker:** If that is so, I apologize. Continue.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** You have plenty—anyway. This is what happened. When the Minister came there at 7.55 p.m. we had to leave to attend the other function. When I found out the other day, I heard she came very late in the evening, yet the bank manager allowed her to cut the ribbon. We did not leave and run away. When persons come to this honourable House—we call it honourable House and we have honourable Members—they must speak the truth.

We heard the Member say that we are not attending functions. This is a democratic country and if someone invites us we are free to accept or reject. We are not bound by any statute to attend any function in our constituencies. We have to put the record right. I want to let the Members of this House know that when we come to this Parliament to seek to increase tax breaks we must not behave as if the break that is being given to the people who deserve it, is a gift. This is the money of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. When there is something dealing with money, it must be explained properly; whether it is a tax break or gift. We must come to this Parliament and ensure that when the Members are presenting the Bill, it is explained to us. They should make us understand what it is about so we might support the Bill without asking so many questions.

I want to end by saying let us consider, at the committee stage, the question of the ministry. This could be a dangerous precedent. We have many boards in this

country which are under the supervision of ministers. One such example is the National Insurance Board (NIB). If we say that the minister is responsible for the operations of the NIB, what we are doing is in fact going back to the days of central command. We have to be careful how we approach that.

As we move on into our global economy, we must have trust and encourage our chairmen of boards. We must give them some free way and will so that they can become better managers. We may have ministers who may not know about this field, but there may be a gentleman or lady who may be well qualified to do the job. It is better left for the board to determine what they do. They should be under the chairman of the board, rather than the minister.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I am tempted to say I beg to move. I think there are one or two issues of relevance—not really of relevance, but there has been—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** You need to put the record straight.

**Hon. K. Valley:** That is what it is. We started with the former Minister of Finance who demonstrated clearly this afternoon why he generally keeps silent. His contribution this evening demonstrated that he had very little to say. Perhaps, he was forced to speak in this debate. More importantly, he was so way out, that my colleague from St. Ann's West was able to catch him in the slips. He spent most of his time in his contribution lamenting the fact that the Government would be retrenching, he says, 9,000 employees of Caroni (1975) Limited, failing to mention that, in fact, some of them would be rehired as we move from the 100,000 to 70,000. He neglected, most importantly, to make the point that he approved a report, the effect of which was to retrench 14,700 workers; the doublespeak and lack of credibility that we see so often. He gets up immediately after me and says that I said that this severance bill was for the benefit of employers. I do not know how he got there. He goes on to make the point that no, the severance bill has nothing to do with what I said; it has to do with Caroni (1975) Limited, it is only about Caroni (1975) Limited. It shows the simple-mindedness of the individual. Why are we retrenching persons at Caroni (1975) Limited? Why are we reducing the levels at Caroni (1975) Limited? Is it not a question of globalization? Is it not a question of liberalization? Is it not a fact that Caroni (1975) Limited cannot compete in the world market as he himself said in his report?

**Hon. Member:** Who is he?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Sorry, the Member for St. Joseph. He is dealing with it at this simple level and does not make the connection with the bigger picture. One

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wonders—Caroni (1975) Limited is merely symptomatic. The severance amendment is to really send a signal, as I said, demonstrating a sensitivity of the Government. As I said, it points the way to what is generally called a trade assistance programme which applies from January 01. It means also that the BWIA employees can rely on it because they, too, are affected by the global situation. We make the point that it is necessary and it is for the worker not the employer.

My colleague dealt with the Caroni (1975) Limited situation. Whereas I attempted to put the thing in an international context, my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, dealt with the application of this general principle to the specific case of Caroni (1975) Limited. Do you understand that?

Then he goes on another tangent and argues. It is not simply that the connotation is the same in the two instances, we are talking about the Revenue Stabilisation Fund. Because we talk about the Regional Stabilization Fund he said we do not care about the Revenue Stabilization Fund. We made the simpler point that does it really make sense? Do you think you can fool anyone if, at the same time you are borrowing money, you are putting moneys aside in the Revenue Stabilization Fund?

At present, I will tell you what is happening at the Ministry of Finance because we are asking that question. Critically, the important issue is that yes, when the IMF and the World Bank say you need a revenue stabilization fund when oil prices are high, what they really telling you to do is to ensure that you do not get out of hand. In other words, with that extra revenue, you ought to have a surplus; you ought not to be borrowing. One has to look at the expenditure side and keep that in check. It is not a question that you could allow expenditure to run away and simply say we have put money in a revenue stabilization fund so you borrow money at 15 per cent and put it in a revenue stabilization fund in which you are earning 5 per cent. That is what the UNC was doing.

Consider that against the Regional Stabilization Fund. Again, the Member noted the fact that the other countries are important to us. Their needs are important but small in comparison to Trinidad and Tobago. They are asking, just the same way we make a contribution to the International Monetary Fund—as we do and as the former Minister is aware—for countries in the world if they have a difficulty, the same way in Caricom, they are saying let us put a fund together, so should a member country experience some difficulty, we can assist that country, but Trinidad and Tobago went further than that. While that fund has taken an IMF approach, the Trinidad and Tobago Government has established what we call a

Caricom Support Programme, in which we have put \$100 million for technical assistance and for studies, to avoid the country getting in a position where it will have to use the Regional Stabilization Fund. We are going before and assisting the country in technical work so that it will not get in a situation where it has to use its stabilization fund.

Then, who was it? Chubby, the Member for Oropouche—the Estate Management Company. He takes issue with putting Farad Khan—a former candidate of the PNM—with our putting him on the board of the Estate Management Company. Oblivious as it were that his party in government put the losing candidate from Diego Martin Central, Jennifer Kernahan, as the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. While he is saying that he is in charge of Caroni (1975) Limited state land, the lady was in charge of all state lands—a losing candidate. *[Interruption]* What do you know? All those toys you walk with, what do you know?

Mr. Speaker, there is a lack of credibility with which the Members opposite approach issues. I think he already spoke on state policy on severance. Again, as though he missed what I was saying. The Government is moving/designing a trade assistance programme. In a trade assistance programme, the company would ensure that the severance is paid to a retrenched worker; coming out from a fall in the business of the company or imports. More than that, the Government would provide for retraining perhaps, or income support for the employee for some period of time to make the transition to the new industry. We are at present designing that programme. The Government is clear that in this environment, that providing adequate severance is of critical importance.

There are two other issues and customs. The Member for Chaguanas spoke about the Customs and Excise Division. It is not the first time that the Comptroller of Customs and Excise Division is being appointed. The Member was in the Cabinet. I want to ask him whether his government followed the hierarchy? Did his government follow the hierarchy? *[Interruption]* Yes, I will give way.

**Mr. Ramsaran:** The Comptroller of Customs who was appointed under the UNC was number three on the list. We appointed him because the others would have retired within six months.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Oh Lord, have mercy. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Constitution provides for veto of the Prime Minister. It was placed there to allow the Prime Minister the right to look for someone who he feels could do the job. It has nothing to do with political favour. There are US consultants at the Customs and Excise Division who are advising Government on this matter and that is the reality.

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Those are the few issues. I had to fight to find issues to which I could respond. I am happy to have brought this legislation here. I commit that, hopefully before the end of the year, we will return to the Parliament with a full-fledged trade assistance programme as a critical part of our programme of integration of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago into the global environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

*House in committee.*

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

*Clause 4.*

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

**Mr. Sharma:** Mr. Chairman, with respect to clause 4, the Minister gave an explanation that the ministry would become responsible. What obtained in the past worked very well. This is not PNM country. Anything to kill time.

**Mr. Valley:** *[Interruption]* Yes, correctly said. Ask Minister Sahadeo.

**Mr. Sharma:** You could run but you cannot hide.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to, That the Bill 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 Monday, June 16, 2003 at 1.30 p.m. In doing so, I want to inform my colleagues on the other side that on that day we would do the report of the Finance Committee which met earlier today, as well as the Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation Bill.

*Adjournment*

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**Mr. Speaker:** Before I move the motion for the adjournment, I would like to inform you there were two matters on the adjournment, both of which have been withdrawn.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.47 p.m.*

**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Mr. Selwyn Richardson  
(Status Report on Investigation)**

**116.** Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*) asked the Minister of National Security:

Would the Minister please give a status report on the investigation into the murder of former Attorney General Selwyn Richardson?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

**The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean):** This honourable House is advised that Mr. Selwyn Richardson, former Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, was murdered on June 20, 1995. Enquiries were conducted by the police and statements were recorded from relevant persons. The two suspects were murdered.

Since there is no statutory limitation to the offence of murder, the case remains open. Therefore, any forthcoming evidence regarding the murder of Mr. Richardson and the two individuals suspected of his murder will be pursued by the police.

**National Carnival Commission  
Carnival Celebrations 2003  
(VIP Section)**

**117.** Mr. Chandresh Sharma asked the Minister of Culture and Tourism: Could the Minister provide this House with:

- (c) a list of persons issued tickets by the National Carnival Commission for the VIP section of the Queen's Park Savannah during Carnival celebrations 2003; and
- (d) the total cost of hosting guests and others in the VIP section?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

**The Minister of Culture and Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams):**

In respect of Carnival 2003, following is the list of persons who were issued tickets by the National Carnival Commission for the VIP section:

H.E. President A.N.R Robinson and Party

The Honourable Prime Minister Patrick Manning & Party

The Honourable Penelope Beckles, Minister of Culture & Tourism and Party

The Honourable Edward Hart, Minister in the Ministry of Culture & Tourism and Party

Chief Justice Mr. Sat Sharma and Guests

Chairman, NCC and Guests

NCC Commissioners and Guests

Mr. Bertie Marshall and Guest

The Honourable Barendra Sinanan and Guests

Dr. the Honourable Linda Baboolal and Guests

Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean and Guests

The Honourable Hedwige Bereaux and Guest

Sen. The Hon. Rawle Titus and Guest

Cabinet Ministers/Members of Government and Guests

Hon. Kenneth Valley

Hon. Keith Rowley

Hon. Colm Imbert

Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis

Hon. Roger Boynes

Hon. Franklyn Khan

Hon. Eulalie James

Hon. Diane Seukeran



*Written Answers to Questions*

*Friday, June 06, 2003*

Hon. Stanford Callender  
Hon. John Rahael  
Hon. Eric Williams  
Hon. Lawrence Achong  
Hon. Jarrette Narine  
Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid  
Hon. Anthony Roberts  
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds  
Mrs. Eudine Job-Davis  
Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning  
Sen. The Hon. Lenny Saith  
Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams  
Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph  
Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano  
Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enil  
Sen. The Hon. Howard Chin Lee  
Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas  
Sen. The Hon. Christine Kangaloo  
Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift  
Sen. The Hon. Satish Ramroop  
The Honourable Basdeo Panday and Guest  
Head, Diplomatic Corps and Guest  
His Worship the Mayor: Murchison Brown and Guests  
Gerard Ferreira and Guests  
Elvin Edwards and Guest  
Francis Bertrand and Guest

Orlando Nagessar and Guest  
Chief Secretary, THA Mr. Orville London and Guest  
Permanent Secretaries and Guests  
Mrs. Z. Rajnauth  
Mr. Lester Efebo Wilkinson  
Mr. Leroy Mayers  
Ms. Yolande Gooding  
Former NCC Chairmen and Guests  
Mr. Alfred Aguiton  
Mr. Roy Augustus  
Mr. Carlos John  
Mr. Claude Clarke  
Mr. Brian Kuei Tung  
Mr. Hilton Guy and Guest  
Brigadier Ancil Antoine and Guest  
Mr. Leo Abraham and Guest  
Mr. Lennox Alfred and Guest  
Mr. Linus Rogers and Guest  
Dr. Brian Harry and Guest  
Mr. S. Finbar Ryan and Guest  
Mr. Ewart Williams and Guest  
Dr. Aleem Mohammed and Guests  
Mr. Hasley Crawford and Guest  
Mr. D. Punwasee and Guest  
The Rt. Rev. Dean Knolly Clarke and Guest  
Mr. Ali Khan and Guest

Ambassador Jerry Narace and Guest

Mr. Kenneth Gordon and Guest

In addition:

- three hundred and sixty-seven (367) seats were designated as VIP seating in the Grand Stand area under the control of the NCC
  - another one hundred and sixty-four (164) seats were allocated to the three (3) Interest Groups - National Carnival Bands Association (NCBA), Trinidad and Tobago Unified Calypso Organisation (TUCO) and Pan Trinbago - for entertainment of their sponsors and guests
  - additionally, thirty-two (32) tickets in the Special Reserved Box were provided to the Leader of the Opposition for distribution to Members of Parliament, for Dimanche Gras and Parade of the Bands. These were revenue tickets, which were utilized as complimentaries
  - tickets were also provided to H E Mrs. Z. Hassanali and her guests
- (b) The cost of hosting guests and visitors in the VIP lounge over the period February 20—March 4, 2003, was one hundred and thirteen thousand, eight hundred and eighty-six dollars (\$113,886.00).

**Unemployment Relief Programme  
(Chaguanas)**

137. Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*) asked the Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister identify the projects and the locality of each project undertaken by the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) in the constituency of Chaguanas for the period October 2002 to April 30, 2003?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of this House:*

For the period October 2002 to April 30, 2003, the URP projects and the respective localities, in the constituency of Chaguanas are as follows:

Fortnight	Number	Project Name	Locality
One	1	New Settlement Caroni	Caroni Savannah Road
	2	Nemlette Street	Enterprise

<b>Fortnight</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Locality</b>
	3	Crown Trace	Enterprise
	4	Jerningham Junction	Cunupia
	5	Caroni Settlement	Frederick Settlement
	6	St. Thomas Village	St. Thomas Village
<b>Two</b>	1	Nemlette Street	Enterprise
	2	Caroni Settlement	Frederick Settlement
	3	New Settlement Caroni	Caroni Savannah Road
	4	Crown Trace	Enterprise
	5	Jerningham Junction	Cunupia
	6	St. Thomas Village	St. Thomas Village
<b>Three</b>	1	Isles Trace	Enterprise
	2	Caroni Frederick Street	Frederick Settlement
	3	Nemlette Street	Enterprise
	4	Dass Trace	Enterprise
	5	Caroni Savannah Road	Chaguanas
	6	Jerningham Junction	Cunupia
	7	St. Thomas	St. Thomas Village
	8	Bhagaloo Street	Enterprise
	9	Circular Drive	Enterprise
<b>Four</b>	1	Nemlette Street	Enterprise
	2	New Settlement, Caroni Savannah Road	Caroni Savannah Road
	3	Jerningham Junction	Cunupia

<b>Fortnight</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Locality</b>
	4	Caroni Frederick Settlement	Frederick Settlement
	5	Bhagaloo Street	Enterprise
	6	St. Thomas	St. Thomas Village
	7	Isles Trace	Enterprise
	8	Dass Trace	Enterprise
	9	Circular Drive	Enterprise
<b>Five</b>	1	Dass Trace	Enterprise
	2	Isles Trace	Enterprise
	3	Circular Drive	Montrose
	4	Nemlette Street	Enterprise
	5	Amaroosingh Street	Longdenville
	6	Bhagaloo Street	Enterprise
	7	St. Thomas	St. Thomas Village
	8	Jerningham Junction	Cunupia
	9	New Settlement	Caroni Savannah Road
<b>Six</b>	1	Circular Drive	Montrose
	2	Isles Trace	Enterprise
	3	St. Thomas	St. Thomas Village
	4	Dass Trace	Enterprise
	5	Bhagaloo Street	Enterprise
	6	Nemlette Street	Enterprise
	7	New Settlement Rec. Ground	Caroni Savannah Road

<b>Fortnight</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Locality</b>
	8	Jerningham Junction	Cunupia
<b>Seven</b>	1	Nemlette Street	Enterprise
	2	Bhagaloo Street	Enterprise
	3	Jerningham Junction	Cunupia
	4	Caroni Savannah Road	Caroni Savannah Road
	5	St. Thomas	St. Thomas Village
	6	Circular Drive	Montrose
	7	Isles Trace	Enterprise
	8	Dass Trace	Enterprise
<b>Eight</b>	1	Crown Trace	Enterprise
	2	Greenidge Road	Felicity
	3	George Lane	Cunupia
	4	Circular Drive	Montrose
	5	Nemlette Street	Enterprise
	6	New Settlement	Caroni Savannah Road
	7	Isles Trace	Enterprise
	8	Dass Trace	Enterprise
<b>Nine</b>	1	Dass Trace	Enterprise
	2	Isles Trace	Enterprise
	3	Circular Drive	Montrose
	4	Nemlette Street	Enterprise
	5	Crown Trace	Montrose

Fortnight	Number	Project Name	Locality
	6	Greenidge Road	Felicity
	7	Lee Trace	Cunupia
	8	New Settlement	Caroni Savannah Road

**Lifeguards  
(Employment of)**

- 148.** Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*) asked the Minister of Local Government:  
Would the Minister please state the number of lifeguards employed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and provide the following details:
- (v) the beaches at which lifeguards work;
  - (vi) the number of lifeguards assigned to each beach and the work timetables;
  - (vii) a list of equipment purchased for use by lifeguards from January 2002 to March 2003;
  - (viii) a list of vehicles assigned for use by lifeguards and the beaches at which these are utilized?

*The following reply was circulated to members of the House:*

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has in its employ a total of 113 Lifeguards. Of this number, 24 are employed on a permanent basis; 22 are employed on a regular basis and; 67 are employed on a casual basis.

- (i) Lifeguards are employed at the following beaches:
  - San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation—Maracas, Tyrico, Las Cuevas
  - Sangre Grande Regional Corporation—Manzanilla, Salibia
  - Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation—Mayaro
- (ii) A total of 48 lifeguards are assigned to the beaches of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation; 17 are assigned to the beaches of Sangre Grande Regional Corporation; and 48 are assigned to the beaches of Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation.
- (iii) A list of equipment purchased for the period January 2002 to March 2003 is as follows:

<b>Corporation</b>	<b>Beach(es)</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Equipment</b>
San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation	Maracas/Tyrico/Las Cuevas	44	Pocket Masks
		1	Portable Oxygen Kit
		1	Blood Pressure Kit
		1	First Aid table
		6	Megaphones
		9	Kickboards
		12	Rescue Cans
		1	Weight Set
		1	Dumbell set
		4	Complete Set of Diving Equipment
		50	Raincoats
		1	Refrigerator
		50	Fox 40 Whistles
		3	Pairs Fins
		2	Skipping Ropes
		23	Anti Fog Goggles
		20	Red and Yellow Flags
		40	Red Flags
		3	Diving Knives
Sangre Grande Regional Corporation	Manzanilla/Salibia	6	Rescue Cans
		6	Pocket Masks
		2	First Aid Kits



<b>Corporation</b>	<b>Beach(es)</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Equipment</b>
		24	Whistles
		1	Stove
		1	Refrigerator
		3	Handsets
		4	Megaphones
Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation	Mayaro	50	C.P.R Pocket Masks Resuscitators
		10	Carry Bags (10 x 8 x 5)
		10	Red Lifeguard Flags
		20	Red & Yellow Flags
		1	Oral Airway Kit
		1	Motor Flashlight,
		1	Propeller
		4	Lifejackets with reflectors
		1	Coil 5/8 Nylon Docking Line
		10	Fox 40 Classic Whistles (Canada brand)
		35	Raincoats heavy-duty rubber lined with cap & belt
		1	Hand Pump Kit
		1	Heavy-duty Axial Pump
			Supply & Install Sunbrilla cover with Eyelets for Rescue Craft

<b>Corporation</b>	<b>Beach(es)</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Equipment</b>
		10	Oxygen Masks
		10	3 Compartment Lockers complete with stand
		4	Rescue Rings
		1	Anchor
		1	Refrigerator 11 cubic
		5	Respirator Kits (children)
		8	Pairs High powered binoculars
Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation	Mayaro	2	Plastic Stretchers
		3	Respirator Kits (adults)
		4	Flotation Lines
		2	Body-boards
		6	Snorkel Gears
		8	Rescue Cans
		10	Marker Buoys complete with anchor
		6	Pairs Fins
		4	Motorola portable trunking radio complete with battery charger and antennae

(ii) A list of vehicles assigned for use by Lifeguards and the beaches at which these are utilised is as follows:

<b>Corporation</b>	<b>Beach(es)</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Equipment</b>
San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation	Maracas/Tyrico/Las Cuevas	1	Ambulance

Corporation	Beach(es)	No.	Equipment
		1	Rescue Craft (Boat)
		1	Minibus
Sangre Grande Regional Corporation	Manzanilla/Salibia	1	Ambulance (transferred from the Ministry of Tourism with the Lifeguards and is unserviceable)
Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation	Mayaro	1	Vehicle short-base Land Rover
		1	Rescue Craft (Boat)

**Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation  
(Grants/Funding)**

**151.** Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*) asked the Minister of Local Government:

- (a) With respect to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the year 2002, could the Minister of Local Government list all grants/funding and all other assistance provided for the hosting of the following:
- (i) Carnival celebrations;
  - (ii) Steel pan events;
  - (iii) Eid celebrations;
  - (iv) Labour Day celebrations;
  - (v) Hosay celebrations; and
  - (vi) Divali celebrations?
- (b) Could the Minister list the names of the recipients of the above funding?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

- (a) For the year 2002, the grants/funding and other assistance provided by the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the hosting of the various cultural events are as follows:
- (i) Carnival celebrations—NIL
  - (ii) Steel pan events (Street parade—10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations)—\$20,100.00

- (iii) Eid celebrations—\$8,395.00
  - (iv) Labour Day celebrations—NIL
  - (v) Hosay celebrations—NIL
  - (vi) Divali celebrations—\$6,150.00
- (b) The recipients of the funding listed in the reply to part (a) of the question were as follows:

<b>Event</b>	<b>Recipient of Funding</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Steel Pan events	Starlift	\$ 1,800.00
	El Dorado School Band	\$ 1,350.00
	Family & Friends	\$ 450.00
	Harlem Syncopaters	\$ 3,150.00
	San Juan Eastside	\$ 2,250.00
	Arima All Stars	\$ 1,350.00
	Trinidad East Side Symphony	\$ 720.00
	Nu Pioneers Pan Groove	\$ 720.00
	Spree Simon Harmonie	\$ 720.00
	BWIA Invaders	\$ 4,450.00
	Pan Trinbago	\$ 3,090.00
Eid celebrations	Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, Eid Festival Committee	\$ 8,395.00
Divali celebrations	Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, Divali Festival Committee	\$ 6,150.00