

Leave of Absence

Wednesday, June 25, 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 25, 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 for leave of absence from this Special Sitting of the House, from the Member for San Fernando West (Hon. Diane Seukeran).

IMMIGRATION (CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY SKILLED NATIONALS) (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Act, 1996 [*The Minister of Culture and Tourism*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken forthwith. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

The Minister of Culture and Tourism (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) (Amdt.) Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us is the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) (Amdt.) Bill, 2003. The main purpose of this Bill is to widen, beyond university graduates, the categories of persons eligible for free movement in Member States of the Caribbean Community, Caricom, to include artistes, musicians, sports persons and media workers. The Bill will also widen the application of the Act to include persons qualifying as citizens of Caribbean Community States by descent, registration, naturalization and adoption and put beyond doubt the authority of immigration officers to permit the spouses and dependants of persons who satisfy the qualification requirements of the Act to enter Trinidad and Tobago.

Finally, the Bill includes, in the list of qualifying Caribbean Community States, Haiti, the latest full member of Caricom.

Mr. Speaker, this Act was amended some time ago when I was in another place and was piloted by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ralph Maraj. As said in the explanatory note, we are dealing specifically with including artistes,

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musicians, sports persons and media workers. We are aware, particularly as it relates to Trinidad and Tobago and our rich culture, that we have been the beneficiary of artistes and musicians being able to work in certain countries within the Caribbean. We have realized, within recent times, particularly as it relates to carnival in some of the territories, that there have been concerns raised about artistes going to work.

We do have Crop Over in Barbados, carnivals in St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Grenada and Jamaica—throughout the entire Caribbean—and Trinidad and Tobago has been the beneficiary of requests from the various islands for our skills in terms of wire bending, pan tuning and our indigenous art form to provide skills and expertise to these various countries. As a matter of fact, both Grenada, which will celebrate its carnival in August, and St. Lucia and St. Vincent have requested from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago several steel bands, “mas” bands and wire benders to work with and train their persons to improve their carnival product, to bring it up to the standard of Trinidad and Tobago.

As I said before, many of our calypsonians have been beneficiaries of contracts in Barbados and throughout the Caribbean. The importance of this Bill is that Trinidad and Tobago, as a member of Caricom, continues to support that initiative and acknowledge our need to have that Caribbean identity. The passage of this Bill will give cognizance and recognition to that fact.

We know that Caricom meets in the next couple days in Jamaica. There are various items on the agenda, including the issue of the regional carrier, the issue of trade, the tourism product and the challenges of tourism, the issue of sharing of the cultures, particularly as Carifesta is due to take place in Suriname later in August 2003.

Carifesta has given us the opportunity for the last couple years—Trinidad and Tobago having hosted Carifesta V and VI—to witness the fusion of the cultures throughout the Caribbean and also to give Trinidad and Tobago an opportunity to demonstrate its multi-ethnic culture, not just calypso, pan, chutney, our indigenous folklore and our steel bands. That opportunity would arise again in the next couple months.

There have been challenges for artistes coming into Trinidad and Tobago that relate to immigration; issues of bringing in their artefacts and art work. In making this amendment, we are going a long way to ensure, particularly as it relates to the richness of our culture, that we deal with these matters to allow the development of the culture, the exchange of cultural artefacts and all other matters relating to culture.

Last year, for the Crop Over celebrations in Barbados, certain issues arose on the freedom of some of the Barbadian calypsonians and the difficulties that were encountered in their coming to Trinidad and Tobago. When some of the Trinidadian calypsonians went to Barbados, some of the similar problems arose. We are of the view that since calypso and carnival, steel band and chutney have developed such that we have been able to develop exchanges: chutney with Guyana and Suriname; calypso and steel band throughout the entire Caribbean, that it is necessary for us to continue to showcase our culture.

Mr. Speaker, the National Steel Orchestra has been invited by the Jamaican government to perform at the opening of Caricom next week and Trinidad and Tobago has accepted that invitation, so that we can demonstrate the richness and diversity of our culture in terms of the selection of the tunes that the National Steel Orchestra will be playing. It is an opportunity for us to show to the Caribbean the only acoustical instrument to have been invented in the 20th Century.

Even more important is the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is one of the few countries in the Caribbean to have still our indigenous peoples, that is, the Caribs. Carifesta VI specifically paid tribute to the indigenous peoples. St. Vincent and Dominica are two of the other countries in the Caribbean where there still exist some indigenous people. Both Venezuela and Guyana have been, from time to time, doing exchange programmes in terms of artefacts, the similarities in the cultures of the indigenous people and training some of the Trinidadians and Tobagonians who are interested in knowing the work of indigenous people in the other islands.

Clause 5 of the Bill specifies:

“Notwithstanding sections 8 and 9, an applicant who is a citizen of a qualifying Caribbean Community State and possesses any qualification or experience or combination of qualification and experience that to the satisfaction of the Minister proves that the applicant is—

- (a) an artiste;
- (b) a musician;
- (c) a sports person; or
- (d) a media worker,

is deemed to have satisfied the qualification requirements of this Act.”

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I have spoken specifically as it relates to artistes and musicians, but we all know of the importance of sports in the Caribbean—football, cricket, lawn tennis, golf; just about every sporting activity. We know that several of our players—Russell Latapy, who is now playing in England, played in Jamaica for some time—have played in some other islands.

In terms of our professional leagues, we have had sportsmen from other parts of the Caribbean here on contract and therefore improved the football in Trinidad and Tobago. Some of the sportsmen that have worked in some of the other islands and worked in Trinidad and Tobago have been able to obtain professional contracts. We all know that, over the years, we have had difficulties in terms of some of the sportsmen and sportswomen accessing contracts and the extent to which they have been able to travel freely within the Caribbean to earn a living.

The Cricket Academy is now in Grenada and persons from several of the West Indian islands and even from abroad are now going to Grenada to learn and benefit from the cricket that is being played there. Trinidad and Tobago has also set up its academy and other benefits are being derived therefrom.

We see our West Indian cricket team and we have all recognized and acknowledged the benefits of the unity amongst West Indians as it relates to cricket. The world has acknowledged that strength, particularly in cricket, has to do with the pooling of talent from all over the Caribbean. We have, therefore, been able to benefit from travel all over the Caribbean. We also know that in 2007 the West Indies is likely to host the 2007 World Cup and, therefore, the importance of the freedom of movement as it relates to all these categories continues to be very important.

We have all recognized the value of the media workers being able to go throughout the Caribbean to give immediate coverage and their interpretation of activities in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the Caribbean, whether in sports, culture or politics. We recall several occasions on which media workers have been subjected to having their contracts terminated. We remember only too well a couple years ago Julian Rogers. We also know that recently, maybe in Cuba and St. Lucia, there was a similar incident of media workers being asked to leave the countries when they fell foul of governments.

We are of the view that artistes, musicians, sports persons and media workers, in addition to the categories that were previously included—all this Bill seeks to do is to amend the Act to include some other categories that would not have existed in previous bills and to ensure the free movement of people within the Caribbean.

We have spoken about the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME). Trinidad is the seat of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and as we continue to ensure that we—Trinidadians and Tobagonians—move freely throughout the Caribbean, we also want to ensure that other Caribbean islands have the benefit of that free movement.

Those on the other side had previously brought amendments to this Bill and I am sure, in the context of what this Bill intends to do, they would not have any difficulty supporting the Bill.

Question proposed.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are assembled today in a special meeting to debate the Bill, the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) (Amdt.) Bill.

I welcome the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs—who joined us late—but we are happy that he is here to listen to the contributions from those on this side and to respond to questions we may have on this matter. Although he came a bit late and had the Member for Arima in the difficult position of presenting this Bill, telling us about sportsmen and artistes—which is within her competency as Minister of Culture and Tourism—I am sure that there are other matters that the hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs would have liked to raise, but I gather that later he would have an opportunity to do so.

We are here in special sitting because of the incompetence of the Government. That is why we were called away from our constituency duties and other professional work to assemble in the middle of the week to debate and, according to the invitation, to settle this matter of the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) (Amdt.) Bill. We could not wait until Friday or next week. We had to meet in special session because those who organize the business of the Government are not sure of what they are organizing: their priority, their legislative agenda, their scheduling and so on.

On the last occasion we met, we could not determine whether we would meet again on this Wednesday to debate this matter. The Government had to be informed by the Caribbean Secretariat that the Prime Minister made certain commitments in February. The Prime Minister and his delegation are on their way to Montego Bay, Jamaica, in a few days and they just discovered—they were busy promising “licks like peas”—that they were not doing the business of the Government, so the Caricom Secretariat issued a letter to this Government dated June 20, 2003, which reads:

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“Dear Prime Minister,

As you will no doubt recall, Heads of Government, at the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference last February had, inter alia—

‘Underscored the need for more systematic and critical assessment of implementation of activities by Member States and the need to hold Member States accountable for the fulfillment of their commitments;

Agreed that the Parliamentary Agenda of Member States would take account of the legal requirements for the implementation of the CSME.

Against that background, Heads of Government signaled their intention to be in a position at the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Conference to announce that all Member States have completed all necessary arrangements and therefore that Free Movement of Graduates, Media Workers, Musicians, Artistes, and Sports Persons was legally in effect across CARICOM.

It is recognised that the time now available is, at maximum, two weeks to the end of the Meeting of the Conference on 5 July 2003 to ensure that this is in fact the case, and to avoid the Community being open to the criticism of not taking its decisions seriously. The opportunity is therefore again being taken to remind Member States of the action which had been identified as needing to be completed to give effect to free movement of these categories.

This action would relate to—

- (i) Legislation for Media Workers, Musicians, Artistes and Sports Persons;
- (ii) Regulations and/or Administrative provision.

With respect to the Facilitation of Travel, that is—

- (i) The use of a Common E/D Form;
- (ii) The acceptance of photo IDs in place of passports for CARICOM Nationals traveling intra-regionally; and
- (iii) Common Lines for CARICOM Nationals at Immigration points,

action regarding compliance needs to be indicated by all Member States, particularly with respect to E/D Forms and IDs.

The issue of Free Movement has been included on the Agenda for the Retreat of Heads of Government in Ocho Rios on 30 June—1 July 2003.

The Secretariat will of course continue to give whatever assistance is possible...

/s/ Edwin W. Carrington
Secretary-General”

It took a reminder from Caricom that the Government was not fulfilling its obligations and commitments to it. Then, they discovered that the time was going and they could not wait until Friday because half of the Government delegation would have left before Friday and another half on Saturday. So, Mr. Speaker, they hastily summoned this meeting of Parliament, using your good office, to get us all to come here from our constituency work, because of their incompetence, and participate in a debate, which they should have planned before.

It is very interesting that when an earlier amendment to this Act needed parliamentary approval in 2001—the UNC government was in office and the hon. Member for Couva North and Prime Minister had to travel in July to a Caricom Meeting—that particular amendment was debated in this House on May 18, 2001, six weeks or so before the meeting. The Caricom Meeting began on July 02, 2001. That was to ensure that both Houses of Parliament would have ample opportunity to discuss and debate this matter and would not be hurriedly rushing into passing any legislation that was not properly considered and where the national interest was not taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I made those remarks to demonstrate that the Government has no agenda, no schedule and no priority and this is what will happen. We believe that in the future you may be called again on several occasions to call special meetings. This amendment comes after an amendment in 2001 and the parent Act, Act 26 of 1996, which was passed in this honourable House under the administration of the United National Congress.

Let me make it abundantly clear that we stand firmly committed to the process of Caribbean integration—the creation of the single market economy. We are firmly committed to the political union of the Caribbean and our credentials on that matter cannot be questioned. It was, after all, the government of the UNC that introduced the legislation in 1996 to give effect to the free movement of skilled nationals within the Caricom region, dealing at that time with graduates from the University of the West Indies, University of Guyana and so on. So, our credentials on this matter are very clear.

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By 2001, the UNC returned to the House with a bill to amend the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Act, 1996, which sought to remove one subsection that was in contradiction with immigration laws as pointed out by the Ministry of National Security. Today we are called in special sitting to address our minds to another amendment to this Act, which widens the application of the Act to include persons qualifying as citizens of qualifying Caribbean Community States by descent, registration, naturalization and adoption and to put beyond doubt the authority of immigration officers to permit the spouses and dependant members of persons who satisfy the qualification requirements of the Act. The Bill also seeks to include in the list of qualifying Caribbean Community States, the latest full member of Caricom, Haiti.

This is a very important piece of legislation, which is not to be taken lightly. It is not a simple piece of legislation that we could suggest that it would really help pan tuners, wire benders and “Moko Jumbies” to go to Barbados for Crop Over or to Vincy Carnival. It is another process of opening the doors of this country to non-national workers within the region.

Of course, it was outside of the ambit of the Member for Arima, but we were also hoping that the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, in presenting the Bill, would give us an outline of Government policy on the Caricom Single Market Economy, globalization and trade liberalization. We were also hoping that the Minister would outline the proposals of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in matters relating to its immigration policy, labour market planning and its vision for this country.

We have heard about vision 2020, but to this day outside of the manifesto and a few Cabinet conferences, we do not know anything about it. We assume that part of it involves job creation. We assume, because we cannot be the developed country that we want to be without creating jobs. It is incumbent on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to outline to us the perspectives of the Government and how it is synchronizing a national development plan that creates jobs in line with the Caricom Single Market Economy. We are in the process of opening the doors to new categories of workers and that has serious implications for our domestic labour market and for labour market planning in the region.

We are not in a position like the European Union and to a lesser extent the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) where we have a very well-balanced labour market, harmonized labour relations, up-to-date employment policies dealing with decent work, proper terms and conditions, leading institutions that promote decent work and that promote worker protection and so forth. The

Caricom region aspires to get there, but is hardly there at the moment. When we open our doors to workers, we have to factor in the nature of the labour market in Caricom and our own labour markets. It could well be that in passing this legislation, there is a contradiction between the PNM Vision 2020 and the Caricom Single Market Economy. It could well be.

Those of us on this side would have thought that the least the Minister of Foreign Affairs could have done was come to the honourable House and outline the thinking of the Government as it relates to the Caricom Single Market Economy and the harmonizing of their national development plan with the regional development agenda. We got neither. We got the Minister of Culture and Tourism telling us about the wire benders and so on.

We need to explore, in some detail, the implications arising out of this legislation. I repeat: we are committed to Caricom and to Caribbean integration. In fact, we passed the legislation presiding over the transformation as far as it relates to the movement of skilled workers.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make another point. When you look at the debates over the years concerning this matter—the movement of nationals within Caricom—there is another feature that strikes you. When you look at the debate—the statements from the PNM, then in opposition, and those of the UNC—there is an interesting conclusion. On the matter of geographic mobility within the Caribbean, the UNC has as a wide-ranging approach, a perspective that deals with economics and labour market planning, while the PNM, now the Government, has an approach that is defined by politics.

So, in some way, the Caribbean integration is a political project for those on the other side, while for us it is more than a political project, it is an economic project. Not surprisingly, those on this side would talk about transfer of persons with skills that can be accredited and are quantifiable, while those on the other side would talk about opening the floodgates and letting everybody move across the borders—anybody wanting to come is welcome. Come across, we have carnival and we need workers to make mas' costumes and so on. There is a fundamental difference in the approach and that has implications for this country's development as well.

This Bill says nothing about the other commitment made by the Prime Minister and to which Caricom is holding him accountable—that of facilitation of travel: Caricom nationals, moving within the region without the hassle of having passports and different types of entry departure forms. We know nothing of that.

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That was 50 per cent of the commitment. We are here in special sitting because they forgot 100 per cent of the commitment, but they decided to deal with the skills and so on.

I will take a labour market approach to this matter and stay within that realm. It is important that before the Government embarks upon any measure related to the Caricom Single Market Economy, it is done within the context of our national interest. It is one thing to go to Jamaica or the Bahamas and sit on stage and gleefully admit that we pass legislation—we are on board—but it is something else if that legislation is contradicting our national interest and the national interest must be considered. Mr. Speaker, that is an important consideration when you open your borders for persons.

I also want to spend a couple minutes talking about the vision of the United National Congress. This is very important that we put our vision on record, again. It was not by luck that we created over 77,000 new jobs between 1995 and 2001. When the Member for Couva North was busy across the globe attracting investment, that was linked to a job creation project. That did not happen by luck. We created 77,000 new jobs without the help of over a dozen make-work, public sector programmes that they have now: the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP), et cetera—we will come to that later—because we knew how to position this economy for the new industries.

When we looked at our labour market, we saw the objective reality then we started to plan what we wanted. We were talking early about single-digit employment. Later we were talking about full employment. We began with single digit, then we were talking about full employment.

Mr. Speaker, under the auspices of the former Prime Minister we established a multipartite commission under the office of the Prime Minister, which led to a process of developing a national vision—a development agenda. One aspect of that had to do with job creation. Our policy was to attract high-road investment in manufacturing, in technology, in the service sector and in the hospitality industry. We were attracting investment in these industries and in industries that were technologically driven. So, not surprisingly, a government that is concerned with investment in these sectors was also paranoid about education and training. We invested over \$1 billion in education and training to prepare the labour market for the new jobs that would come on stream with this investment programme. That is how we created jobs.

I know this will not be comfortable news for those on the other side. I beg them to remain quiet. They do not want to hear about investment and job creation.

We will speak in a little while about blackmail and corruption. I think they will appreciate that.

Our investment policy was linked to our job creation policy. That is how we created jobs. Our goal was for what is called a high road to development—upskilling, high skill, high productivity, high value addition. That requires a particular type of industrial development. You have to create the training, but you also need the labour and the skill.

When we said on the last occasion when this Bill was being debated that we would like qualified skilled persons to come into the country to work where there are vacancies and nationals cannot fill these vacancies immediately, it is not that we were against Caricom nationals who may not have a particular type of skill. It is not that we are against people who are not trained as masons, carpenters, welders, “mko jmbies” and so on. We are not against that. We are about building an economy with high skill, high productivity, high value addition to create the level of economic growth that is necessary to be of a developed country status. That is what the UNC is about. That is how we created the jobs.

What this Government has really done, in a very short space of time, is to lower the standards; not only with entry requirements to the public service, but also in their approach they have not factored in skill. They talk about everything except skill and qualifications. This is why they would come to the Parliament to allow categories of workers to come in.

The vision of the UNC was to create a developed country by 2010, based upon economic growth premised on an investment policy that links to the job creation policy in growth sectors—the technology sector, the services, hospitality and so on.

In a document which was presented to the multipartite commission that dealt with employment, a document that was done at the Ministry of Labour when the Member for Nariva had the honour to serve in that Ministry, we calculated that we would need to create 130,000 new jobs between 2000—2005 to get unemployment down to 8.6 per cent. Remember the labour market is growing every year, so is the population. We did a trend line analysis that suggested to us if we wanted 8.6 per cent unemployment by 2005, we would have to create a certain number of jobs per year and after five years we would have to create 130,000 new jobs. This was the research done at the Ministry of Labour when the UNC was in office. That by itself is quite a challenge.

Now, they may actually create some jobs from the CEPEP, Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), Helping Youth Promote Employment (HYPE), Youth

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Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA) and so on, but those are not the permanent well paid, skilled jobs required for value addition with high productivity and high returns. So that, in terms of job creation, this Government is clueless. They may not be hopeless—by luck they may create some jobs—but they are clueless in terms of creating jobs. The UNC had a calculated scientific approach to job creation. We were clear on our labour market.

Those on the other side with some expertise in employment policy and so on would agree that this labour market has generated a high level of unemployment, notwithstanding periods of economic growth. After benefiting from the oil windfall, the lowest unemployment we had by 1981 was around 9.9 per cent. That is still very high for a rich country. When the UNC entered office, unemployed figured at 18 per cent. When we were removed from office by unconstitutional means, the unemployment figure was 10.7 per cent.

This country has always had high unemployment. Instead of the Government focusing on the unemployment challenges and creating more jobs for our nationals, training them to access jobs in the private sector, they are opening the gate for non-nationals to come into a competitive market and take certain jobs in certain industries. So, where is the national interest here?

Youth unemployment in this country, over the last decade and a half, has been almost 40 per cent between the ages 18—35. National unemployment is going down, but youth unemployment is high. Instead of focusing on training and attracting investment in selected sectors, they have embarked on a half dozen make-work programmes to sap up unskilled labour. The thing with make-work programmes is that you do not transfer skill; you transfer poverty.

We are very pessimistic about the employment prospects in this country. Notwithstanding wealth creation, we have always had high unemployment and the Government needs to focus on our employment challenges before it focuses on lifting the floodgate and allowing non-nationals to enter the country for jobs that nationals are either trained for or can be trained for. This is the problem, Mr. Speaker. This is not like some countries where we have had unemployment of 6 per cent and 5 per cent. We have had high unemployment and that is the challenge for the Government and they are not facing that challenge but are meeting in special session because we have to tell Caricom that we have worked between sessions.

They have a bill here that deals with selected categories of workers—artistes, musicians, sports persons and media workers—but who are these persons? Who is an artiste, a musician, a sports person and a media worker? To get a definition, we

need to look at the *Draft Manual of Administrative Procedures for the Implementation of the CSME*. In this document, there are definitions of these persons. Let's define media workers.

"Media workers are defined...as persons:

- whose primary source of income is in the media and media related work;"

Now, what is media related work, we do not know. Is that editing and reporting? Is it technical work, engineering work, desktop publishing maybe?

Media workers are persons:

- "with three years working experience in the media; and
- holding letters or documents from an affiliated employer or media house through which their work is published."

So, I imagine that the newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago—*The Express, The Trinidad Guardian, Newsday, The Probe, The Mirror* and so on—can certify that persons are media workers and so they can move around in the Caribbean. But,

"Such persons must be accredited as CARICOM Media Workers and registered by a panel of approved Caribbean Broadcasting and Media houses including Press Agents, Newspaper Columnists/Reporters, Journalists, T.V. and other electronic media workers.

We would like to have simple questions answers. Do we have a Caribbean Broadcasting and Media Panel? Do we have these Caricom media houses registered by panel? Who are the members of this panel? Where are they based? How often do they meet? How do they consider a person a media worker or not? Important questions. So, you get a media house to say that you are working there for three years editing a newspaper and that your primary source of income is from the newspaper and you can be accredited as a media worker to travel all over the Caribbean. Yes, it would include some of the tabloids.

Who are artistes? The manual goes on to describe artistes.

"Artistes must satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- create impact in area of activity at Community or National level

To be an artiste, you must create impact in areas of activity at community or national level. So, you parade on the street as a "moko jumbie" and you create an impact; you are an artiste. You:

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- hold record of awards from national or professional body”

We need to be told which is the professional body. Which professional body in Trinidad and Tobago would be recommending artistes? Pan Trinbago? The Chutney Association of Trinidad and Tobago? The Tassa Drummers’ Association? The Limbo Dancers’ Association? Which professional bodies would be accrediting these artistes? What is the impact in the national community?

In this country, we still have a debate as to what is national culture and what is not national culture, but we have to create impact in the area. So, it must be Solo Gidharrie they are talking about. You must be registered with a national artiste association where it exists.

These are loose, vague definitions and we do not have the supporting information as to which professional bodies they are talking about. What is national impact? If this Government embarks upon a course of action of discriminating against certain cultural segments, they may never rise to become national in impact and cannot qualify as artistes to travel throughout the Caribbean.

I am reading from the *Draft Manual of Administrative Procedures for the Implementation CSME*. Let us find out who are musicians.

"Musicians must satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- create impact in the area of activity...”

So, you are a musician if you create an impact at the national level.

- “hold record of awards from national or professional body”

Now, again, which professional body are we talking about?

- “produce record of employment in the field.”

So, someone must pay you to play a mouth organ somewhere or beat a pan on the corner. You must have a record of employment.

“be registered with a national Musicians Association, where one exists”

We do not know what that is about. Again, who are musicians? Who qualifies for this? The Government needs to be transparent on this matter. Tell us which bodies you will consult. Would it be Pan Trinbago? Would it be the Baalvikas? Who will they be consulting when they define people as musicians?

A sports person must be one who possesses minimum qualifications required by the national association for the particular sport to coach, umpire, referee or

participate in the particular sport. Now, that could be anybody. The Table Tennis Association can write a letter to the minister that somebody is playing table tennis in the community centre and they are looking good. He is a sportsman. They move around and so on.

These are the loose definitions that they are working with. The Government is yet to tell us which are the bodies in place that would recommend to the Minister.

As if that is not bad enough, we are told there is a committee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the Committee for the Issuance of Caricom Skills Certificate operating since December 2001. That committee has issued, we are told, over 200 certificates. Let me show you one. I have one. They are issuing certificates we are told; we do not know. We would like to know who are the persons who came in from other Caricom States and got these certificates. What did they get them for? To do which job? Where are they working? Under what conditions? Did they go through any employment bureau in Trinidad and Tobago? Before the hon. Minister granted the certificate, did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs consult with the distinguished Member for Point Fortin, the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprises Development to let him know whether they are coming to do jobs which local workers cannot do for one reason or another? Are these persons coming in as musicians? Are they really musicians? Where are they coming from? Which body recommended them in St. Lucia, Jamaica, Guyana and so on?

According to this Bill, they are coming into this country for a period of indefinite duration—forever. If non-nationals stay here for seven years, they have the right to citizenship and they have rights to vote. Is this the 21st Century version of vote by boat? Two hundred nationals from other countries coming into this country have been issued this Certificate of Recognition of Caribbean Community Skills Qualifications. The way this works is that if you are in Jamaica and are applying for a job in Trinidad and Tobago, you go to the mission and apply. There must be a process—which we want to learn about—where they screen candidates to ensure that they are not part of any court matter and are not debarred by the Bill; and that they are not carrying an infectious disease. Mr. Speaker, you cannot get this if you are carrying an infectious disease, but the able Minister of Health, I am sure, has that under control.

We would like to know what are the procedures in foreign missions to receive applications and screen them properly before these certificates are issued. All one needs on this certificate is a picture, full address, occupation—you can say any occupation you want—qualifications, place of birth and so. The legislation widens

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the scope where persons not born in Caricom regions—for example, you can be born in Estonia, you come to a Caribbean island, obtain a passport and then get a certificate like this to come and live forever in Trinidad and Tobago. That has a national security implication, which I will come to. We need to be told of the procedures—the institutions are not the law. What regulations and procedures are in place to protect this country from those seeking to abuse the legislation?

These are some of the questions we need to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs. When they should be answering the questions, they are busy talking about how many cheques they have. They have cheques in their possession, you know; cheques to bounce on the Opposition as part of ongoing election campaign. *[Interruption]*

They are interested in the School Nutrition Programme; the latest scandal to rock this country, in Barrackpore, where children, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, were poisoned with milk. When they did the investigation, it was a company called the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited, whose general manager is the PNM Mayor for Point Fortin.

2.30 p.m.

The Mayor of Point Fortin is the general manager of the company which supplied milk to kill children in Barrackpore. I am told that that company never existed prior to 2001. They never provided milk or anything to the school feeding programme. This is a serious matter involving a top official of the Government. If they have been there, we want to know how long. A mayor in this Government; a high party official, is the general manager of this company. How did he get this contract? Another CEPEP contract! We will ask the appropriate questions in due course. The Government's corruption has reached the highest form now. The Government is literally milking this country dry. They are killing children. This is a matter that should be dealt with by the police. This is not just a matter of poisoning a few children in Barrackpore; it is bigger than that. It is a pattern of the Government. The Government will give contracts to persons to supply milk that would endanger the lives of citizens as long as it involves a kickback to high PNM officials.

Mr. Speaker, do we have a shortage of labour in this country as it relates to artistes, musicians, sports persons or media workers? Did we do a labour market analysis and find a shortage so that we now need to open the gate to bring in these workers? The National Training Agency has been doing labour market surveys in this country over the last five years. There are two surveys: labour market survey

report, December 2000 and another survey report for 2002. Mr. Speaker, in the labour market survey by the National Training Agency, they identified certain sectors which would be attracting workers. These sectors are: chemical and industrial plastics, metal industries, information technology, leisure marine, food and beverage manufacturing and printing and packaging. They go on to identify the type of workers that are needed in the economy which are: competent and skilled workers in construction, transport, mechanics, repairs and the energy sector. This was done in 2000. They did a projection which indicated that we need technicians, plant operators, supervisors, et cetera. By 2002, The National Training Agency identified other jobs that would be available; they include welders and fabricators, air-condition refrigeration technicians, machine operators, chefs, sales representatives, electrical instrument technicians, et cetera.

Instead of the Government responding to this by developing an aggressive training policy to train our nationals to secure these jobs, they are bringing in the artistes, musicians, sports persons and media workers. I have not seen The National Training Agency suggest that we need them, but that is what the Government is about. The Government is bringing in these workers where there may be no institutions and regulations to safeguard us against an influx of those persons abusing it. We do not know why. The Government may have its own reasons as to why it is doing this.

We must also warn our Caricom neighbours. We have a responsibility, not only to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but to Caricom. The UNC has a responsibility to our Caricom neighbours: to warn them of this Government. Hypothetically—I do not have the example before me—suppose a government of the day is in collusion with criminal and terrorists organizations in their own country, and in order to export criminals and terrorist, you certify them as musicians and artistes and send them to other Caricom territories to promote criminal work and terror in Caricom countries and the government, without these agencies, checks and balances, certifies members of known terrorist organizations as musicians and we send them off to all the islands, so that they can establish cells to pursue criminal and terrorist works? Those of us on this side may very well have to write Caricom Heads of Government and warn them that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is in collaboration with elements that they may be exporting via this legislation. We may have to do that.

When the issue of the movement of skilled nationals was dealt with in the late 1980s, arising out of the Grand Anse Declaration in 1989, the world was not as it is today. When we talked about national security 30 years ago, we were talking in

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the context of the cold War and communist. We had to protect our country from ideological influences that would have undermined the country. This Government has a horrible track record on mobility of any kind. It was this party that also prevented a national of this country, Stokely Carmichael from returning to this country for several years. When this was considered, the international threat, through terrorism, was not as it is today. We did not have the level of technology and mobility in the world. Someone coming from a corner of the globe may enter a Caricom territory, secure a passport and under this legislation, enter Trinidad and Tobago. We all know the record of this Government as it relates to criminal activities.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: There is also a security threat inherent in this type of legislation. Unless we have the checks and balances, and cannot be assured of them, there are serious problems associated with this free movement of people posing as musicians, artistes, media workers and sports persons.

Mr. Speaker, when the matter of the movement of skilled persons was considered decades ago, Haiti was not part of Caricom. Today Haiti is a full member of Caricom. It is instructive to note that in Haiti, over 80 per cent of the population lives in abject poverty. The labour force of Haiti, in 1995 was 3.6 million persons. They have a shortage of skilled labour and an enormous amount of unskilled labour. The country has a lot of musicians, artistes and practitioners of voodoo. We should take note of this development: 3.6 million persons in Haiti, the majority unskilled, are now in a situation where they may seek to come to Trinidad and Tobago as musicians, artistes and sports persons. Other Caricom territories such as Antigua have taken steps to implement laws that would curtail the abuse of immigration laws. We just need to look at the situation in Europe, Turkey and Morocco which are yet to become members of the European Union because of this issue of labour imbalances and the labour market of Turkey and Morocco, where the European Union believe that once they open the door, by bringing in Turkey and Morocco, it will lead to the destabilization of the labour market in the European Union as it is today.

Three point six million persons can now access this certificate that is issued by a committee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When 3.6 million persons can access this, there is another issue. We were talking about the free movement of

skilled nationals but we never talked about a language barrier because we were thinking of Caricom in the context of an English-speaking region. Do we now have qualifications for language competencies? If you are getting the certificate out of Haiti, do you have a certificate to prove that you can speak English? Otherwise we will have a situation in this country, which is interesting, where we may have Spanish-speaking doctors—courtesy the Member for Diego Martin East, French-speaking artistes and bad English-speaking ministers. That is where we may go. We may have French-speaking mouth organ players.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be told whether, in places such as Haiti and Suriname—although Suriname has a much smaller labour market and all the Surinamese are in Holland already—if there are institutions in place to ensure that persons seeking these certificates would be competent in the English language. These are legitimate concerns before we can embark upon any process to support this type of legislation. This can be the subject of abuse; where labour markets in the Caricom region, with high unemployment, industrial decline and low, real wages could just be seeking to come into Trinidad and Tobago to cash in to what they perceive to be job opportunities.

We also need to warn our Caricom neighbours that all is not well here. If they are coming here to work they could be murdered or kidnapped. In this country there is a labour-related issue to work. Workers cannot be protected in this country. A few days ago, a cashier and the manager at the KFC Montrose branch were held up by bandits. Margaret Ballantyne, a worker at that KFC outlet, was shot in the leg. That job is a high risk job in the fast food outlets. The bandits wanted money and original chicken, not hot and spicy. The bandits shot the manageress. The Government cannot protect workers in this country, but they are now opening the door for more to come in to be shot, murdered and kidnapped. We need to warn our brothers and sisters in the Caricom region that this is the situation and they need to be careful. They may come here as a “moko jumbie”, and be shot and reduced to size.

Those workers that the Government is seeking to bring here—I hope the Government is not intending to bring people here for house padding. We hope that the Government does not intend to use workers in Caricom to come to Trinidad and Tobago for house padding to fill the houses that they are building in San Fernando West and elsewhere. We hope the Government is not building houses for those workers. Then, we may need much more than 400 persons from police and army to secure them. We hope that is not the agenda. We hope the agenda is not to bring workers under the guise of musicians and artistes to work in

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CEPEP, where they would be exploited and their rights would be trampled upon. The only thing expanding under this Government is CEPEP. We anticipate by the end of the year that the Government will spend \$1 billion easily on CEPEP. *[Interruption]* We must enquire whether these artistes the Government is speaking about would be painting stones for CEPEP. How will that work? Is that the skill these people would come into the country with and take up jobs in the CEPEP to house pad for the PNM? These are some of the questions that the Government needs to respond to.

When the spouses and children come here, they will have to find work. There is also an implication as it relates to the social services. We cannot provide health care for our local population, but we are now going to bring everybody in. We cannot secure our citizens, but we are bringing more. They would need policing, health and education. The school system has collapsed but we will be bringing more children to go into the school system and hospitals. I imagine French-speaking workers would have Spanish doctors at Port of Spain General Hospital. This is a serious matter.

This Government has presided over the dismantling and retrenchment of 10,000 workers at Caroni (1975) Limited. The Government cannot provide jobs for those 10,000 workers at Caroni (1975) Limited, while 670 left BWIA. There are workers to go at the Port Authority and WASA. There is mass unemployment and the Government has opened the gates to bring in more. Is this part of that plan? The Government gave \$50 million to LIAT. Not a worker at LIAT has lost his or her job, but jobs were lost at BWIA. Is this part of the union with St. Vincent, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago? Is this part of the deal: that the borders will open and they can come into Trinidad, work in CEPEP, live in NHA apartments that are now refurbished with plumbing and electrical installation and join the expanding criminal groups? Is that part of this project? Is that the vision of the PNM? The Government needs to speak to us on these matters.

There are places in the world such as the oil-rich region of the United Arab Emirates which, many years ago, opened their boundaries for labour. They had an open-door policy where persons could enter to work. It led to a lot of workers from Asia and the Far East coming in. They just said: "Come, we have work." After doing that for two decades, they have a crisis on their hands with the non-nationals work force that has taken away the jobs of nationals and wrecked the labour market. There is also some research data to suggest that non-nationals coming into a national labour market do not respond to your education and training initiatives and so they remain unskilled and at the lower end of the labour

market. They can participate, more likely in criminal activities. Today, in that region in the United Arab Emirates, the foreign labour inflow has been a disservice to the country in progressing to a high productivity, high-skilled economy. They are now taking certain steps to close the door somewhat to ensure that the nationals of that region would benefit from jobs and training. They are now doing that in that part of the world and we are doing the opposite. We are opening our doors.

Like the European Union, this Government must understand when it embarks on a policy of geographical mobility, it must be tied to its own economic and labour market planning. The Government should not just open the gate and let people come in like that, it must have a plan for its own expansion, education and training. This is why, in the European Union, they are talking about workers with high skill. The European Union is asking governments to ensure that the workers in their respective countries are highly trained and skilled before they are made mobile.

A report coming out of the United Kingdom's Parliament dealing with this matter stated that a select committee was appointed to consider the European Union documents. They dealt with the new European labour market and concluded that what is required is high-level skills to ensure the European labour markets are efficient, open and accessible to all. They had to have a dynamic, competitive and knowledge-based economy built on a high level of skills. The Government cannot separate mobility from skills, training and education. These are the matters that must occupy the Government: not who getting "licks like peas". The Government has very little time to embark upon planning.

The Government has time for politicizing and corruption allegations. They have made a joke out of corruption. A very serious matter such as corruption has been trivialized. If you look at the Commission of Enquiry with "Judge Judy" on Richmond Street you will understand. Nobody takes corruption as a serious issue in this country because of this Government's handling of the matter. The Attorney General has to defend herself from FW Oil who said she is a liar. While the Government is doing that and making a mockery out of corruption, they are busy campaigning and trying to con the population to win more seats for "licks". I do not know why they bothered in some areas. They sent nine candidates to lose their \$2,000 deposit in Penal/Debe. I imagine this is also poetic justice. The Government is stealing money from the Treasury, through CEPEP, so they may return it by candidates losing their deposits. The Treasury will get back some money from Penal/Debe and Chaguanas; where the PNM will be rejected, clearly.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs must tell us how this legislation is consistent with the new Caribbean economy as it relates to creating jobs in

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Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister must be very clear on the dynamics of our own labour market. He should also tell us the implications for our labour market. The Government must tell us how many certificates were issued by the committee operating under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Where are these persons? Do we have a monitoring mechanism in Trinidad to ensure if persons come in on a certificate to be a bar singer, that they did not move from being a bar singer to a hairdresser? With respect to the 200 persons who were granted certificates, where are they and what are they doing? The Members on the other side are not about that.

Part of this legislation, and all the legislation dealing with this matter, gives the authority to the Government—through the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation—to deport persons coming with these certificates who have committed a crime in Trinidad and Tobago and can be jailed for one year or more. What is the process for doing that? Who is monitoring that: the Ministries of National Security and Rehabilitation, Foreign Affairs or the committee that is busy giving out certificates? Are they enforcing the provisions of this legislation?

How are they going to protect our children? I am not speaking about those who are poisoning them with milk in Barrackpore. Removing him as a mayor will not help; the children are already sick. How will the Minister protect us against artistes who may be coming from other countries—not to perform, because they could have all the time? Mr. Speaker, this legislation is irrelevant, as it relates to artistes coming into Trinidad and Tobago to perform. There are regulations that govern artistes coming into the country to work short-term: 30 days or less. How is the Government going to protect us from artistes who may be coming from other countries and are part of certain types of culture: rap, gang and violence? They can now come in and set up shop and work and influence the children of this country with violence-related music and poor lyrics. How are we going to deal with that issue? Anyone can find a certificate somewhere and come in. While the Government should be busy doing that and protecting this country, they are about associating with criminals, terrorist elements and presiding over a rampant crime wave in Trinidad and Tobago; unable to defend the citizens.

Mr. Speaker, these things rub off. One's conduct would be determined by one's friends. If you associate with criminal elements, that will also characterize your conduct. We were not surprised, that on the last occasion, when the Leader of Government Business on the other side, in concluding, responded to us on the matter of the outstanding moneys owed to the Members of the Opposition said the Government is desirous of bringing legislation—to pay Opposition Members of Parliament—but the Government is saying if legislation is required, the legislation

would be introduced into the House, the day after the Police Service Reform Bills are passed in the Houses of Parliament. That is blackmail! Mr. Speaker, under your watch, the Government is seeking to blackmail the Opposition. We have heard that in the corridor. That is good for the rum shops, but the Government has gone on record to say that its official government policy on this matter is blackmail. In one breath the Government says it understands and empathizes with us. They are desirous of bringing the legislation. They will not be desirous if they do not understand and agree, but it will take place on the morning after they pass the Police Service Reform Bills. That is blackmail at the highest level. If it is not so, the Government is free to retract this statement. If that is the Government's approach on dealing with Opposition and the Members of this House, what is their approach as it relates to dealing with the wider society? Murder, kidnapping and blackmail all go together: that is a family of crime. The Government must be condemned for that. I regard that money as my savings; to get it, I will. One way or the other, that money will be paid. We will not do it by succumbing to blackmail from the Government. We will not do it that way! We will stand firm on that matter.

This is the Government's approach to governance. Not surprisingly, you are called upon to pull us away from our professional work and constituency business in the middle of the week, to respond to the Government's incompetence, having to go to Jamaica at the end of the week and discover that they did not pass the legislation. The Government should also resolve to present to this House a legislative agenda. We need to know what are its priorities. The Government should wake up one morning and realize that Caricom is on its back and the Parliament would have to be summoned to an emergency session.

On this matter, I want to close by re-emphasizing the commitment of those of us on this side to the process of integration to the Single Market and Economy. We have a duty to protect our national interest and workers in this country. We also have a duty to protect the interest of workers throughout the Caricom region: those who may be conned into coming here to face the criminals, murderers, kidnappers and exploitative working conditions in the CEPEP, URP and elsewhere. We have a job to protect them. This is not a government that could be trusted to secure the interests of nationals. This is not a government that we can declare will seek the interest of the workers of Trinidad and Tobago first and others second. This is a government that clearly would seek anything towards its political end. As we are fond of telling them: they are about the next election, not the next generation. They will do everything to win elections; even if it means wrecking the labour market and putting this country back 50 years in our industrial development.

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We also call upon the Government to outline its plan to create permanent, well-paid jobs and to tell us where those jobs would come from. We want to know if those jobs would come from make-work, public sector work programmes or from investment in selected sectors. We also need the Government to spell out in detail its policies and regulations with regard to screening candidates for this certificate. The Government needs to tell us what security checks are in place, so that persons will not disguise themselves as musicians to come into the country for criminal and terrorist activities and they, in turn, will not be exporting criminals and terrorists to Caricom neighbours. We also need to know about language: whether workers in Haiti and Suriname would demonstrate to the authorities that they can speak and write English to qualify for jobs. We need some assurance from the Government that these matters will be treated with as a priority and not placed on the back-burner, so that when we meet for a next amendment to bring other workers, we will be in a position where we can reflect and look at the abuse of this system.

In due course we will be asking questions as to the persons granted these certificates: under what conditions, where they are living, where they are working, what jobs they are doing; vis-a'-vis their qualifications and education. This is a most serious matter. The Parliament must call the Government to account on this matter. There is a real fear that this Government may preside over another mass influx of persons for political purposes. These are the serious matters that we wish to raise.

We assume that the Government is serious and respond when its comes to respond, please stick to the issues. It is a sad example in this Parliament that when we raise issues, those on the Government side will stand and attack our personality and characteristics and say everything, except the issues that we are raising. The issues are very clear. I did not spend all my time speaking about CEPEP and corruption. The Government can write if it wants to. What are the checks and balances in place to prevent the abuse of this certificate: both in our missions abroad and in Trinidad and Tobago? Who have received these certificates? How is the Government defining this? We cannot depend on the definition of artistes, musicians, and sports persons. Which are the recommended national agencies and professional bodies? I have been through these issues. The Government must respond to them. The Government should not tell us about “licks like peas” and the number of seats they would be winning here and there.

The Prime Minister assembled a few days ago, the rank and file of the CEPEP at Woodford Square to announce another “licks like peas” speech. We do not want that today. We want to know what the Government is doing to protect the

interest of workers of Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister announced another madcap plan to fight crime. Incidentally, the announcement of a new crime plan is a startling admission of incompetence that the old crime plan failed. Anaconda, the launch which cost a few million dollars at the Trinidad Hilton, went down the drain. We now have a new crime plan, the elements of which is really the old crime plan. The Prime Minister is fond of these new madcap plans. It must be the new haircut. A brush cutter got away. We are asking the Government to focus on the issues and not politicize this matter by going in detail about electioneering issues. We want them to respond to the very few serious queries that we have raised on this side.

With these few words, I hope that the Minister of Foreign Affairs—who, because of his late arrival in the Chamber, did not have the opportunity to present the Bill and respond to all the queries I am raising—would consider these statements and respond when he is winding up this debate.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Lawrence Achong): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We came here this afternoon to deal with a very simple amendment to the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) (Amdt.) Bill. I have just listened to the Member for Oropouche who spoke for 75 minutes, of which 60 of those 75 minutes dealt with all sorts of matters other than the amendment of this Bill. He talked about crime, CEPEP, electioneering and a whole host of things that bore no relevance to this piece of legislation which we are trying to enact.

One could gather that the UNC is totally opposed to Caribbean integration. I suppose if it was an alliance between Suriname, Guyana and Trinidad, that would have been all right. We have been asked by the Caricom Secretariat to enact legislation that this country and other Caricom countries agreed to. How would Trinidad and Tobago look in the eyes of our other Member States if we were to ignore or to act differently than the rest of them? We have to take into account that in another few years we are going to have the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in place. We will have the Caribbean Single Market and Economy in place and there is going to be need for maximum co-operation between Caricom countries.

This amendment is simple and I do not know why the Opposition is making such a hue and cry over it. We are simply attempting to increase the number of categories of workers from Member States into Trinidad and Tobago. Obviously, the Member for Oropouche, who started his statement by saying he was a bit annoyed that he was called away from his constituency today, felt he had to

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punish us by going all over the place for 75 minutes. He made fun of the categories of workers that we hope to include. He asked what is an artiste? The Opposition could gain entry into anywhere because they are court jesters, every single one of them. They will qualify to go to another Caricom country.

The Member spoke about the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. He knows full well that this Government is on top of the situation, to the extent that we have a unit set up in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to deal with the Caribbean single market and economy. He talked a lot about the labour market. I would have him know that on entry into the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development we saw some piecemeal work there for the establishment of a labour market council in Trinidad and Tobago. We put it in place. His fears about what is going to happen to Trinidadians in terms of their job security is totally unfounded. We get the distinct impression that if the UNC were in government today, Caricom would be one member less. The whole tone of his speech suggested that and I am glad that we do not have too many non-nationals here. I would hate them to think that is the view of Trinidadians. We welcome our brothers from the Caribbean at all times.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the proposed amendments, one cannot reasonably object to them. At present, persons who are graduates of the University of the West Indies are entitled to work in Member States. We are simply saying let us expand the categories and include people who frequently travel from state to state: musicians, artistes, sports persons and media workers. If the Opposition is objecting to this now, when Caricom further opens up the market, what would they say then? That would come eventually. There will be free access of labour throughout the West Indies.

For a moment I thought the Member was campaigning. He was highly political and did not deal with the substance here. His contribution was similar to the one that was delivered to 45 persons in Point Fortin on Monday night. I listened to every word. Even the chairs were hostile to them. There is really nothing much to debate in terms of this Bill. I would think that as the junior Minister of Labour—with respect to the questions he has posed here, having been in that position for well over a year—he should have been in a position to give us some facts and figures which he asked for. I could let him know that—given the exercises we have been taking—this Government is well poised to bring unemployment levels down to 5 per cent within a year or two. When the Member talks about trying to get the unemployment level down to 8 per cent by 2010, we are well ahead of that.

Mr. Speaker, the question of jeopardizing the jobs of Trinidadians by the enactment of this piece of legislation does not come into play. For that to happen, it would mean that this Government would be extremely irresponsible. That is the impression the Member is giving. That certainly is not the mode of operation of a PNM government. Obviously, the question of total, political and economic integration of Caricom States does not ride well with the UNC. We cannot escape it. We will flounder and die if we try to exist out there as Trinidad and Tobago alone. I would expect that the Opposition would support this amendment in its entirety, not that we really need it. It would signal to the rest of the Caricom that Trinidad and Tobago is and wants to continue to be part of a strong, forward-thinking, integrated region.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, I join this debate and would like to begin by complimenting my colleague, the Member of Parliament for Oropouche, for his well researched contribution, which is in total contrast to the contribution of the Minister of Labour and Small Micro Enterprise and Development. He was totally unprepared. He had nothing to say. As the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, to come to this Parliament and say that the Bill before us is a simple amendment, is a clear demonstration that he does not understand the danger and impact of the amendment that is before this Parliament today. He has absolutely no idea of what is going to take place in Trinidad and Tobago when we open the floodgates in this manner.

As Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, with responsibility for the workers of this country, he has absolutely no idea of what is going to happen when 3.6 million Haitians now feel they have free paper to come into Trinidad and Tobago. Unemployment is so high in the rest of the Caricom region. The unemployment level is 20 per cent in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a great friend of the Member for San Fernando East. I do not understand what is the mesmerizing effect the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines seems to have on our Prime Minister, but each time he appears, our Prime Minister is giving handouts. There seems to be a strange relationship. I am told that the unemployment rate is 30 per cent in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In all the islands, there is this imbalance in development. When we bring an amendment to allow these persons to come into Trinidad and Tobago, the question we must ask is: which person in Trinidad and Tobago wants to go and live indefinitely in any one of those places? [*Interruption*] Member for Arouca South, please go. We will be very happy to see that. This amendment is anything but simple.

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My colleague from Oropouche read some of the definitions which we will come to in a moment. I am so disappointed that the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development of this country would say nothing about what he would do for the workers of this country and what kind of jobs he would provide. He said he would bring down unemployment by 5 per cent. Does not tell us when, where or what, despite the issues raised by a person who really knows about labour: the Member for Oropouche. When you lift the Order Paper it says "Special Sitting". The only thing on this Order Paper today is this Bill. It is an extraordinary sitting that we have been summoned to. The question is why? What is the urgency of this Bill? Why is it so imperative that we pass this Bill in this Parliament today? What is so urgent that we must come and say: "We are going to give "free papers" to musicians, artistes, sport persons and media workers? What is the urgency that the Government brings us to Parliament when, already, these persons have no difficulty in entering Trinidad and Tobago? What is the urgency? If we had come here today to pass legislation to deal with whistle-blowers, we would have been far more satisfied than to come here to deal with legislation for bringing musicians and artistes.

Crime is on the rampage and out of control in this country. The Prime Minister stood in Woodford Square and said the Government is going to spend \$3 million for whistle-blowers. He does not know that this is legislation which we had brought to the Parliament. He says he is now going to do that. He should not come in a hurry and with such urgency to deal with putting legislation in place to protect the whistle-blowers. No, that is not a matter of priority. The Government's priority is to bring musicians, artistes, sports persons and media persons for more PNM fete and bacchanal. Why do we want these persons here? What is the urgency that the Government has brought us here?

If the Government had come here to pass laws for the protection of the workers, we would have been happy to join in that exercise. It is now 45 days since the disabled persons are protesting to get work, but that is not a priority for the Government. The Government comes to the Parliament to ask us to pass law to allow musicians, artistes and sports persons to come into Trinidad and Tobago. If the Government had come here today to ask us to pass laws to increase the minimum wage, that would have been something that we would have joined them in. Here it is, they come again: musicians, artistes and sports persons. What is the urgency? Why is that so important? If the Government had come here to carry out its promise about the NIS, which was really the UNC's proposal that is being put into place: to harmonize NIS with income tax, we would have supported that, but that is not a priority. Priority No. 1 is to bring musicians, artistes and sports

persons into Trinidad and Tobago. The Government has brought us out here on Wednesday.

My colleague for Oropouche spoke about incompetence. This Government is operating by “vaps”. They needed to pass a budget, they brought the budget and passed it. When they wanted more money to run the election campaign, they increased the budget. They had to deal with the presidential election, they brought that. Look at the legislative agenda. There is absolutely no policy guiding that legislative agenda since we have returned to Parliament. There is absolutely no agenda: it is “vaps”. Every time the Government quickly discovers something—the Prime Minister has to go to Jamaica—they have to pass a Bill, so they brought us here to Parliament to pass this Bill. The government has brought us to Parliament to spend money. They brought us here to get \$200 million for the Caribbean Court of Justice. Why? So that the Prime Minister can go to Jamaica and say: “Listen fellas I got the money.”

Whilst it is that the Caricom has never stood up for justice for Trinidad and Tobago, our Prime Minister is giving that priority to the Caricom first. I am being advised that our goods have been banned from going into certain Caricom countries. Is anything being done about that? When we look at the Bill itself it is cause for great fear and concern in this country. We need to go backwards, because we have to go back to the parent law, which is Act No. 26 of 1996. This law was passed by a UNC administration in 1996. Even then, when the parent law was passed, we came with the Bill to Parliament with a very restricted number of persons to be included under this Bill. Our concern has always been the same: there is unequal development within the island states. Therefore, where Trinidad and Tobago is at a different position economically and otherwise than the other countries, we needed to give Trinidad and Tobago that protection so that our citizens would be protected first.

In 1996, we came with the Bill, based on the protocols that had been agreed to with the Caricom states, that we would allow professionals. That is what the Bill stated in 1996, when the UNC came to this Parliament: only professionals such as dentists, lawyers, et cetera. Those on the other side said: “No, that is not good enough, let us make it include all university graduates.” We went along with that proposal and we included them within the Bill. We removed the professionals as being the only category and said all university graduates. Within that 1996 law, was put into place the criteria and manner in which the qualifications would be accredited as being those that would qualify persons to come under the ambit of the law: to allow them to get this free movement within the Caricom. The

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university graduates were the first set. We had no problems with changing “professionals” to “university graduates”. Let us face it, Trinidad and Tobago contributes the majority of money towards the University of the West Indies. It was a joint effort and those persons would have been trained in that manner and would have had that free movement within the region. We agreed to that and it went into Act No. 26 of 1996.

Thereafter, in 2001 we came back to amend the law. We amended the law to clear up some of the difficulties that the Ministry of National Security had pointed out in terms of immigration procedures. We changed the law in 2001. Here we are again today, where we are seeking to widen the category of persons. The Bill clearly states that the purpose of the Bill is :

“...to widen beyond university graduates, the categories of persons eligible for free movement in Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), to include artistes, musicians, sports persons and media workers.

The Bill would also widen the application of the Act to include persons qualifying as citizens of qualifying Caribbean Community States by descent, registration, naturalization and adoption and put beyond doubt the authority of immigration officers to permit the spouses and dependent members of persons who satisfy the qualification requirements of the Act, to enter Trinidad and Tobago.

Finally, the Bill would include in the list of qualifying Caribbean Community States, Haiti, the latest full member of CARICOM.”

My first objection is to the inclusion of Haiti within the ambit of these provisions under the immigration laws to be included under the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) (Amdt.) Bill. My colleague from Oropouche has made the point and I want to reiterate that point: we have 3.6 million Haitians who are unemployed and cannot be employed who could and want to benefit by coming into Trinidad and Tobago under a provision like this. It is my respectful view that Haiti should not be included in the amendment. Yes, Haiti is a partner in the Caricom movement, but that does not mean that Haiti must be given the provisions under this particular piece of law. They could be members of the Caricom, but when we come to this, it is not the time for us to be including Haiti. I am advised that Antigua has banned the Haitians from coming in. Why would we in Trinidad and Tobago want 3.6 million Haitians banging on our doors? What is going to happen to us in Trinidad and Tobago? How are we going to decide which Haitian should come and which should not? When a man

blows a whistle and stumps his foot is he an artiste? Are you an artiste when you blow a mouth organ? How would we determine who is artiste and who is not? “Every man Jack” is going to be an artiste, musician or sports person. If a man wins a relay race, is he a sportsman? Are these the persons who would come to Trinidad and Tobago? The frightening thing, is nowhere in this law is there any qualification or restriction which says that if you come in as an artiste, musician or sports person, the only kind of work that you can do when you come into Trinidad and Tobago is that of an artiste, musician or sports person. That is a very dangerous thing. A person may run a relay race and gets a piece of paper to come into Trinidad and Tobago under this law. What is he coming here to do? He is going to take somebody’s job.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, let us not lose the point, it is a dangerous point that has nothing to do with Members and me, but it has to do with the people of Trinidad and Tobago who are seeking jobs out there. There are so many of our persons who are unemployed, and the Government is going to bring a sports person who runs a relay race, a musician who blows a mouth organ or whatever under this law, and that person could stay for an indefinite duration, and that means the rest of his life. That person could come and go as he pleases, and he has that free movement as any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, when he comes here, there is nothing that says, that person is a sportsman, musician or an artiste and that he must work in that particular field.

The Bill also says, well, not only you could come, but look who could come also. In addition to that person coming in by himself, he could bring his spouse and every dependent member of his family. Let us go back to the parent Act and find out what “dependent member of the family” means. So this person is coming with four, five or six persons—“toute bagai”. Where are they going to work? Who is going to sustain them and maintain them? Is it this one sportsman or one musician? Who is going to do it?

When one looks at Act No. 6 of 2001, the amendment that was made says:

“‘dependent member of the family’ in relation to a person means—

- (a) a child or step-child under the age of 18 years;”

So, the person is coming, and he is coming with a spouse, so that is already one person extra, and then that person may have two, three or four children under 18 and, in addition:

“(b) a child over the age of eighteen years and wholly dependent on that person for his subsistence;”

So, if you are over 18 years and not working anywhere, you are wholly dependent now on this musician or sportsman:

“(c) a parent and a grandparent wholly dependant on that person for their subsistence;”

So here it is, grandma, grandpa, stepchildren or children under 18 or over 18—when one sportsman is coming into this country, he could bring five or six persons with him. Are these people going to work as sportsmen or musicians? Where are they going to work? When they need to go the school, which schools will they be going to and who will be paying for them? When they need to go to the hospital for care, who is going to pay for that? So, for every person that the Government is letting in for that skill, it is letting in five, six or up to 10 persons under this law, and that is a very dangerous piece of legislation.

So, there are dependents that would be coming in with artistes, musicians or sports person. I want us to look at the Representation of the People Act, because what the law says is this person could come in here “for a period of indefinite duration”. What are the rights of a person who comes into the country now? Under this very law, he could acquire property and own property and work anywhere. Do you know what rights this person now requires? That person requires residential rights. What are residential rights? Under the Representation of the People Act, sections 12 and 13 define who could be an elector in this country and it says:

“A person is qualified to be an elector for an electoral district at a Parliamentary election, a Country Council election or the Tobago House of Assembly election, who on the qualifying date—

- (a) is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago; or
- (b) is a Commonwealth citizen, other than a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago of the age of eighteen years or upwards who has resided in Trinidad and Tobago for a period of at least one year.”

So when the musician and sportsman and so forth comes in—I am talking about the person from Haiti or anywhere in the Caricom—under this law and resides here for one year, that person now gains rights to vote in a parliamentary election, which could determine, Mr. Speaker, whether you are the Speaker or not. They now have the right to vote in a parliamentary election; they have the

right to vote in a county council election; a Tobago House of Assembly election; a borough election or a City Corporation Election after one year. After one year of living here they would have acquired these rights. So here are the sportsmen, musicians artistes and so forth of no fixed definition.

My friend from Oropouche read out the *Draft Manual of Administrative Procedures* which attempted to lay out some guidelines as to who would be media workers, artistes and sports persons, but this is not part of the proposed Bill. This does not form any basis on which a decision would be made as to whether a certificate under this law would be granted; it does not. This forms no part of it. The danger in all of this is that when one looks at the Bill, it is stated clearly who is going to make the decision as to who is a sports person, artiste, musician and so forth, and it says that those persons would be determined—and I read the proposed clause 5:

“9A. Notwithstanding sections 8 and 9, an applicant who is a citizen of a qualifying Caribbean Community State and possesses any qualification or experience or combination of qualification and experience that to the satisfaction of the Minister proves that the applicant is—

- (a) an artiste;
- (b) a musician;
- (c) a sports person; or
- (d) a media worker,”

The only person, who has to be satisfied that the man who runs the relay race is a sports person, is the Minister; the only person who has to be satisfied that a man playing the mouth organ is an artiste, is the Minister; and the only one who needs to determine who is the musician or the media worker, is the Minister. There are absolutely no checks and balances within the proposed amendment, absolutely none whatsoever. And here it is a politician is going to be making the decisions as to who is an artiste, sports person, musician or a media worker. This is totally unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall in the 1960s what happened when the then PNM administration lost the federal elections. The floodgates were opened up in this country for all the illegal emigrants, coming out of Grenada to flood Trinidad and Tobago. That is what happened after the PNM lost the federal elections, and they brought all these persons into Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* You see, the Member’s mindset is so totally tunnel vision, racist! All the Member could talk

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about are Guyana and Suriname. What is the Member's obsession with Guyana and Suriname? What is the Member's obsession?

Mr. B. Panday: Racist!

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, in 1998, when the then NAR Government decided that they would grant amnesties to all the Caricom illegal emigrants who were living here at that time—it was estimated to be 150,000 persons—and each of those persons would have had children and other dependents. That was the situation then and what is going to happen is that these persons are now going to become illegal emigrants, and my fear and concern is compounded, because as of today, the Minister of Legal Affairs would be giving out free birth certificates. [*Desk thumping*] Our fear and concern has to do with the way that the PNM operates. What is going to happen with these matters without the checks and balances. Is it that the Government is going to change the demographics of Trinidad and Tobago? Is the Government going to bring disequilibrium in the demographics as it operates? The Government is also going to damage severely, the way of life as we know it in Trinidad and Tobago for all of us as citizens and, especially, for our workers, because for every musician, artiste and sports person who brings five or six persons, it is someone's job right here in this country that person would have to take. Does a musician work for the whole year? Does a sportsman work for the whole year? Does the artiste work for the whole year?

The Member for Arima indicated that there were certain festivals and festivities where artistes are required, such as Crop Over, Carnival and so forth. There were times when activities were taking place and these people have had no difficulty in coming to Trinidad or any of the islands. I have not heard of a single case, up to today, where a sportsman has been debarred from coming into this country to participate in an event or as an artiste to participate in any event. We have heard of none of that.

If it is that the Government wants to facilitate these persons, the law already exists for them. I ask the question: What is the urgency and importance now of bringing in persons in this manner? If the Government stands to tell me that the UNC began this, I would like to read into the record, a statement made by the then hon. Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, on Friday, July 10, 1998. I want to make it very clear that we have no difficulty with the movement towards Caricom integration; we have no difficulty whatsoever with Caricom and working with them, but our difficulty is that this is not the time for workers such as these to come in without any checks and balances. To show that we have been consistent

with regard to that, I would now read the statement dated Friday, July 10, 1998 by the then Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday and he said:

“Mr. Speaker, a number of protocols amending the Treaty of Chaguaramas were signed at the 19th Caricom Summit and several more are due to be signed shortly. The Summit was impressed with the acceleration in the implementation of the Caricom single market and economy, and agreed to work towards the implementation of the remaining major elements by 1999.

One of the elements of the Caricom single market and economy is the free movement of university graduates holding designated degrees. A policy of free movement that would include media and sports personnel, artistes, musicians and skilled personnel is being considered.”

Mr. Speaker, I pause for a moment to say that here it is, in this statement made in 1998; we were talking about university graduates—and that law was passed in this Parliament.

“Contrary to the impression that has been widely promoted by the hegemonic regional media interests and political partisans, Caricom is yet to establish the certification and accreditation mechanisms to provide for the inclusion of media and sports personnel, artistes, musicians and skilled personnel. To my knowledge, no member country has the statutes and mechanisms relevant to these additional categories of skilled persons in place.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, consideration of these measures must, of necessity, take into account the fact that with the inclusion of Suriname, and with the imminent inclusion of Haiti, Caricom is about to move from an English-speaking community of six million people to an English, Dutch and French community of some 14 million people. That is going to be a lot of media and sports personnel, artistes, musicians and skilled personnel and their families, who would be expected to have their automatic right to move to Trinidad and Tobago, or to any Caricom state of their choice to reside and seek employment in their fields.”

And I repeat the quotation:

“That is going to be a lot of media and sports personnel, artistes, musicians and skilled personnel and their families, who would be expected to have their automatic right to move to Trinidad and Tobago, or to any Caricom state of their choice to reside and seek employment in their fields.”

I continue the quotation of Mr. Basdeo Panday of July 10, 1998:

“Mr. Speaker, there is considerable work to be done by the Caricom Secretariat and by member governments before Trinidad and Tobago would be in a position to implement this policy. For example, there would have to be a common understanding of who is to qualify as an artiste. Would an exotic dancer—some people call them belly dancers—qualify for this designation? For that matter, is it not a fact that every West Indian male, and a goodly number of West Indian females, see themselves as sport persons? When we speak of skilled personnel, to whom do we refer? Do stenographers and carpenters fall into this category? Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to accept that elected leaders and public officials would even think of embarking on the consensual chaos that would result from immediate implementation in all these categories identified in Caricom free movement aspirations.”

Mr. Speaker, since then, this proposal from Caricom that media, musicians, artistes, sports personnel and so forth would be included in the free movement legislation has been there during the time of the UNC administration, but the then Prime Minister and the UNC administration took a conscious decision that we could not open the floodgates to these persons for the reasons just raised within the quotation that I have quoted from Mr. Panday’s statement and that remains our position.

The Government has brought the legislation and there is nowhere within the legislation the Government identifies, defines or demarcates in any way, who would be these personnel. What criteria would be used to assess them, except to say that the Minister must be satisfied, and that is not good enough.

When we brought the legislation, the parent law, we indicated that university graduates would be able to have free movement, and heated debate arose in this Parliament here in the House and in the Senate. I remember the Member for Diego East was particularly concerned with respect to how we deal with the qualifications of who would be the university graduates; who would have accredited these people; and the issue arose about the university of Guyana—and, again, Guyana, the Member’s obsession—the Member was very heated about whether the University of Guyana graduates should be accepted and put under this law.

Mr. Imbert: Me?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Yes, the *Hansard* record is there; I read it last night. I would bring it when I am finished speaking. The Member for Diego Martin East said that the University of Guyana graduates do not qualify. There were very serious arguments in this House and in the Senate about the certification

requirements, and when we passed the parent law, we set out in the parent law, how we would determine these university graduates. I want to read that because it substantiates the point now that we are dealing with the artistes and so forth.

When we brought Act No. 26 of 1996; we set out the qualification requirements as follows and I quote:

“(1) The following qualifications satisfy the qualification requirements of this Act:

- (a) a degree of the University of the West Indies, of the University of Technology, Jamaica, or of the University of Guyana, designated as a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctor’s’ degree; or
- (b) a degree of Doctorandus, Meester, Licentiates, or Doctor of the University of Suriname; or
- (c) any University degree which is recommended by the University of the West Indies to be at least comparable in academic standing with a qualification in...
- (d) a certification from the Secretary-General...on the recommendation of the University of the West Indies.”

So the University of the West Indies is the accredited agency to monitor and look at all degrees from all over the world and say, “Well, yes, these are comparable in academic standing.” There was this monitoring, check and balance.

- (d) a certificate from the Secretary General of the Caribbean Community attesting that university level qualification possessed by the applicant satisfied the conditions for recognition of Caribbean Community skills qualification, such certification to be issued on the recommendation of the University of the West Indies, or”

Again, the University of the West Indies is given that role of determining the fitness of the qualification.

- “(e) a certificate from any authority, designated by the Minister by Order as an accrediting authority for the purposes of this section, attesting that university level qualifications possessed by the applicant satisfy the conditions for recognition of Caribbean Community skills qualification, such certificate to be issued on the recommendation of the University of the West Indies, or
- (f) any qualification or combination of qualifications in a list—

- (i) compiled from time to time by any authority designated by the Minister by Order as an accrediting authority for the purposes of this section, on the recommendation of the University of the West Indies;”

So at every point, the University of the West Indies was given that oversight to ensure that the credentials and the qualifications would be for those of proper academic standing.

- “(ii) Prescribed by the Minister by Order, on the recommendation of the University of the West Indies, as a list of qualifications and combinations of qualifications satisfying the qualification requirements of this Act.”

Again within this section it tells us:

“For the purposes of this subsection (1)(d), authority includes—

- (a) any institution or other body whether or not—
 - (i) incorporated;
 - (ii) established under the authority of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago or of any other qualifying...state;
 - (iii) established under any written law;
 - (iv) situated in Trinidad and Tobago;”

Mr. Speaker, the point that I am making is that we cannot leave it up to the discretion of the Minister to decide whether a sports person is, in fact, a sports person and the kind of musician that we are looking at. Within the law, we should set that check and balance here and now. It should not be left to an administrative decision to be made at some later point. That is what we had done when we dealt with the University of the West Indies, and we did it in conjunction with the then Opposition, because they were very concerned about keeping up standards, and about having that authority to grant such a certificate taken away from the discretion of a politician such as a Minister.

The Member for Point Fortin said it very clear that they do not need my support or any other Member’s support. The Government has the majority and they are going to pass this Bill. If the Government is serious about what is to happen to the people and the workers of Trinidad and Tobago, then the Government must put the checks and balances in. It is not about us sitting on the UNC Bench. The Government must put that check and balance in which it is to

say; let us amend it in such a way that it would not be left open to abuse, so that any relay runner, mouth organ player or whistle blower would qualify. We need to put the check and balance; we cannot leave it open, and that is the first major point. If the Government leaves it open it would open a floodgate, because the Government could no longer turn them down once the person gets the qualifying documents from his country.

Once the country that the person is coming from gives him the qualifying documents and say, "Listen, he is a qualified sports person and so forth," the Minister here now—under whose hands that falls to make the final decision—cannot turn it down; and then the Government would really need the Caribbean Court of Justice in the original jurisdiction to deal with those disputes, where people would be turned down or not turned down. The Government cannot turn it down, because it would be taken out of its hands; please keep it within your hands by putting it into the domestic legislation of Trinidad and Tobago. Do not leave it up to Caricom. Let it be part of our domestic law in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, this matter is not just about us sitting in this Parliament here, it is about all the persons outside there, as well as those who would come tomorrow in this nation. So that if the Government opens these floodgates for any Tom, Dick, Brown and Harrylal to come in, we are going to see this disequilibrium in the demographics of this county that would bring us to a sorry past. I am asking the hon. Minister to look at that again and to place the check and balance for the accreditation, monitoring, assessing and determining of which one of these persons would qualify under the law. Let it be placed today in the legislation. The Government is in a hurry to take this up to Jamaica to say that my Parliament has passed it and that is fine. If the Government wants to go with it, go with it, but do it properly so that we will not live to regret this forever more.

The second plea that I am making—apart from the check and balance—is that the Government needs to remove Haiti from this schedule. Haiti would remain in the Caricom, but Haiti should not be given the privileges that the Government is putting under this Bill. Again, as I said, it is not a UNC situation, it is not a PNM situation, it is about the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and it is about 3.6 million Haitians who would now be given free paper to enter this country, and I ask the Government to please look at that.

Mr. Speaker, we are consistent in our position that we want to forward Caribbean integration; we are committed to Caribbean people living as a community, but we must put Trinidad and Tobago workers and citizens first. Our priority has to be the people of Trinidad and Tobago; it cannot be the people of

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the Caricom, and that was totally apparent from the statement I read from the hon. Basdeo Panday that he made in 1998, with respect to the commitment that was given to Caricom, but the then hon. Prime Minister came here and said that is Caricom's position, but we have to look after our people first. We must look after the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago first.

What are the benefits then for Trinidad and Tobago? I hope the Minister could respond to that question. What are the benefits in giving a free paper of indefinite duration to live in Trinidad and Tobago to a sports person or a musician? Do we really need sports persons and musicians to come here to live indefinitely? Do we really need persons in the technology field—given globalization and this age of knowledge and technology information—to come here and live indefinitely? Is this the kind of free worker movement that we need? What do we need for the development of Trinidad and Tobago?

It was said that in Trinidad and Tobago, we have the lowest level of persons moving on to tertiary education, and that is why the university graduates were being brought in to allow free movement. We were looking after the interest of Trinidad and Tobago and not just that of Caricom. We needed more persons of tertiary-level education, so we brought the parent law, to allow university graduates to come in. Do we really need a free movement of musicians at this time? The artistes could come for Carnival—they have been coming—and I have been making that point over and over. Do we need them to come here and live for an indefinite duration with five, six, seven and eight dependent members and their spouse, who would also live for an indefinite duration and for them now to be able to work in any place in any part of Trinidad and Tobago? Do we need that at this time for the development of Trinidad and Tobago?

Whilst the Government is going to Caricom its mission cannot be that Caricom must be its first and foremost goal; the Government's mission when it goes to Caricom must be that Trinidad and Tobago must be its first and foremost goal. There was a famous Caribbean man, Shridath Ramphal who said, "I am a Caribbean man first and a Guyanese second." I want to state very clearly that I am a Trinidadian and Tobagonian first and a Caricom second, and all of us must take that attitude. [*Desk thumping*] We must understand that we are Trinidadians and Tobagonians first before we go to the Caricom.

So, our Prime Minister goes off to Caricom—and the way, in which he has been behaving in the last several months, it is again a cause for serious worry. We came on Monday last so that the Prime Minister could have announced \$200 million for the Caribbean Court of Justice. Nothing in our domestic law approves

a Caribbean Court of Justice, but he wants to run off to Jamaica to say, “Listen fellows, I got this \$200 million for you all, I have the money.” Today, we are here again, so that the Prime Minister could go back and tell them, “Well, listen all of you who could play music and thing, come; sportsmen come, artistes come and look, I have satisfied this, here I am; I am being a good boy, and I am part of this team, I have done what you have asked me to do,” without any consideration being given to Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that our Prime Minister is now on a mission to deal with the problems of Caricom rather than with the problems of Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister is more concerned with going off to Jamaica to talk about a regional stabilization fund—the Caricom region putting money into some kind of fund to stabilize the fluctuations and the problems in the economies of the Caricom—but right here in Trinidad and Tobago, as the Member for St. Joseph pointed out last week, the Revenue Stabilization Fund to deal with fluctuations in oil prices here, the Prime Minister does not seem concerned about that. That is not a priority. The Prime Minister’s mission appears to look after the whole Caricom and the Caribbean with Trinidad and Tobago taking second place. That is totally unacceptable! If the Prime Minister believes that when he goes to Caricom by allowing them to bring sports persons, musicians and artistes and tell all his friends up there—Gonzales and the others—“Look, we get this, all yuh could come now,” and that is going to make the people of Trinidad and Tobago happy, the Prime Minister is going to find out on July 14, 2003. The Government cannot do that to the workers here.

My colleague mentioned it and the Member knows that right here in Trinidad and Tobago, BWIA retrenched 617; Caroni (1975) Limited, 10,000 workers on the breadline; Mc Donald’s, 145 workers went on the breadline; Trinidad Cement Limited, 70 workers went on the breadline; Carib Glassworks, 81 workers went on the breadline; Airports Authority, 38 workers went on the breadline; TIDCO, 20 workers went on the breadline; 40 data entry clerks at Customs and Excise went on the breadline; there was retrenchment at Nestles; and dismissed officers at TTPost. The Government fired all these people when it came into office. Recently, I saw where the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Self-Help Commission was fired. The Government is putting all these people on the breadline—no jobs out there for the people—but they are bringing in musicians, artistes and so forth. The Government is going to find out on July 14, 2003—and they are talking about “licks like peas”—where the “licks like peas” would be falling; certainly not on this side. The people of Trinidad and Tobago cannot be satisfied with a Bill like this that has no checks and balances.

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Mr. Speaker, the only reason I could think for the urgency and priority that the Prime Minister is giving to the Caribbean and Caricom and not to Trinidad and Tobago has to be—Members would recall when the hon. Prime Minister declared that he was father of the nation, he is no longer satisfied with being father of the nation, he now wants to be godfather of the Caricom. So it is hand out loans here; give out money here; and give out grants there. We went through this already. Under the last PNM administration, the PNM loaned out billions of dollars to Caricom neighbours, which were never paid. Under the Paris Club we had to write-off the moneys to Guyana—billions of dollars—because he felt that he was some kind of godfather to the entire Caribbean. We do not have any difficulty with helping them, but help home first.

Mr. Gonzales came to Trinidad and Tobago and the Prime Minister got a “vaps” again and started to talk about political union, and no Caricom nation is interested, except those who want to be able to flock into Trinidad and Tobago; take from Trinidad and Tobago and who cannot give to Trinidad and Tobago.

The Prime Minister of Barbados made it very clear that he wants no part of that political union that the Member for San Fernando East spoke about. The Prime Minister for Jamaica, Mr. Patterson, wants no part of that; and Barbados opted out of that proposed political union. They want no part of it. My colleague was telling me that they were saying that they were hearing a tune, but with no melody. What the Government wants is the money out of Trinidad and Tobago; they want to support this Revenue Regional Stabilization Fund that I mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, if one looks at LIAT and BWIA, again, Prime Minister Manning wants to be the godfather of the Caricom.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, I was on the point of why Trinidad and Tobago must now become the godfather of the Caricom, and this whole madness about the political union that the Member for San Fernando East spoke about. The Prime Minister of St. Vincent did not come here to talk about any such thing, he came to see cricket, and whilst they were “liming” in the oval when the cricketing was going on, the next day, our Prime Minister “vaps” again and says, “Political union with St. Vincent”, but Jamaica and Barbados who are the more

developed Caricom nations said to leave them out. I read this article by Rickey Singh and Curtis Williams and it says:

“Jamaican Prime Minister PJ Patterson and his Barbados counterpart, Owen Arthur, sent a clear message yesterday that they were not interested in forming any political alliance at this time with Trinidad and Tobago, as has been proposed by Prime Minister Patrick Manning.”

And I repeat:

“Jamaica Prime Minister PJ Patterson and his Barbados counterpart, Owen Arthur, sent a clear message yesterday that they were not interested in forming any political alliance at this time with Trinidad and Tobago, as has been proposed by Prime Minister Patrick Manning.”

Sharing a media briefing ahead of the closing session last evening of Caricom’s 14th Inter-sessional Meeting at Crowne Plaza Hotel in Port of Spain, Patterson and Arthur were anxious to make a distinction between ‘governance’ to enhance the economic integration process, and any new form of ‘governance involving political union’.

Patterson maintained Jamaica’s position and, using a cricket analogy, said he did not intend to let Jamaica ‘be caught out’ on a no-ball.”

It was very clear that they want no part of any political union with us.

“He said Jamaica regarded Caricom ‘as a community of sovereign states. Jamaica intends to remain a single sovereign state’.

The Barbados Prime Minister was less forthright in his rejection of the proposal, saying there was insufficient information.

He told the news conference: ‘The notion of proceeding to another different form of integration has been posed. Our position in Barbados is that those who are seeking to put this new concept have a responsibility to give us a concept paper. As the situation stands now, what we have is a song that has an enchanting melody, but no lyrics.

Patterson and Arthur were offering explanations and making distinctions between separate calls by the two regional Prime Ministers for Caricom to move towards political union.

First, there was the statement by the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, during a public lecture on Wednesday night that advocated ‘a sturdy confederal political arrangement’ among Caricom states.

In 2002, Gonsalves had announced his preparedness for St. Vincent and the Grenadines to team up with any one or two other Caricom states to launch some form of political union.

On Friday it was Manning's turn to make his own declaration on political unity.

To the evident surprise of some of this regional colleagues at the opening session of the meeting on Friday, Manning said:

'Let us firmly put on the table Trinidad and Tobago's intention to enter into discussions with any Caribbean country willing to pursue with us the objective of Caribbean political integration.'

Paterson and Arthur acknowledged the right of their other colleagues to move towards political unity, and expressed willingness to support them in such an objective, but said they could not now be so involved."

Mr. Speaker, now look at what happens thereafter. The Prime Minister of St. Vincent tells Mr. Manning, "Let us do it alone. If these people do not want to do it, then let us do it alone." That is why I asked the question what is this special relationship with Mr. Manning and the Prime Minister of St. Vincent. There was a headline on the *Express* newspaper dated February 14, 2003 which says: "St. Vincent PM urges political union Let's go without Jamaica" and I quote:

"St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves has called for a political union that leaves out Jamaica.

In outlining his case for a union of the islands of the Eastern and Southern Caribbean, Gonsalves said his proposal did not incorporate Jamaica because he felt that country was not yet ready for political integration.

Gonsalves' proposed union would take the form of a confederal political arrangement similar to that of the European Union but with variations to suit the Caribbean realities.

He made the proposal while delivering the inaugural lecture in Caricom's distinguished lecture series at the Hilton Trinidad on Wednesday night.

He warned that the Caribbean islands had little choice but to be part of a political union.

'This Caribbean identity demands an institutional political expression of the deepest kind possible for it not to languish in inchoateness and perhaps eventually wither and die. This is a great cause and great causes are not won by doubtful men and women.'

The Vincentian Prime Minister argued that there were essentially two options facing the region: the well-beaten path of the post-independence period: and the Caribbean as an authentic independent civilization.”

So, when Prime Minister Arthur and Prime Minister Patterson say, “No way”, the Prime Minister of St. Vincent says, “Mr. Manning and himself could do it alone.”

On the *Express* newspaper dated February 14, 2003 the headline says: “Manning takes Caricom lead” and I quote:

“Prime Minister Patrick Manning last night announced that Trinidad and Tobago would leap ahead of its Caricom partners and unilaterally widen the categories of regional workers...”

This is important because how many other Caricom States have widened? Again, the godfather of the nation, and the leading light for the Caribbean and Caricom has been saying since February—and only today we are here with this Bill—taken by surprise, they brought this Bill over the long holiday weekend, so they felt we could not do the research properly and I quote:

“Trinidad and Tobago would leap ahead of its Caricom partners and unilaterally widen the categories of regional workers who can be employed in this country without a permit to include skilled construction workers.”

So here he is saying musicians and artistes and so forth and now he is saying construction workers.

“In addition he has committed Trinidad and Tobago to be ready to implement the Caribbean Single Market and Economy by year’s end.

Hours ahead of today’s opening of the Caricom Heads of Government meeting Manning said masons and carpenters among other skilled construction workers will be targeted since they were in short supply in this country.

The issue of the free movement of labour has been a sticking point in the region with individual territories worried about being flooded by nationals from poorer member states.”

In the region, the other states are worried about being flooded by poorer states, and here in Trinidad and Tobago we are not worried at all, when every one of those states are poorer than Trinidad and Tobago. Why is that? Again, we have a Prime Minister who now wants to be godfather of Caricom. I continue to quote from the *Express* newspaper of February 14, 2003:

“But Manning said: ‘We are making this move to treat with our own peculiar situation and so while we are not required to be ready for the single

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market and economy until 2005 we intend to be ready by the end of the year and similarly we also intend to allow other categories of workers not now covered by the Caricom agreements to work legally in this country.'

So they are not even covered by the Caricom agreements, but our Prime Minister is now saying, "We are going to bring them in, we are in front, we will bring in anyone inside here to come and work, not to worry with all these workers at BWIA, PTSC, Port, Caroni (1975) Limited and Petrotrin and so on, do not worry these workers do not have jobs; do not worry about them, but we are going to bring in other workers; even though the Caricom Agreements did not cover them, and did not say that you must bring them." Why this great haste, hurry and urgency to bring people out of the other Caribbean islands. Do we not have enough problems here to deal with in our health sector; in our education sector; national security, jobs and housing? Do we have enough to see about? Why does the Government want more? Why does the Government want to bring in those people who are not even covered by the Caricom agreements? So, fine, the Government comes and says that these people are covered by the Caricom agreement, the Government needs to stagger that and do it incrementally. The Government just cannot come and bring these people into Trinidad. What madness is this!

"Manning, who is chairing...said he was encouraged by today's discussions on a political union among member states.

He said it was no secret that Jamaica was not in a position to consider a political union but St. Vincent, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago were particularly enthusiastic about the possibilities.

He said while Trinidad and Tobago did not wish to prejudge the outcome of the discussions he felt Barbados' proposal for a Caribbean Commission could find favour this time around although it was rejected just over a decade ago when a West Indian Commission was recommended.

'I think the circumstances are much different this time around and it may lead to that proposal being accepted'..."

This is our Prime Minister, who is now telling this country that he is willing to bring in carpenters, masons, construction workers, whether they are covered by Caricom or not; anyone could just come. This is the commitment that the Prime Minister was giving that he takes the lead into Caricom, and while he wants to help the Caribbean brothers and neighbours so much, what is happening here in Trinidad and Tobago?

I want to talk a little on what my colleague for St. Joseph mentioned last week about what is going on with LIAT and BWIA. Here, again, there was no interest whatsoever when BWIA was going down and laying off workers, but “Govt distances itself from BWIA layoffs”. This is the headline in the *Newsday* newspaper dated January 31, 2003 and it says:

“Prime Minister Patrick Manning yesterday washed his hands of the BWIA retrenchment issue, saying that the airline, in which government has a significant shareholding, was a private company and therefore, ‘it is not for the Government to be comfortable or uncomfortable about retrenchment there. Once it is done in accordance with the law’.

Well, then who is to be uncomfortable? Is it only the workers who are out on the breadline with no jobs must be uncomfortable, and the Government has no care whatsoever? Here, the Prime Minister is washing his hands, distancing himself from what was happening at BWIA.

“He was speaking at a post-Cabinet news conference at Whitehall.”

This is the same Government that sold BWIA to Acker. I repeat these words to my friend from Diego Martin Central each time he said, That was my best deal.” This deal might have been good for the Member but for the country it was the worst deal ever. Look at where it has come about in just a short few years, and I quote:

“Manning said there were no plans to retrench workers at WASA or the Port. Nevertheless, responding to the action taken by WASA workers, the Prime Minister issued a warning to all those who engage in ‘wild-cat strikes’. ‘The time has come for Government to make it clear it is going to begin to invoke the provisions of the Industrial Relations Act.’ Saying that there were proper industrial relations procedure in this country, he stated that if disputes arose between employer and employee, there was recourse on either side for bringing the issue to a resolution.

The Prime Minister was threatening the workers, but he wants to bring in workers from other parts of the Caribbean. My colleague in the Senate yesterday, Sen. Mark, raised the issue as to whether or not the Government wants to bring these people in as scab labour, so when persons go on strike here, the Government would bring in its Caricom friends and give them the jobs as scab labour to undermine the unions in this country.

In this same *Newsday* report, Mr. Manning made it very clear of his hostility towards workers who stood up for their rights, whilst at the same time distancing himself from the layoffs at BWIA and, on the other hand, he strikes a deal now to

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bail out LIAT. So, what again is so special about Mr. Gonzalves and the rest of the Caribbean? What is so special that the Government has no care for what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago with BWIA, but the Government cares about LIAT?

I read now from the *Guardian* Newspaper dated April 17, 2003 and it says:

“Prime Minister Patrick Manning flew into Barbados last weekend and agreed to advance an interest-free loan of TT\$29.37 million to the ailing sub-regional carrier LIAT.”

And one would remember the history of the PNM loans to all these Caribbean organizations. The Government never recovered a cent! The Government gave out money like nothing.

“This sets the state for an eventual merger with BWIA, which already owns 29 per cent of airline.

Trinidad and Tobago’s loan contribution, which has a repayment moratorium of five years, is part of a \$54.28 million rescue package to which five regional countries will contribute to give LIAT some financial breathing space until the end of June.”

So the Prime Minister distanced himself from BWIA, which is our national airline—the shame, the scandal and the disgrace. The first time in the history of this country, our flagship was being impounded in Miami. The Government washed its hands out of it, but here they are saying \$54.28 million rescue package to five regional countries to deal with LIAT.

“Under the financing arrangement, Antigua will put \$11.28 million; Barbados, \$7.05 million; Grenada, \$705,000; and St. Vincent, \$5.875 million.

This decision was arrived at in an environment of global chaos in the airline industry where since September 11, 2001, regional airlines, ridden by unsustainable debt, have been forced to slash staff and to reduce costs and schedules.

It is anticipated that initially there will be a single carrier for the south and eastern Caribbean.

‘I am very heartened by the decision that has been taken to have one carrier in the south and eastern Caribbean to envision arrangements that would arrive at a final determination of that carrier.’ said Prime Minister Manning.

‘It represents a new level of co-operation and collaboration among governments of the region,’

This new level of co-operation and collaboration is Trinidad and Tobago money to bail out St. Vincent and the other Caribbean partners! That is the new godfather of the Caribbean.

“Manning added that, at the end of the day, the institutions that were efficient ‘had the most chance of success’.”

So the Government is bailing out LIAT and taking LIAT and merging it with BWIA—two failing airlines—to be funded by the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago, because of a Prime Minister who is determined to be godfather to the Caricom, but that is not the only mission that the Prime Minister is on. It is not only in respect of the airline; it is not only in respect of funding the majority part of their proposed Caribbean Court of Justice; it is not only in respect of allowing all these people to flood into Trinidad and Tobago, with no checks and balances, but “Cheap oil for CARICOM”. This is the headline in the *Newsday* newspaper dated Friday, March 07, 2003. Again, what is this relationship that the Prime Minister has with them? And I quote:

“Trinidad and Tobago will be giving its Caricom partners cheaper oil prices, but only for fuel which is to be used for electricity generation.

This was announced by Prime Minister Patrick Manning yesterday at the post-Cabinet news briefing at Whitehall.

Manning said a proposal was being developed along this line, which is to come before the Energy Committee on Tuesday. Manning said it would mean that government would be foregoing some revenue.

The plan involves putting a cap on gas oil and fuel oil prices, which have risen...Prime Minister said Trinidad and Tobago could not afford to give the same relief for gasoline for cars and for gas prices in general.

In explaining the rationale for the decision, Manning said many of the Caricom countries see themselves as facing ‘economic destruction’ if oil prices stay at the current levels for any length of time.

Manning said one also had to recognise that Trinidad and Tobago was the largest market in the Caricom, and Caricom was this country’s second largest market...

Manning said many of the Caricom countries could not compete with industries in Trinidad and Tobago. He said therefore it is left to Government intervention to address this situation. He said a Caricom team is looking at a variety of options, but in the interim, the Trinidad and Tobago government ‘unilaterally’ decided to provide the relief in the form of lower oil prices.”

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So, Caricom is looking at the movement of workers, but Trinidad and Tobago, by our illustrious Prime Minister, is unilaterally going ahead to bring persons, even if they are not covered by the Caricom's protocols. Here the Member is looking at how to deal with the problems with oil prices, in the energy sector, to assist the Caricom neighbours, and he did not wait for what Caricom had to say and how to work it out, but he said, "Trinidad and Tobago 'unilaterally' decided to provide the relief in the form of lower oil prices." We are part of this Caricom team so why all these unilateral decisions?

"Manning noted that in the oil boom days, Trinidad and Tobago provided liberal assistance to its Caricom partners."

Mr. Speaker, we remember those days when money flowed through like a dose of salt in this country; money was no problem and yet there are parts of this country—when that PNM went out of office—it did not have free education for all; the health sector was in shambles, and there were no amenities whatsoever—if one went to Penal, Siparia, Oropouche, Naparima, Princes Town or one of our constituencies. Nothing! But money was no problem, and the Government was giving it away all over the place, and this is the same kind of modus operandi of the then PNM, it is the same thing that we are seeing happening again with this PNM—giving it away they have too much—and yet there are so many hundreds of thousands of people still living below the poverty line; still not being able to get basic amenities, but the Government has so much that it is giving it out to others, without any concern for what is happening here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, on the BWIA and LIAT issue, since then they have met and put forward a holding company which is to deal with the BWIA and LIAT issue—I wish them good luck, because we do need a carrier in the region. I do not think anyone in Trinidad and Tobago wants to see again, a BWIA plane being impounded in the Miami Airport or in any other airport—what a shameful thing for a nation such as ours, and for an airline which was a flagship and carries us everywhere—impounded in Miami, and not once but twice, and when all of this was happening, the Prime Minister distanced himself and he would not help. What is the new impetus now that the Prime Minister has come in to help? Is it because of Gonzalves and LIAT again? What is the relationship there? I do not understand it at all.

Mr. Speaker, as I close in this debate, on this particular Bill, I am saying that this is a very dangerous piece of legislation in its present format without the checks and balances. There are absolutely no checks and balances within this legislation. It is a wide-open gate for an invasion of persons from lesser-

developed Caricom nations, and it is an open gateway for the flooding and invasion of persons from Caricom into Trinidad and Tobago. That is a monster that the Government is creating here, and this Government would live to rue forever, because from the time that this piece of legislation becomes law, if there are no checks and balances within the legislation—do not leave it in the hands of the Minister, who is a politician. We have seen what has happened in the past with that so do not leave it up to the discretion of a Minister, who is a politician, to determine who is a sports person or who is a musician. We cannot do it! I have said that repeatedly and I cannot stop repeating it, because it is a dangerous piece of legislation.

I would like to ask the Government whether there is any kind of quota system; that is to say, if the Government is letting in musicians and so forth, is it that the Government is going to let in 1,000, 2,000 or 3,000? Should it not say, “Per year we should only let in five or six musicians and so forth”? At the end of the Government’s five years would the Government have let in hundreds of thousands—5,000, 6,000 or 10,000 persons? It should be stated here that within no one year we should exceed so many persons, because there are no checks and balances of definition or demarcation of who is the musician and who is the artiste. So it means that anyone could really come once that person is blowing a whistle or playing a little guitar and so forth. The Government should put another check and balance by saying, “only so many persons per year would be allowed to come in.”

I am asking the Government that at the committee stage, if they want our suggestions, we have them. The Member for Point Fortin pointed out that all we could do today in the House is to talk, since the Government has the majority and they are going to bulldoze it through anyhow. I am asking the Government again to take notice of our concerns with respect to putting checks and balances in the legislation.

The Government has very good draftsmen here, and I am sure that within the committee stage, we could deal with those changes. So take out Haiti out of the schedule. Haiti should not be included in the schedule; we do not want 3.6 million Haitians here. Other Caricom states have done it so we cannot say that it is only Trinidad and Tobago—Antigua has banned the Haitians from there—and let us put proper demarcations and definitions with respect to the musicians, artistes and sports person.

I see my friend from Arima, my colleague, in law and so forth, and I am happy to welcome her back into the Chamber. I was very happy to hear the

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Minister say that the National Steel Orchestra of Trinidad and Tobago has been invited to perform at the Caricom Heads of Government meeting, and I will say thanks to a UNC Government there is a National Steel Orchestra, because the Government never supported the idea of a National Steel Orchestra, and good luck to them as they go to Jamaica. I will not support this Bill and I ask my colleagues on this side, not to support this Bill unless the checks and balances and other measures are placed within the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague has asked me to remind the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs that if the hon. Minister is going to be the one to decide who is a musician, sports person, artiste and so on, then we are in serious trouble, because the Minister could not even reach here in time to lead off the debate. [*Laughter*] So I hope that the Minister would be kind enough to answer some of our concerns—we are happy that the Minister has joined us—and deal with some of the issues that have come to this Chamber.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, perhaps this is an appropriate time to suspend the sitting for the tea break and we will resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make some observations to the Bill before us. I am very sorry that the Leader of the Opposition is not in his chair to reflect on some of the things that he said here this afternoon. Let me begin by saying that to those of us on this side foreign policy is serious business. I repeat; foreign policy is very, very serious business. To us, foreign policy means obligation, commitment and responsibility, and it is with that sense of commitment, obligation and responsibility that we approach the exercise to this Bill before us this afternoon.

If I might place things in their proper perspective let me begin by saying that Act No. 26 of 1996 to the regional integration movement and the establishment of the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME), this is one of the responsibilities that we are facing in the proposition of this Bill. When that Act was first committed to, it was committed to as a first step towards facilitating the free movement of skilled persons among member states to implement with effect from January 01, 1996, the free movement of Caricom nationals who were university graduates subject to the acceptability of their credentials by their member states concerned.

Subsequent to that—that was July 1996—the heads of government agreed to extend this facility to include artistes, sports persons, musicians and media workers. So that the proposition before us today involving agreement to this amendment is, in effect, the carrying out of a decision that the legislative and administrative arrangements to that early decision must be in place by June 30, 2003.

As a third step, Mr. Speaker, to date, all Caricom member states, with the exception of Suriname and Montserrat, have in place legislative, or, as in the case of Barbados administrative arrangements to give effect to the decision to permit the free movement of university graduates. Suriname is taking the necessary action to give effect to this commitment. Barbados also needs to amend existing legislation to permit the movement of university graduates who are seeking employment in Barbados.

As far as the free movement of artistes, sports persons, musicians and media workers are concerned such countries as Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda and St. Lucia have enacted the appropriate legislation to give effect to this decision. So, as I said to Trinidad and Tobago, foreign policy is a serious business. Indeed, when we try to conform and to carry out our obligations under the CSME, this is in acceptance of the responsibilities and the obligations which we assumed as a serious Government.

It would seem that those on the other side have never paid real attention to the seriousness, to the gravity and to the weight of the responsibility that would attach to the taking of collective agreements. I have no doubt about this because during their six years in office, rather than winning friends in the Caribbean they were just creating enemies up and down the region. In fact, this has made the work of this administration very difficult, indeed, because we are still correcting defects and deficiencies that predecessors left along the way.

Mr. Speaker, as we seek to ensure the responsibility that we had undertook to meet the deadline prescribed by the very heads of Government to fulfill these obligations by June 30, we are simply conforming to standards that we are accustomed to in the People's National Movement. There are those who argue that there are no benefits to be derived as far as Trinidad and Tobago is concerned from this Bill, but I am wondering if those are the same people who, before, had actually taken us into this agreement in the years 1995, 1996 and onward. So that while it may escape them as to when one undertakes certain responsibilities that the world is watching, the people are looking and that does not bother us at all. We feel that with a vision there is a need to carry out understandings and undertakings that we entered into.

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One hon. Member on the other side mentioned the question of Haiti. Haiti is a full-fledged Member of Caricom. We cannot, therefore, think of any means or reasons why we should discriminate against a member. Caricom heads took a decision and we would not be, what you might call, abnormal head going to Montego Bay next week to reverse that. This is typical of the United National Congress. They took Trinidad and Tobago into the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), and now they are saying that they are not going to be part of it, and I am wondering where this reversal would lead us. To them, foreign policy is always something that is dealt with en passant; to us, it is very serious business.

The rationale for the decision on the free movement of skilled persons may be in the acceptance of the fact that in order to achieve the objective of the Caricom Single Market and Economy that is closer integration of the markets of the member states of the community and the eventual fashioning of a single market in the region. Those factors of production, susceptible of movement must be allowed to move within the community in order to achieve an optimal allocation of scarce resources within the single market.

Mr. Speaker, I make bold to say that in response to the affirmation that Trinidad and Tobago's interest must come first in this decision, I would say that as far as we on this side are concerned, Trinidad and Tobago's interest within the context of a Caricom family, is not dissimilar from the interest of the wider Caricom. [*Desk thumping*] They speak with cloven tongues; they speak on both sides of their mouth. Indeed, we thought that we on this side were carrying out the mandate and the expectation of the national community when we decided to move in sync with the recommendation taken by heads that we should meet our obligations by June 30, 2003.

In that regard I may say that it is surprising that the other side is asking for definitions. I know that from time to time they do suffer some difficulty both in pronouncement and pronunciation—because the two things are not separate. So when you asked about the definition of an artiste; who is an artiste? Who is a media worker? It strikes me as being very strange that at this stage in their professional development, one cannot recognize who is an artiste; who is a media worker; or who is a sportsman.

As I had to say yesterday—on their side of this honourable House someone was arguing that perhaps the musicians would come here to displace Caroni (1975) Limited workers, and my comment was that I can hardly see Ziggy Marley taking up a cutlass to go and do a task work at Caroni (1975) Limited. That is not our interpretation. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: If hon. Members would maintain silence you would hear what the Minister is saying.

Sen. The Hon. K. Gift: Let me remind the other side that on the question of certificates of employment we at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs endorse a certificate of eligibility for employment. That is what it is called. We at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not engage or employ persons. That is not our role and function. You see when they take this position, it again reflects and manifests a certain degree of myopia on the part of the other side. They do not see foreign policy as a dynamic thing; they see it static, and we must exclude Haiti. Haiti is a full-fledged member of our family and I think it should and would remain that way for the foreseeable future.

They speak, misspeak and they criticize the amplification of this Bill to include artistes, media workers and sportsmen. I would just like to take them back to Minute No. 10:48 of August 08, 2001, when under their watch, Cabinet inter alia agreed, in principle, that Trinidad and Tobago expand the coverage of the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals Act 1996, beyond university graduates to include artistes, musicians, sportspersons and media personnel. [*Desk thumping*] This is a direct quote lifted from their records under their watch. This is a Cabinet decision. So to come now so many years later to argue that we are previous on this side, I believe that again it shows that they do not take foreign policy commitments and decisions with the seriousness, as they ought to. They do not have the vision to lead this country. They are static; they are myopic. So I do not think that with this identification of evidence we need to spend much more time showing their inward-looking, myopic approach to Caribbean integration to which we on this side are fully committed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (Couva South): Mr. Speaker, I have second thoughts about speaking, after listening to the brilliant contribution of the Member for Oropouche supported by the Member for Siparia, but I knew that I had to say a few words after the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs. First of all, I want to let him know that if we made any errors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we did get rid of the person who was responsible for that. [*Desk thumping*] Indeed, he got rid of himself. He is now comfortably placed in the bosom of the Prime Minister advising him on foreign affairs.

As you know in the Office of the Prime Minister there is an advisor on every issue because he does not trust his Ministers. So he has to have his own advisors. I

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understand the difficulty my good friend who is visiting us this afternoon has, because I thought he was going to make a substantial statement to this Parliament, particularly since we are dealing with a very important matter that affects the national community. The national community has not mandated this Prime Minister or any other Prime Minister to take us into the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

In fact, I do not even recall, during the recent campaign, that this was a major issue, and I thought that since there are so many differing views on this issue; particularly a view by many that they do not know anything about it but the Government would have spent time in this Parliament—and particularly the Minister of Foreign Affairs—to begin a discourse for the benefit of all the citizens on these important issues.

While watching cricket on television, I saw Mr. Carrington on a number of occasions; I saw children and I think the advertisement came out of the Secretariat in Guyana, talking about the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and asking the national communities in the Caribbean to support it. There were school children dressed in uniforms talking about the advantages and perhaps the disadvantages of this major and bold step. It seems to me that somebody is sitting in Georgetown drawing up all the rules, having their heads go from time to time to conferences; agreeing to what the technocrats are producing for them, taking it to their respective Parliaments and expect that the Parliaments are going to approve them because for the time being their heads enjoy the majority in their respective Parliaments.

I understand the difficulty of the Minister of Foreign Affairs today because he spent most of his time seeking to criticize hon. Members here about being inward-looking, myopic and so on, instead of dealing with important issues. The Members for Siparia and Oropouche were at pain to say that we need to have certain definitions clarified. We need to know how does the certificate of eligibility come about when people were asking to come to Trinidad and Tobago to perform; to work; to play cricket and so forth. As you know, today in Trinidad and Tobago many clubs are bringing in players to play; not only when we have Test Cricket or the Shell Shield but they are actually coming here to work.

All hon. Members have been asking for in this debate is protection from abuse. Because the people of Point Fortin, many of whom have been demonstrating—[*Interruption*—oh, I addressed a large crowd of more than 500 persons in Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*] I do not know if anybody has any business of going before a meeting starts and taking out a few shots of them and publicizing it, but we would determine that on Monday, July 14, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, the labour movement has not been drawn into this debate. I do not know if it is presumed by the Oilfield Workers Trade Union (OWTU), that is now a puppet of the Government the Public Services Association (PSA) is now a puppet of the Government; and the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) is now a puppet of the Government. I am sure that apparent support for the ruling party would come to an end once they are not able to extract from the Government what they hope to extract. Certainly, persons who work at Atlantic LNG and other construction projects in the country would like to know that since they are contract workers and they have no security of tenure that they are not going to be victims of replacement by an indiscriminate programme of bringing people from the other islands into Trinidad and Tobago. It is not myopic, and it is not inward looking for us to protect our turf.

If we are going to enter into any single market; if we are going to accept the Caribbean Court of Justice as an appellate court; if we are going to allow people—even though it is a first step or a second step—to come and work here, we must be able, as a Parliament, to engage the national community in discussions. You are aware of the countries that are now being admitted into the European Community. Each one of those countries is involved in a referendum in their own country to determine whether in the first place, they want to become members of the European Union because of all kinds of adjustments that they have to make in terms of their agricultural production and their way of life. The question they ask is: Are they prepared to make these adjustments in terms of nuclear power plant, generating plants, closure of various industries in the years ahead?

So they put before their people and their people are not unhappy in most cases that they should become members. They look at the advantages of becoming members of the European Community. When I was a little boy not too long ago I remember the debate on what was then called the EEC and every day on the *Guardian* newspaper at that time, the issue was being raised in the Caribbean with respect to what is going to happen to the Caribbean in terms of its dependency. We are no longer dependent on the quotas and the special privileges accorded to Caribbean production.

In Trinidad and Tobago we must now ensure that a forum is presented so that we can involve as many persons and interest groups to discuss the benefits and the sacrifices as well, that we would have to make as a people. The piecemeal handling, although it is a commitment that we have made—even the Government of the United National Congress was part of this commitment—and the hon. Minister was right about that. The Member for Siparia dealt with a speech made

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by the former Prime Minister with respect to the safeguards that had to be put in place. He was right when he said that the Cabinet took a decision saying that we should look at these things, but the former Prime Minister was particularly careful in his address to Parliament about the issue. [*Interruption*] I am talking here, Mr. Speaker, about an address delivered some minutes ago by the Member for Siparia who quoted from the former Prime Minister, his concerns about this particular issue. It was not a substantive matter before the Parliament at that time.

I have been reading about these issues: I have read Rickey Singh's predicting what Manning's difficulty would be; I have read Shridath Ramphal on this subject; Mr. Carrington has been speaking on this subject; I myself have been working with a Committee under Byron Blake setting up a Caribbean target change centre, which has now been set up in Belize and so forth. We all understand the benefits of working together as a region on issues which are pertinent and important to all of us. But we cannot proceed as a nation on the basis that whatever is said and done and ratified by the heads in Georgetown must now be a legislative by individual parliaments without its discussion among the population.

One of the first things that should be done in this country is that there should be a select committee of Parliament looking at all these issues that the Prime Minister would have raised when he goes to Jamaica or he goes to any such conference which requires, in the not too distant future, the support of Parliament. Whatever committee it is Parliament has to sit through one of its institutions and discuss matters so that we could engage in public discussion and not simply say that we have agreed to what has taken place in Jamaica or anywhere else. I am quite sure that we are going to be talking later on about the single currency.

I have always admired the Eastern Caribbean countries; when everybody else went and set up their own central banks all over the place. There was a central bank for the Eastern Caribbean countries. They operated for years, even before we became Independent they have been operating with a single currency in Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia and all of these places. We would be looking at that at some stage. Are we talking about that to the population?

The matter of the Caribbean Court of Justice which the hon. Minister alluded to, is not as similar as somebody agreeing, in principle, that the Caribbean Court of Justice was necessary. There are two important aspects to that: One aspect is a court that deals with the various agreements and treaties that would be established among member states; and then another aspect of it would be an appellate court which is intended to replace appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy

Council. That is not a simple matter. That is not a matter that has to be legislated because the Prime Minister goes to a heads of government conference and agrees, in principle, that we should have a Caribbean court. In fact, my view is that that is a matter which requires the blessing of the people of Trinidad and Tobago through a referendum.

You are dealing with the amendment of the Constitution which fundamentally alters the Constitution and affects the rights of citizens of this country, and then for the hon. Minister to come here and play politics. After all, he should know that he is a visitor here, and we treat visitors very well. He has not suffered the scrutiny of any electorate. He has been handpicked and I am quite sure it is for a good reason. *[Interruption]* It is not about myopia; it is not about inward looking; it is not about agreeing to anything that you come to Parliament to ask us to support. There are abuses. You know very well, Mr. Prime Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, what the heads in Europe are talking about now.

Somebody alluded to it earlier, with respect to the illegal immigration and the concerns of countries, particularly Britain, with the free movement of persons and the implications for peace, order, stability and good government for those countries. The movement of persons coming through Spain and Turkey and these areas into Western Europe and into Britain, they are now very concerned, and they are taking steps to ensure that this is not a free-for-all, but that this is something that is going to ultimately impact on social stability. It has to do as well with the current issue of terrorism and the export of terrorism that is affecting the world. When you talk about a ship being held up in Greece with 680 tonnes of Trinidad and Tobago equivalent to an automatic bomb that was intercepted on its way to the Sudan, somewhere you begin to understand the kinds of implications that would come with the free movement of people and the free movement of goods and services and so on.

All the people of Trinidad and Tobago need is to make sure that our Government is not simply pandering to those who wish in the Caribbean to move with haste. We cannot do that. The Prime Minister could talk all that he wants about oil and subsidies to these countries. We are a net importer of oil. We are no big oil-producing country. We have no control over what British Petroleum produces and what BHP would produce; we have our own little company that makes 55,000 to 60,000 barrels per day. We import oil; we pay for that. We do not get any subsidy on importation. We refine that. Our business is about margins between what we import and sell. We cannot go and make any blind concessions to Caribbean Governments and so on. I understand his concern when he said that

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we could not subsidize gasoline and so forth. But all the Caribbean needs would be simple fuels such as aviation fuels, gasoline, diesel and so forth. We cannot just make these blanket statements because we are interested in the Caribbean integration movement. Some people believe that if they join this Caribbean integration movement Trinidad and Tobago would be supporting them in a big way. We have our own problems to deal with.

There is a picture with Dr. Rowley on the *Guardian* newspaper of some two weeks ago and I just want to quote from the headline: "IDB: Caribbean survival depends on T&T economy". It states:

"The economic survival of the Caribbean depends on the performance of the T&T's economy, an Inter-American Development Bank representative has said.

'All the indicators tell us that the economic survival of the Anglophone Caribbean is dependent to a large extent on the performance of this country's economy,' said IDB resident representative William Robinson.

'Trinidad and Tobago is an important market for regional exports and a major supplier of fuel, manufactured products, human resources and financial services to the rest of the Caricom region,' ..."

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Planning and Development, the hon. Dr. Keith Rowley who signed the agreement, also spoke. It appears as though Dr. Rowley did not have much to argue about.

We know very well that in this integration movement and this single market and economy that there are going to be enormous benefits for the country. We also know that we are going to have major obligations, and I am surprised to hear the hon. Minister say that this foreign policy is serious business and it deals with obligations. Yes it does. There is no question about that. Once we decide, in principle, as a Parliament and as a country that we are going into this movement we have an obligation. We also have an obligation to our citizens first. That is something that we have to bear in mind. Shridath Ramphal could say what he wants; he sold the people out of Guyana and then migrated out of the region. He supported the repressive and oppressive regime of Forbes Burnham and ran away. He is no authority for me to quote. We do not waste any time on people like that. When things start to get good in the Caribbean they all come back and talk about Caribbean man.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot to protect in our great Republic. This is a wonderful country. This is a country that we contributed over the last six years to

developing at an unprecedented rate, where foreign investment flowed into this country, as it never did before. The Member for Oropouche was saying that over 70,000 jobs were created. We have to protect all of these gains and whatever decision is taken by the present Government—who is there for the time-being—we must make sure as Members of Parliament in this country that we do not pander to those persons who are putting pressure on us to do so.

I do not understand why a Prime Minister—I suspect that he has been out of office so many times for so long that his exuberance and enthusiasm has overwhelmed him and has certainly affected his capacity to think as a leader. When he talks about political unity with St. Vincent and the Grenadines and inviting persons all over the place to politically unite. You do not go and compromise the integrity of the State by making statements like that. You do not have a mandate from this country to unilaterally change the Constitution. This is a sovereign State. We do not have a sovereign leader in this country; the people are sovereign and we have a responsibility to ensure that the things we do are consistent with the sovereignty of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

It appears to me and the general public that you have a man full of anxiety, as the Member for Siparia says, “almost wanting to become the godfather of the Caribbean”. We know his imagination runs wild talking about building a pipeline up the islands, and he tells me that I have not sat with him so he can have the benefit of my enormous experience in those matters. [*Laughter*] He told me so. I know what I am saying; that we can do it. There is a Prime Minister who just won an election through means that were less than honest—and I do not want to get into that kind of debate this evening; I am on serious matters.

You just came out of an election in which you won a seat by 234 votes; another one by 249 votes; and one by 600 votes; and you form a Government. Immediately after the Prime Minister formed a Government—apart from demoting my good friend from Diego Martin Central, a brilliant—but I understand his limitations and the need in this modern day to have modern-thinking people. You want progressive thinkers. I just want to say that you get into power and immediately you start talking about political union. You think in any developed country any leader could stand and make such a statement to his neighbouring countries without having the blessings of Parliament, or the blessings of his country. You imagine what kind of repercussions would follow such a statement. I think that this holds some security into which he has been lulled, has blown his mind. So he starts talking to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada. When I heard Owen Arthur and his opponent debating the night

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before the election in Barbados, I said that those people were really advanced. [Interruption] Owen Arthur did not “get lick up”; he won a third term. But what I am saying is that I saw the respect of the Prime Minister of the day or the leader of the opposing party for the people who were—[Interruption] Mr. Speaker, you understand the difficulty the Prime Minister has in his Cabinet from this Member for Diego Martin East. [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Diego Martin East, the hon. Member for Couva South is making a very good contribution, let us hear him.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Sir, I do not need to be protected. I understand the difficulty of the Prime Minister. I understand why so many senior Members of his party have been relegated to all the backbenches and the west benches and they have gone and found the talent from the Senate. I understand that, and I would have done the same if I had to deal with a group like that. [Laughter] So you start off with a call for political unity and when we have been through this, Jamaica and Barbados say that they are not ready; and then we say, anybody who is ready to come, just come. It is gross irresponsibility. It makes Trinidad and Tobago look bad. I am sure you did it in error, and you did it with a good mind, and with a spirit of integration. You would understand why St. Vincent and the Grenadines would be running; this is because there is 30 per cent unemployment in that country. I have many friends in St. Vincent and the Grenadines who tell me that this is more like—[Interruption] Oh, I have a lot of friends. Mr. Speaker, I would not be sidetracked on these matters, but I would tell you that Mr. Ralph Gonsalves is quite anxious to get involved in some kind of political unity. But these are not issues to be dealt with overnight; these are issues that you involve your own Parliament and your party. I am sure that you have disrespected your party in some way by not going to the party and discussing such an important initiative. Your manifesto has nothing; I looked into it; and your vision has nothing to do with that kind of unilateral stance that you have taken.

To make matters worse, you come up with this plan to build this pipeline up the islands. Mr. Speaker, you know very well and the Prime Minister knows—and I would repeat for his benefit—that as a proud exporter of liquefied natural gas it is easier for you, the National Gas Company (NGC), to set up degasification pipes in the Caribbean, move a liquefied natural gas ship up the islands, load up these storage facilities up and down without having to go through the cost of running a pipeline up there. [Interruption] Mr. Speaker, I am speaking here as a technocrat and the hon. Prime Minister is speaking as a politician. And he knows that you cannot get to Jamaica with that pipeline; he knows that you cannot get to the

Dominican Republic with that pipeline; he knows that you cannot get to Puerto Rico with that pipeline; he knows that the largest user of energy in the region is the Dominican Republic; the Prime Minister knows that very well. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Couva South for giving way. I just want to advise him that the arrangements for Train 4 LNG involves supplying LNG from Trinidad and Tobago to the Dominican Republic and with considerations of supplying Jamaica. Puerto Rico is already being supplied by other Trains and the islands that are closer to Trinidad and Tobago are best supplied either by pipeline on the one hand, or by a new technology in compressed natural gas and the feasibility studies are likely to indicate that the pipeline is the more feasible of the two mechanisms. So I just want to advise the hon. Member on that.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, the feasibility study has not yet been done so it is not likely to indicate anything.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, the feasibility study has been done.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister is dealing with a pre-feasibility study. Anyway, I do not want to deviate from the subject matter before us, but I want to advise the Prime Minister that when he is talking about putting pipelines of that magnitude onto the islands he must first of all, ask himself: What volumes are these islands going to be using? If the hon. Prime Minister wants some information I can provide him with all the energy studies coming out of Jamaica—a committee of which I had the honour to be part—so that he can look at all the energy requirements; a project which is done by a Professor Headley, who is no longer with us and one would see that the major requirement is the generation of electrical power. It is so small. Right now they use diesel and in some cases, they use fuel oil. The amount of gas that would be used to generate power in these islands is so small that one could not pay back for such a pipeline.

I do not understand why that kind of thinking is pervading the mind of the PNM. I can only say that it is an attempt to take the leadership of the Caribbean through plenty talk. That is not the way you get the respect of your Caribbean colleagues. You do not want to do things that cause Mr. Owen Arthur from Barbados and Mr. P. J. Patterson from Jamaica to just dismiss a call for political unity overnight when they rightly said to you, that these are serious matters that require serious deliberation. In the same way when you offered to build a pipeline up the islands people would ask you all kinds of questions. Who is going to pay for it? What is the rate of return? What is the present world value index? What is

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the pay out of such a project? Is Trinidad and Tobago and the National Gas Company going to do all of that and then charge us a price that we cannot afford?

While your intentions might be noble in terms of agreeing to what the Caribbean heads have agreed with respect to the free movement of people and resources, you must recognize that these things are going to take studies and they are going to take time. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for Couva South once again for giving way. While I must confess that I am enjoying his contribution this evening—one of the rare occasions on which he makes a very dispassionate, as far as possible, contribution—I think I ought to make yet another correction. In the articulation of a policy for the construction of a gas pipeline up the Caribbean we did, in fact, look at the volumes and that is why the gas pipeline could only be feasible if it goes as far north as Guadeloupe, and that the two key islands in all of this are Martinique and Guadeloupe.

May I also advise him that in that context I have written to the French President on the matter and have now had a response from him. It is quite correct that the volumes used by the other countries are small, but that in total the volume of gas to be used by all the islands amounts to about 150 million cubic feet a day, which makes the pipeline feasible up to that point. That is why you see we have so far not sought to go north of that, even though—I can tell you—there is discussion in certain circles now, about a gas pipeline involving gas from Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela as far north as Miami.

More than that, the Venezuelans have now indicated to us their interest in the gas pipeline that is contemplated between Trinidad and Tobago and Guadeloupe. And the pre-feasibility studies have also indicated that such a gas pipeline could result in a reduction in the price of electricity in those territories by an average of 30 per cent. That is the reason we consider it so feasible at this time.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Prime Minister really enjoys getting involved in a debate of such intellectual heights—something that he is not accustomed to doing in his own party, especially these days when he stands on his platform. I want to move away from that. I do not want to get into a discourse now. I think at the appropriate time we would talk about that. I have raised this matter in the context of the discussions which are taking place in the Caribbean with respect to how Caribbean nations can come together eventually for the benefit of everyone. We are committed to that. That is a statement that has been made time and time again. The former Prime Minister addressed heads of

Government but there is an urgent need for the country to participate in these discussions. It does not have to be a political, partisan issue. That is why there ought to be a bi-partisan approach via a parliamentary committee. You know, I ask whether bi-partisan means that the person who is writing the Bill belongs to both parties or whether it means people coming from different parties. Their views probably are the former. You know they are so myopic—to use the hon. Minister's word—that all they are concerned about is getting a piece of legislation passed very quickly and I am sure my friend is talking about the police service bills and bi-partisan committees and so on.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister is committing this country to the most revolutionary change that we would have ever been through as a nation; even more revolutionary than Independence. We are talking here about a sovereign Caribbean. I have listened to the Secretary General, Mr. Edwin Carrington, talking about Caribbean sovereignty, and there are issues that have to be discussed that people are concerned about. I want to know whether half of Trinidad and Tobago that consists of people of East Indian origin would be marginalized in the process. I do not know the answer. I can certainly speak for them. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. K. Ramnath: I am quite sure that I can speak for a large percentage of 41 per cent of the citizens in this country. I am saying in all seriousness that I do not want to be distracted by a voice in the wilderness—one who cannot even sort out his own problems.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. Member would agree to the extent that his party supported the Caricom initiative over the last six years in Government and that, in fact, given the point that he represents that community whether, in fact, they have agreed to the integration of the Trinidad and Tobago economy into the single market economy. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, let me repeat what I said earlier; many of these decisions which were taken at the heads were taken in principle. Up to now when a Prime Minister goes to a heads of government meeting I know how these agreements are written. These decisions are taken in principle. They are expected to go back to their respective states and to have these decisions ratified in one form or another, and ultimately through the legislative process. Nobody is disagreeing. I am saying that you must allay real fears in a society.

The matter was raised today about the issue of people coming in. I trust that we are going to have genuine sports persons and artistes coming in so you do not

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have the problem of Machel Montano going somewhere and being treated as a second-class citizen in some island; or people coming here and some immigration officer decides that they have not fulfilled their requirements of their work permit arrangements and so on. I understand all of that. But, as the Member of Siparia said, there must be checks and balances and so on; I want to know. Ultimately, people are already talking about Caribbean sovereignty.

In fact, Mr. Edwin Carrington said that the Caribbean Court of Justice is the final institution or would finally seal this issue of Caribbean sovereignty. He is the Secretary General of the Caribbean and he is talking about the CCJ in relation to Caribbean sovereignty, and I ask the question: What is Caribbean sovereignty? What does it mean? Does it mean that having come from similar historical backgrounds that we have a destination to arrive as a people? Is it a movement of Afro-Caribbean people? Is it a movement that would encompass all of our citizens? These are important questions that people do not like to discuss in Trinidad and Tobago. I do not think that we are going to reach anywhere with piecemeal legislation. We have come with the university graduates; we passed that in 1996; in 2003 we are talking about expanding it. The intention is that the Caribbean heads is to have free movement ultimately across the Caribbean. The people of this country—I do not know about the other islands, but I do know that in places like Barbados and Jamaica, where there is a high level of political consciousness they would not allow a Government in any of those islands to simply let Parliament make that final decision. I am asking that we do not use this as some kind of spring board to discuss the more fundamental issues of Caribbean integration, political and economic integration.

We should learn from what has occurred in Europe, and the time that it has taken Europe to reach where they have reached; and the kind of discussions and institutions that exist in the European Community to ensure that the movement takes place gradually but with great certainty. We should be talking in the Caribbean now about treaties; we should be talking about trade and agriculture; we should be talking about agreements as to how we are going to proceed with respect to manufacturing; with respect to all kinds of matters which hon. Members here know a lot more than I do, and setting up these agreements. We should be talking about environment; we should have in the Caribbean a movement for environmental management, which should be across the Caribbean, and when we meet at the heads or some sessional committee we should be able to come to Parliament with a Bill, which would be agreed to by all Parliaments in the West Indies on the issue of environmental protection in the Caribbean.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, these are the ways that you ultimately arrive at consensus; not through legislation in the way that we are approaching it today. When the Member for Oropouche talked about the haste with which the Parliament has been summoned, I understand what he is talking about. We have to meet a deadline, so the Prime Minister can go and report that he has, in fact, gotten the Parliament to approve this measure. We should also be talking about safety as a Caribbean issue.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would not require all that time today, as I have important engagements of a public nature on evenings. [*Crosstalk*]

You know, Mr. Speaker, it hurts them. I can imagine how hurt the Member for Point Fortin was when I stood in the civic centre and articulated the issue of Atlantic LNG and the impact on the people of that area, to about 500 people. [*Crosstalk*] As we are talking about this—[*Interruption*—where did you arrive from?

This is a matter of Caribbean integration. I calculated that 800 million cubic feet at US 19 cents per MCF (million cubic feet), we will get about \$225 million a year in oil revenue; but you know, the entire Clifton Hill Beach is going. A lot of inconveniences have been caused. When I went to Point Fortin on this matter, which affects the whole region, I also said that it was about time that some of that money be put back into the region of Point Fortin and La Brea areas that the PNM have neglected and abused, because they felt that they were sure seats. I could understand how they feel now, as they are about to be defeated in some of those areas. [*Desk thumping*] They cannot continue to treat people with such contempt. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, I was going to end, before I was provoked by this provocative Member for Diego Martin East. [*Crosstalk*] We need to seriously talk about health care in the Caribbean, such a major issue which affects people of the region. [*Crosstalk*] As a Caribbean community we should take certain issues that are common to the welfare of the people of the Caribbean; whether it is environment, safety, industry, product standards, quality health care and so on, and we should be talking. Not with a little committee that advises the Heads, but a serious committee of capable people drawn from across the Caribbean to talk

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about issues that are common to the production of high quality goods and services in the region.

We do not want a Heads of Government meeting to simply approve what a few technocrats have gotten together and said, "This is going to promote Caribbean integration; this is going to promote the Caribbean Single Market and Economy," and so forth. In that way, you get buy-in from the entire region, where people understand what is happening. We may not have had the crisis in the health sector where we are talking about bringing doctors from another Caribbean country. That would not have been an issue.

We are talking to Cuba right now. I think Cuba has observer status in Caricom. [*Crosstalk*] Haiti had observer status at one time. The Dominican Republic had observer status. Cuba could very well become a full member of Caricom. If you have a Caribbean plan for health care and so forth, you do not have to use politics to deal with people who are asking for better conditions of work, wages, salaries and all those things. I do not know where the imagination has gone. We are not going to allow a few technocrats sitting in Georgetown or wherever, to say that we need to legislate this particular issue, because this is going to advance the cause of Caribbean integration. You are going to create, in short, a great deal of suspicion among people. It is going to be politicized.

Therefore, in countries where everything is politicized, like in Trinidad and Tobago, you spend five years trying to overthrow the government, and your margin is small. In Guyana you spend five years and so forth, and there is no time to discuss serious issues that affect people, and you have to use your majority. We want to move away from that. When the Prime Minister goes to Jamaica, I would like to see that he starts talking about putting on the agenda, important issues that affect all the peoples of the Caribbean.

Let us have these committees of technocrats drawn from the widest possible sources to discuss these issues, so that when we would have legislated, we would be legislating in the area of environment, a common environmental policy for the Caribbean; a common industrial safety policy and a common health policy, one which would allow health care workers, doctors and so on to move around the Caribbean. We will not have to bring them in because we want to punish UNC doctors in the San Fernando General Hospital. People are entitled to belong to the UNC; it is a great party. I had to come back in because I recognized what a great movement this is. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

Dr. Rowley: You are grovelling.

Mr. Valley: Do not go there. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. K. Ramnath: I do not consider this piece of legislation very important, despite what the Minister of Foreign Affairs said about obligations and that they take their foreign policy seriously. This would add little or no value to what the founders of this whole integration movement would like. We want to see something more tangible. We want to see things that are going to benefit Trinidad and Tobago and, indeed, all the islands, and not have to deal with it in a political manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a very short contribution on the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Bill. [*Crosstalk*] The purpose and intention of this Bill, as the Members on the other side know full well, is very simple and straightforward. On the one hand, it is intended, as we all know, merely to widen the category of those who are already permitted, by the existing legislation, to move within Caricom to ply their respective professions and/or trade.

Mr. Speaker, in light of that fact, and the fact that there is another amendment that is designed to make, more comfortable, the circumstances of the families of those so affected, I am absolutely surprised that I would hear from the Member for Siparia, that she is not prepared to support this legislation. [*Crosstalk*] I heard the Member say that she is not prepared to support it. I listened as well to the Member for Couva South. [*Crosstalk*] I know she said it, because I heard it; it is in the *Hansard*.

I want to make quick reference to a contribution made by an Independent, Sen. Seetahal, only yesterday in the other place, whose contribution, in this regard, really puts, very succinctly, that which I feel on the matter, in relation to the approach taken by the other side, both here and in the other place. I quote:

“Madam President, I rise to support the amendment of the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Bill.

When I listened to Sen. Mark I really had to check back to see if the original Act No. 26 of 1996 had not been passed by the government of which he was then part.”

There was desk thumping, according to the record in *Hansard*. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the first issue I would attend to in my short contribution is that I have heard the Member for Couva South leading the charge, calling for a

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referendum on matters touching and concerning the continued integration process that we are attempting to achieve in the region. In his contribution a while ago, the Member for Couva South felt that we should consult with the people, by way of referendum, on the question of the Caribbean Court of Justice and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. To underpin the hypocrisy of that Member and those on the other side, I want to remind them that for the past three elections we have had—and they came in quick succession in this country—those issues were already on the political agenda in Trinidad and Tobago.

In fact, it is the party opposite, when in government, which passed the legislation that we are attempting to amend today, and we all know this. At that time, there was no need for a referendum, but the Member for Couva South is now calling for a referendum on the question of the Caribbean Court of Justice, a matter that is very, very much advanced in its development, to the point where agreement has been reached, a site has been chosen here in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and things are well apace; but he now wants a referendum.

It was mentioned in the other place, that there should be no question as to the philosophy of Caribbean integration; we are supposed to be all agreed on that, because it was they who were involved in the negotiations, and took us to the stage in Trinidad and Tobago that we are at now. Talking about philosophy, Mr. Speaker, it appears clear to me, and others on this side, no doubt, that the UNC's philosophy is now about crying, crying, crying. The Member for Siparia, particularly, epitomizes this. Every time you hear her, whether inside the Parliament or outside, she is crying and crying and crying about everything. It is about chaos; it is about creating confusion.

The Member for Couva South anticipates that if, God forbid, anyone would take his very simple and awkward suggestion that there be some referendum on this matter, he will have an opportunity to create confusion and chaos in Trinidad and Tobago which, clearly, is the philosophy of the UNC. [*Crosstalk*] But we are wiser than that in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member was saying, in rather lofty terms, that this Bill is of no great moment, no great significance, but yet they are prepared to oppose it. He is saying that we should be talking about agriculture and environmental concerns for the region; that is true, and sounds very well. We should be talking about trade and finance; well, this is all that the Caribbean Single Market and Economy is all about. Right now that is receiving active consideration, not only from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and, by extension, the people, but by other governments and other people of the Caribbean.

In terms of agriculture, trade, finance, these issues, he said that we should be talking about treaties; well, these treaties, in the main, are already in place. We have Caricom, and many other regions in the world have common markets or trading blocs. The world is becoming quite aware that these are not sufficient. He made mention of Europe; that is not sufficient; they are going beyond that in Europe to unifying the currency and the European region, as a whole, in more and deeper ways. I want to remind the Member that the position he has taken is not entirely new.

I was speaking to representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Calypsonians Organization (TUCO) recently, the body that unifies and represents the calypsonians in Trinidad and Tobago. I was horrified by some of the reports that I received about the way some of our calypsonians are treated when they attempt to get into the United States and other countries, to do their work. One very top artiste—and I refuse to call his name, it might be embarrassing to him—the border officials made him take off his shoes, destroying them in the process. They described to me the absolute indignity and humiliation that they suffer, when they try to move from Trinidad and Tobago into some countries, in order to ply their trade, including, unfortunately, some countries in the region. This Bill is designed to remove that situation.

The argument I am hearing from the other side is that we ought to clearly define who are the artistes. I would like to hear a definition, from a Member on the other side, in the context of our Caribbean reality, who is an artiste. We know some of the very prominent ones in Trinidad and Tobago, but how do you define it? [*Crosstalk*] Nobody is making any suggestion, as though it is not a matter of common sense and general knowledge as to whether that is Sparrow or that is David Rudder or Mungal Patessar and others; [*Crosstalk*] that is quite all right, let me do that.

I heard the Member for Couva South, again, say that if we approach it in this way, we might be approaching consensus. I have a feeling that once the UNC is in Opposition, we will never be able to find consensus on any matter in this country. They are opposing every single thing, good bad or indifferent, and that is their attitude for the position that they hold, the responsible position of Opposition, but that is not new.

There were those in this country who opposed the very concept of independence. The history of this country will show that there were those who felt that Trinidad and Tobago should not have moved towards independence. Many of the difficulties that we are experiencing today [*Crosstalk*] have to do with some of

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the conditions that were laid down by those who were opposed to independence, way back in 1962. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, even before that, when the Caribbean was talking, when the thinkers in the region, supported by the large majority of people in the region, were thinking about a federated West Indies, there were those who were opposed to it, and that opposition goes on until today.

Mr. Speaker, I need your protection from those on the other side; they are disturbing my contribution. I have a right to speak here, as a Member of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: What the hon. Member is saying is quite true; he is in possession of the House, and you all need to listen to him.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Speaker, for reinforcing my right to speak in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I quote, very briefly, from page 275 of the book, *Inward Hunger*, written by the late great Dr. Eric Eustace Williams. At that time, he was speaking about those who were opposed to what the then government was attempting to do in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It has become quite commonplace for Members of the other side to quote elements of what Dr. Williams said, in order to perpetuate their current philosophy, which is to create confusion, crisis and chaos and to divide the people of this country on racial grounds, a very dangerous path upon which they have embarked.

I told one of my friends on the other side that, very unfortunately, in a neighbouring country there is serious political and racial difficulties. We have to be careful to learn from that example and act responsibly to ensure that we do not end up in that position.

I told one of my friends from the other side, privately, that in a particular country, when the election was lost to a particular leader, what he did was to, systemically, go around the country preaching a message of no hope to all his supporters and all who would listen. He was selling to his supporters and those who would listen that there was no hope for them in their country. It is that preaching and that inculcating in them the feeling that there was no hope, that led to the murders, violence and chaos that exist in that country.

I warn my friends on the other side that they must act more responsibly. [*Crosstalk*] They are setting up their supporters and those who would listen. When I challenged the Member for Couva South as to whether he was speaking for all, he eventually whittled down to some. He is right, some not all. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Will the Members of Parliament for Fyzabad and Nariva, please, let the Member for Laventille East/Morvant make his contribution in peace. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. F. Hinds: Again, I am very grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Williams said: [*Crosstalk*]

“‘The Danger facing Trinidad and Tobago and the West Indian nation’.

I said:

‘PNM domination in areas with an overwhelming preponderance of Indian votes reflects the DLP campaign and the DLP appeal that Indians should vote for the DLP so as to ensure an Indian Governor and an Indian Prime Minister. Religion figures prominently in their campaign. By hook or by crook they brought out the Indian vote—the young and the old, the literate and the illiterate...went to the length of distributing by the thousands a letter dated March 28, addressed ‘My dear Indian Brother’ and signed ‘Yours truly, Indian’.

The letter is seditious in intent, offensive, derogatory, an insult to the West Indian nation they claim the honour to represent. From the vicious document, I quote only one sentence, the least offensive in terms of language, the most offensive in terms of politics. The sentence reads as follows: ‘If my dear brother you have realized these occurrences and the shaky position in which our Indian people are placed, woe onto our Indian nation in the next ten years.’ Just think of that, Ladies and Gentlemen! An election to bring into being a West Indian Nation is fought on one side on the issue of ‘our Indian nation’. The Indian nation is in India. It is a respectable, reputable nation, respected the world over.”

This is Dr. Williams speaking of India, a country that he related to and knew very well. I want to quote that again:

“It is a respectable, reputable nation, respected the world over. It is the India of socialism, the India of Afro-Asian unity, the India of the Bandung Conference...”

That he and other leaders had attended.

“That is the Indian nation talking, not the recalcitrant and hostile minority of the West Indian nation masquerading as ‘the Indian nation’ and prostituting the name of India for its selfish, reactionary political ends.

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This, then, is the danger facing the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the West Indian nation—the deliberate attempt of our opponents to exploit race as the basis of political power.”

[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, this is why many of us, quite properly, regard Dr. Williams as a prophet. He saw it as a danger then and it remains a danger to this day.

Having listened to what Dr. Williams actually said, none of them can properly say that anything in his comment was intended to be derogatory or racist. Yet, since that time and, more frequently, within recent times, they have been construing these noble and honest words in racist terms for their own horrible political ends.

What does the word “recalcitrant” mean? For support, I make reference to the *Collins Concise Dictionary* to see what it says as to the meaning and to demonstrate why I feel confident that I can describe them as “recalcitrant”. [*Crosstalk*] You have 16 seats, we have 20; in that sense, you are in the minority; that is why you are in the Opposition crying on a daily basis. The meaning of the word “recalcitrant” is: Not susceptible to control, refractory.

Mr. Speaker, like Dr. Williams, at that time, I am seeing the irresponsibility of those on the other side, and I have a duty to speak out as a parliamentarian and as a citizen. As a Member of Parliament I have a duty to speak out against it, because they are taking our country—[*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Again, I have to appeal to hon. Members, whether you like it or not, the hon. Member is in possession of the House and you have to listen to him in silence. If you do not want to listen to him, the door is right next to you. Continue, please, hon. Member.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I have a duty to take a position against that kind of behaviour, because it is taking our country down a very frightening path. On the question of consensus, it is clear to me that we can find consensus on nothing in this country, once they remain in their mindset; not realizing, as Einstein once told us, that you cannot solve subsisting problems with the same negative, poor and backward mentality that created the problems, in the first place. In order to resolve the problems that beset the region, we have to have fresh approaches.

The amendment before us today is small, I concede, but it is a fresh approach.
[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Einstein never said that!

Mr. F. Hinds: That is exactly what he said! I am not sure whether you ever read. [*Crosstalk*] That is quite all right. I will not engage you. I am making a contribution and I will continue to do so. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, we on this side are attempting to speak more and more on the business of Caribbean integration, “Caribbeanism”, if you like. As we speak today, West Indian cricket is celebrating its 75th anniversary; 75 proud, strong years of an activity that truly unites the Caribbean; an activity that we all share and enjoy. We are trying, if you like, to take Caribbean identity and unity beyond West Indian cricket and Caricom, and to make this area a home for all. [*Crosstalk*]

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, this is not the only Bill that they have opposed. They have opposed every other bill that we brought to this House, and that is what they intend to do, so we expect no support from them on any issue. [*Crosstalk*] Their philosophy is to create confusion and crisis and to use race in order to do it. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I drove through the constituency of Fyzabad this morning, just before lunch. I was absolutely impressed to see the state of cleanliness, the impeccable ambience throughout Fyzabad. [*Desk thumping*] Along my way from Port of Spain to Palo Seco, where I went, I saw groups of people at work in Fyzabad, very nattily attired in their proud CEPEP uniforms. [*Crosstalk*] Perhaps, because they are opposed to cleanliness and the opportunity for little people in the society to participate meaningfully, as we are trying to do for all the people of the Caribbean, they are opposed to it. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, I heard the political leader of that party saying that certain individuals received contracts in the sum of \$500 million. They know that is simply not true. I heard him quoting that one company got a contract for \$600 million. [*Crosstalk*] I know that he would call it irrelevant.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Member for Princes Town, please! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. F. Hinds: I submit that it is very relevant. We are talking about trying to create a Caribbean in which all the people can participate, including those who have contracts in the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme. As a matter of fact, based on the good example that we have led here in Trinidad, other countries in the region may very well assume the model and put it into place.

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Having made the contribution that I got on my legs to make, [*Laughter*] I am disappointed, but not surprised at the position of my friends on the other side in this debate and, indeed, in all others. As I have said, *ad nauseam*, it is clearly the case of trying to disrupt and destroy the good things that are happening in Trinidad and Tobago and the region. They are expected to continue to cry and create confusion, so long as they remain in Opposition.

As we pass this legislation, I hope that the people of the region would benefit totally from it. Just like independence, Caricom and all the other developments were opposed, at the end of the day, all of the region and Trinidad and Tobago will come to see that we had the wisdom to do this, but the Opposition took the position it did, quite naturally.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguana*): Mr. Speaker, I had no intention of joining this debate, but I could not sit here and have the Member for Laventille East/Morvant go into history and repeat those words “recalcitrant minority” and “hostile people” from Central Trinidad.

We want to talk about progressing into this age, Caricom unity and spreading our wings across Caricom, but here we have this sort of statement coming from a Member on the Government Benches. I think that is taking our country backwards. We must really be careful of what we say in this Parliament. We mentioned before in various debates that we are leaders in our community. I want to touch on a few things very briefly and, as we go on maybe I would refer to what the Member had been trying to say this afternoon.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke about what the Bill means to our foreign policy and what have you, but here we have this Member trying to introduce hate and backwardness into this debate. I feel that we have to be careful.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about the Bill. The main purpose of this Bill is to ensure that we deal with the four categories of—I cannot say workers—people: artistes, musicians, sports persons or media workers. I will talk a little about sports. What is there that does not happen, at present, for sportsmen to enter this country or any other Caricom country? What is the definition of a sports person? Why are we now expanding this category to encourage sportsmen to come to this country? What will that do to improve the quality of our sports? As far as we are concerned, each country in the region has its own sports policy and, of course, would want its own sportsmen to play for their country and improve the quality of their standard. How then does this benefit Trinidad and Tobago?

I want this question answered, Mr. Speaker: What category of sportsmen are we talking about? According to this Bill, is it that a person who has just started to play cricket, football or whatever, can come to Trinidad and Tobago to play, bring his whole family and stay for as long as possible or as long as he wants? I think the Bill is really making this a mockery.

When we were in office, we brought the original Bill which talked about skilled people with certain degrees to improve the quality of life for people across the broad. When you water it down to mean an artiste or musicians, what are we talking about? What signals are we sending to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the region, that we could have a free for all?

I always have a problem when Members opposite come to Parliament to have a special sitting, talk about something that is so urgent and yet they do not say anything. I think when something is urgent, it should add value to Trinidad and Tobago and to what we are talking about.

In my wildest dreams, I cannot imagine why an artiste, musician, sports person or media worker. Are we saying that we do not have media workers in Trinidad and Tobago, that we have to import from elsewhere, that we have to import them from Haiti? To me, something is amiss here; something is being hidden from us and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I would like, when the Minister is winding up, that she talks a bit about this.

Mr. Speaker, I know that this is another con man job. I am a bit worried about this piece of legislation, because there seems to be more to the motive for it than we have been told. We see what happened in Trinidad and Tobago with the election that was held recently, with moving votes. The Member for Diego Martin East has been saying, across the floor all afternoon, it is for people to vote. If this is the case, let us know so, maybe, we could create our own defence and not have it passed. [*Crosstalk*]

We have people talking about unity and moving this country forward, yet we have the Member for Laventille East/Morvant talking about people being recalcitrant, hostile and so on, we have a problem with that. We, on this side, must not allow these statements to go unheeded in this Parliament. I believe that we must end this sort of thinking in this country. To quote Dr. Williams and bring him into this debate is a bit unfortunate; that quotation had nothing to do with this present debate.

I could have gone on and replied to him but, just for my own clarification, I would like someone on that side to tell me why this amendment is necessary. I

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have been thinking all afternoon, trying to come up with an explanation. Why do we need to include artistes, musicians, sports personnel and media workers from Caricom? This is the basis of this Bill, and we expect answers. If these answers are not forthcoming then, as I said before, we are taking our countrymen for fools. I do not believe, for one moment, that this Bill is necessary.

When the hon. Minister spoke about a Cabinet Note on these categories that we approved, in principle, it was to have public debate from the rest of the country, to find out what is really necessary, whether we need these people to come to our country. [Crosstalk] What is being said now is that people could come in here for indefinite periods, this is the problem we have; for indefinite periods. For example, if somebody comes here to play cricket, would he or she be able to stay on? This is mind-boggling.

I am asking the Members on that side to consider it carefully, because when Members come to Parliament and bring these pieces of legislation it only points to one direction which could mean the end to our democracy, a threat to democracy, as we know it, in this country. I am warning, that when you do this piece by piece, you are going to dismantle the beautiful country that we have.

Just think for a moment, Mr. Speaker, let us say things could get worse in Haiti, for example, and people come to Trinidad and Tobago in droves, in numbers. What would happen to our country? Just to get an extra vote here and there, you would sacrifice our country? Those who have gone to Haiti would understand the plight of that country. What would it benefit us for our hon. Prime Minister to be rushing this piece of legislation, to go to Jamaica to say, "We did it."? Mr. Speaker, I feel that we should think about this much more carefully. We want to embrace our Caricom friends, yes, but I do not think that this is the way to go. I think we should build on what we have.

The Member talked about sports and that it was the 75th anniversary of West Indies cricket; we are all proud of that. If this was done 10 years before, maybe we would have had no West Indies cricket, because if Haitians could have come here in their thousands, they do not know anything about cricket, they might have destroyed what we have. We have to be very careful about what we are doing. We have to be proud of our country.

I join with the Member for Diego Martin Central. Whenever the Member for Laventille East/Morvant gets up in this House, he introduces racism, hate and divisions. [Crosstalk] I feel that Members on this side must condemn that; we must ask the Chief Whip to talk to him. We, in this country, must not go back to

those days when a Prime Minister could talk about "recalcitrant minority" and these various remarks made against people of this country. We would never do that. We would never describe another race or portion of our people and talk about recalcitrant or talk in any way that would demean them. Mr. Speaker, when people say that, you and I must feel a bit hurt, because we cannot allow ourselves to go back in history to those divisive days.

If you have to move forward and lead the Caribbean and be the leader in Caricom, I congratulate you on your vision but, the fact is, you cannot have other people pulling it down. I think I would ask the Member for Laventille East/Morvant to read back what he said today in the *Hansard* and to refrain from going there. If we, on this side, did that and there were any problems in the country, they would say that we did it. I am warning that the Member should refrain from going into the dangerous journeys that he makes, from time to time, about racism, divisiveness and attacking the integrity of Members on this side without any proof or information.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Prime Minister, when he makes his trip, to rethink this piece of legislation. I do not think this is at all important at this time in Trinidad and Tobago. How are we going to control the invasion or incursion into Trinidad and Tobago, when we pass this piece of legislation? [*Crosstalk*] We must be very careful of what we do, because these little pieces of legislation can mean the demise of this country.

Thank you.

Mr. Harry Partap (*Nariva*): Mr. Speaker, I did not really intend to speak this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. H. Partap: I could not allow the Member for Laventille East/Morvant to throw all those accusations against us, on this side, and get away with it. The Member was in open defiance of his leader. [*Desk thumping*] I want to tell him this afternoon that, on this side, we have discipline; we cherish discipline. We will never openly defy our leader. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Prime Minister, I think you must take action against the Member. In other words, he sent a message to you, that you cannot do him anything; he has a right to speak in this Parliament and nothing you say could prevent him. [*Crosstalk*] Of course, that is your problem; you would know how to deal with your problem. I certainly would not like him to be giving us advice on this side as to how to deal with our problems. We will deal with our problems as we know how to deal with them. [*Crosstalk*]

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Mr. Speaker, when the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Bill was drafted, I am certain that there were two major objectives. The first objective was to widen the scope of the parent Act so as to include four categories of workers: artistes, musicians, sports persons, and media workers. The second major objective was to allow spouses and dependent members of those who can gain entry, to enter this country hassle-free. I think they were extremely good objectives, but there is a sting in the tail; that is what we, on this side, are concerned with. We are concerned about the sting in the tail, that is why we are very cautious as we approach the passage of this Bill. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, again, hon. Members, I have to appeal to you to let us hear the hon. Member for Nariva. There is too much crosstalk. If you have to speak to each other, try and do it in undertones.

Mr. H. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the crosstalk is coming from the other side, it is their Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant that really inspired it, so they would have to deal with him at the appropriate time. [*Crosstalk*]

When a government brings legislation to the House and Members agree to support it, we expect the government to implement that legislation in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We do not trust the Members on that side to act in accordance with the law, justice and fair play; that is why we are so concerned. There is a degree of trust, which we repose in the Government, to act fairly with people. That is what we do when we join with them, but we do not trust the Government. That is as plain as I can make it.

We do not trust the Government, because it is made up of a bunch of determined, creative, pedlars of all tunes. [*Desk thumping*] They are capable of making truth stand on its head, and that is why we do not trust them. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, they have proven themselves to be cunning, deceitful and treacherous, and we have to guard the people of Trinidad and Tobago against them. We do not trust this Government, because we do not feel that it acts fairly to people; that is our concern.

The Member quoted Dr. Eric Williams, but I am certain that he would not be doing the things that you are doing now. [*Desk thumping*] If you look at the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme, it is one of the most visible examples that you could ever find in this country, where discrimination is so apparent. I cannot understand why it is. I feel that it is a good programme. I feel that CEPEP, if run properly, could be good, but you have 10 per cent of the \$600,000 that the people get, going to workers, and the other 90 per

cent going to the contractor. The Member for Toco/Manzanilla knows what I am talking about, because he is in total control of the CEPEP in the Toco/Manzanilla area; [*Crosstalk*] Boynes and Mr. Boynes, that is it. [*Laughter*] It is precisely because of this that we do not trust them.

We are very suspicious of the motive for this amendment, because it is our feeling that this is merely to voter pad. This is to encourage people to come here so that they can set up their constituencies so that they will never ever lose an election again; you will voter pad. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant quoted from a book by Dr. Williams. I do not know if Dr. Williams had indicated that in the decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, a similar method was used; surreptitiously, the PNM was bringing in immigrants, handing them identification cards on arrival and placing them all parts of Trinidad, particularly in the East-West Corridor. Today, the PNM has a built-in majority. [*Crosstalk*] I meant immigrants from the smaller islands, the Eastern Caribbean; that was encouraged by one of your leaders.

The motive of the PNM is crystal clear. [*Crosstalk*] All they are concerned about is consolidating power by the hook or by the crook. [*Desk thumping*] The 2002 general election you got power by the crook, because you stole the election. You could deny it from today until the end of the term; you took the election by the crook. You aligned yourselves with murderers, crooks, anarchists and extortionists.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I know you are capable of speaking to the Bill so, please, try and come back to the Bill.

Mr. H. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know that I would never disobey your rules; not in here; never in here. [*Laughter*] I will follow your guidance. I will just make one point in relation to this particular issue. Between 1956 to 1986 this was the modus operandi of the PNM. They used immigrants to stay in power. I think it was Lord Blakie, a calypsonian, who immortalized the "tiefing" scheme that the PNM had. He said that if you want to identify a person who came here by boat, ask them to say "box". [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, I will go back to the Bill.

We believe that this Bill will be used to voter pad, and this is why we are very constrained to give it support. We feel that the Government will continue to use all kinds of devious ways in order to maintain office. Of course, they have started their thuggery and intimidation already.

Mr. Speaker, we are really concerned about the rationale for expanding the category of workers identified at clause 5 of this Bill, which tells us that they are

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artistes, musicians, sportsmen and media workers. What is the rationale? I cannot understand what is the rationale. Is the rationale based on what the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central said on June 02, 1996, when he spoke in the debate of the parent Act? This is *Hansard* Volume 3, 95/96, page 293, June 07, 1996. This is what Hon. Valley said:

“One of the amendments we need to make to the legislation is to expand the occupations. I am saying further that at the insistence of Trinidad and Tobago, we got the Heads to agree that any member State could expand the legislation to include other skills and you would see that noted in the Heads of Agreement. We are saying that since that was Trinidad and Tobago's...”

I believe he meant “position”.

“we ought to take a decision now to expand it to include other skills; in other words, non-university qualified people.”

Those were the words of the Member. [*Interruption*] “People” is what I see here. [*Crosstalk*] Well the *Hansard* must have quoted you wrongly, but you did not correct it. If you say it was “person”, I will give you the benefit of the doubt. I do not trust you, but I will give you the benefit of the doubt.

Mr. Speaker, what the Member for Diego Martin Central said at that time, just did not make sense to me at all, because the UNC had just come into office—this was in 1996—and we had inherited an unemployment rate that was hovering at 19 per cent. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. The record will show that when the PNM came into government in 1991, the unemployment rate was 20.3 per cent. When we left office in 1995, the unemployment rate was 16.4 per cent; please quote correctly, Member.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Speaker, that is not reflected in the research that I did but I am sure that the Member for San Fernando East—[*Interruption*] Do not go there, please. I am begging you on behalf of the Speaker, do not go there. I am saying that my research did not reveal that but I would check it over. [*Crosstalk*] I am glad to know that we can hear the voice of the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, just to point out, according to labour force reports, and for the benefit of the Member for San Fernando East—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. Moonilal: You have absolutely no discipline on that side.

In 1991 the labour force reports of this country show 18.5 per cent; in 1995, 17.2 per cent. That is correct.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I just want to let my good Friend, the Member for Oropouche, know that we have tracked the unemployment figures on a quarterly basis ever since we came into the Government in 1991. If you look at the disaggregated figures for that particular year, 1991, you would see a different story, and if you look at the disaggregated figures for 1995 you would also see a different story.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the annual unemployment rate, not the quarterly unemployment rate. So it is not 20 per cent. Let me just repeat that: 18.5 in 1991 and in 1995, 17.2 per cent. These are the annual unemployment rates.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Speaker, I explained to the Prime Minister; it is there in black and white so I will go to the figure of 18.5 per cent. Do not make me a liar for .5 per cent.

As I said before I gave way that I am glad to hear the voice of the Member for Diego Martin West. At one stage I thought that he was absent completely from Trinidad and Tobago. While we were in government every Friday he would come and it is one song of corruption, corruption, corruption. Now corruption is under his nose and he is not smelling it. [*Crosstalk*] Do not let me go further, because I could go as far as Jacqui Lazzarus. I would not go there. But do not tickle me, because I would not laugh, you know; I would be doing something else—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please address me and concentrate on the Bill before us.

Mr. H. Partap: Committed as we are to Caribbean unity, we must first be committed to the nationals of Trinidad and Tobago. That has been our position here on this side all along. The parent Act ensures that a minimum category of workers could enter our labour market. We have put in that parent Act a mechanism so that we could verify whether the people are dentists, doctors, lawyers or whether they have gone through either one of the two universities in the Caribbean. They can enter for media work once they have a degree. So that category, I find, is redundant.

We are still concerned about the safeguards for us to determine whether a person is an artiste, a musician, a sports person or a media worker, according to this. You are telling us that we must take the word of the Minister. At first I

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thought that the Minister responsible for immigration was the hon. Senator Howard Chin Lee, but I was advised that hon. Minister Gift is the person responsible for this aspect of the immigration procedures under this Act. Be that as it may, it is still left only to the discretion of the Minister. How would he be guided? What criteria would he be guided by? That is of very much concern to us because any person, whether he comes from Grenada, Carriacou, Bequia, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, can just show up at the Piarco International Airport, that modern edifice of first-world status, that symbol of enlightened vision and development. He may have a guitar slung on his back and a mouth organ in his pocket and would say, "I am a musician; I am an artiste".

The Minister—poor fellow, does not know—the fellow comes in and he says, "I am an artiste, let me in", and he comes in. How is the Minister going to verify that? That is our concern and it is a genuine concern, because just anybody could come in here and say he is an artiste; he is this; he is that and could enter in these four categories.

I want to tell you this. We have media workers a dime a dozen in Trinidad and Tobago who are not working. So according to clause 5, it says:

"Notwithstanding sections 8 and 9, an applicant who is a citizen of a qualifying Caribbean Community State and possesses any qualification or experience or combination of qualification and experience that to the satisfaction of the Minister proves that the applicant is—

- (a) an artiste;
- (b) a musician;
- (c) a sports person; or
- (d) a media worker,

is deemed to have satisfied the qualification requirements of this Act."

I find it is a little too simple to get into Trinidad and Tobago. We are told that we must accept the words of the Minister in this case. Well, I do not know. As we said, I do not trust them. I do not know if we could trust the word of the Minister, but I would tell you one thing, I would have never trusted anything if Minister Chin Lee was the Minister in charge, because I know "all fall down"; Baghdad and all the rest of it.

So clearly, those on that side did not do the ground work that was necessary to make clause 5 work in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. I am really surprised

that this should happen, because the loquacious Member for Diego Martin East who is always ready to talk, when he spoke on this Bill on June 07, 1996, this is what he said. I am quoting *Hansard*, Volume 3, 1995—1996, page 305. Listen to what Mr. Imbert said:

“One must look very carefully,...that we are not opening up a situation where the whole concept of standards and qualifications becomes very loose.”

That is the Member for Diego Martin East. [*Interruption*] It is there in the *Hansard*. You could check the same one the Member for Diego Martin Central has.

I am not against what the Member for Diego Martin East said in 1996. I agree with him. What I am asking is, what has happened now? It is now a serious concern too, and it is a more serious concern because the people from Haiti could come in here. I could tell you what it is like. I worked in the Turks and Caicos Islands, which is about 90 miles north of Haiti, and that island was overrun by Haitians.

Mr. Valley: What were you doing there?

Mr. H. Partap: After this session I would tell you. [*Laughter*]

I found the remarks of the Member for Diego Martin East to be quite amusing. While he was on the Opposition benches he was anxious to make sure that all the groundwork and standards were covered, and so on—up to mark—but now that he is in Government that has gone through the window. Why is he not interested in protecting standards and qualifications? [*Interruption*] I will tell you something; certainly, I did not build any wall that fell down.

What happened was, recently Cabinet agreed to recognize Grade III as a CXC pass. That is lowering standards.

Hon. Member: That was so since 1997.

Mr. H. Partap: Whether it was so in 1997 or whatever it is, I do not care; what I am saying is, you are accepting Grade III as a pass and I did not hear the Member for Diego Martin East say anything, you know. He was very quiet. You cannot water down qualifications. That is what we are very concerned about in this amendment, that you may very well water down the qualifications.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Government has a political agenda in relation to this particular thing, in watering down the standards, but I would tell you another day. I do not want to go into that because that does not form part of the Bill. One day I would tell you the reason they have lowered the standard in the CXC examination results.

Dr. Rowley: Tell me now! Tell me now!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Bereaux: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Does the hon. Member know that the CXC Grade III was being accepted since in or around 2000?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: By whom?

Mr. Bereaux: By your government.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: It was not accepted by my government.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Speaker, I would tell you that what the Member for La Brea said is not true. I know that a report came to us when we were in government but we never accepted it. Maybe they have seen the report, like what the Attorney General had done at one stage—in the last session—but be that as it may, I am asking the Government now whether there is readiness in terms of dealing with this particular thing. Are they ready—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, hon. Members. If you all wish I could suspend the sitting for an hour, for an hour and a half, two hours, and we can come back here, you know. So, please, let us hear the Member for Nariva in silence.

Mr. H. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to find out whether they think they have all the groundwork settled in order to protect us from the influx of people that would come in because they are now putting four additional categories.

The Member for Diego Martin West is one of my favourite Members on that side and I want to quote him because I do not want him to be left out. The Member for Diego Martin West, in *Hansard*, Friday, June 07, 1996, Volume 3, page 273—

Hon. Member: *Hansard* does not come in that size.

Mr. H. Partap: You see, I am working smart; I do not walk with a big book here. I just write it over and I put it here, but they can go and check it. We work smart on this side. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Speaker, I would concentrate directly on you.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps if you would stop quoting or referring to Dr. Rowley the House might be quiet, I do not know. But try and address me.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Speaker, I would have to mention him because I am quoting him. That is the only reason. But I would never quote him again for the rest of the evening after this. [*Laughter*]

Listen to what the Member for Diego Martin West said. [*Crosstalk*] I reserve the right to answer that at a later stage. I quote:

“...it is my view that our present circumstances would not permit us to go immediately into total free movement.”

This is the Member for Diego Martin West speaking, already contradicting the Member for Diego Martin Central. He goes on:

“That is reasonable. I am being very reasonable. I cannot expect this Government...”

meaning the UNC when we were there:

“...or any government in the region, tomorrow, to get up and say, okay, let our peoples move freely; because they have not laid the appropriate groundwork for that.”

Applause to the Member for Diego Martin West; he is quite correct. But what is happening now? I suspect that he was not a Member—or if he was in Cabinet, he did not open his mouth; he was silent. I do not know why he did it, but we would explore that at a later date.

He was correct in making a plea to us to set the groundwork, but what is happening now? Why does he now want to open up the labour market to people from outside in these categories and there is no system for checks and balances? I do not understand. Is it one yardstick for the UNC and another for the PNM? I do not know; maybe. We really cannot open our doors like that and open our labour market without looking at the interest of our nationals. They come first.

According to the Central Bank figures which I took from the *Royal Bank, Trinidad and Tobago Investor*, June 2003, Volume 1, No. 4—it is an in-house paper—it states:

“The unemployment rate is up 11 per cent...”

I hope the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is hearing this:

“...in 2002 from the 10.8 per cent left by the UNC at the end of 2001.”

So unemployment is going up, not down. The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development said it was going down. I do not know if it would

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go up to come back down; that might be so, but it is going up 11.8 per cent. That figure is going to soar as the proverbial eagle, like how crime is soaring—

Mr. Hinds: And you would remain short.

Mr. H. Partap: That does not matter. It would be soaring and more retrenchment would take place. Let me give you a list of the retrenchment. It reads like a hit list under the PNM: 10,000 sugar workers are being retrenched at the moment—they fired them on the spot; they have gone and have not received their severance pay as yet; 800 Port Authority workers are due to be severed under a dubious restructuring programme; 150 PTSC workers retrenched—

Mr. Speaker: I clearly remember the hon. Member for Siparia quoting those exact figures, so move on from there. Do not go there again.

Mr. H. Partap: All right. As I said, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to disobey you in this House, but I am sure that she did not mention this one. What I am saying is, after the local government election this year, July 14, 1,800 workers in Petrotrin are being prepared for retrenchment.

Mr. Ramnath: I disagree with you. Is that correct?

Mr. H. Partap: Yes. They are earmarked for retrenchment.

Mr. Ramnath: So I am listed too?

Mr. H. Partap: Yes, I suspect so. I do not know where Mr. McLeod would be, but I suspect that he may intervene. But he is aware of this. That is not all. After July 14, the Minister of Works and Transport, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, mentioned at a meeting in Poole Village that the daily-paid workers of the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Local Government are also earmarked to be retrenched and their jobs would be taken over by the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). So it has not ended.

All this is happening and the Government has brought an amendment to an Act to bring four categories of workers here and there is no criteria to determine whether these are really people who are artistes, musicians, sports people and what have you. There are no checks and balances. So they are bringing in people from the Caricom area, taking care of the Caricom nationals, but you are leaving your own citizens exposed and I find that to be rather strange.

You see, all this, when you put it in the pot, gives us the impression that we are right in saying that they want to voter pad.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I really hate to do you this but you are repeating the arguments of previous Members. I know you are capable of addressing some other aspect of this Bill. So, please, do that.

Mr. H. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the Government is doing this and it is not putting the standards for us and in previous debates they were talking about standards and qualifications, while they want to bring workers from outside, the Ministry of Education has stopped the On-The-Job Training (OJT) programme for schools. They are doing it like a thief in the night. Where over 300 to 400 young persons could have come into the OJT Programme and get access to be teachers in primary schools, they have stopped it. I can tell you that because I am a member of a denominational primary school board, so I know they have stopped it. They cannot deny it. Do not come here and mislead the House.

They have stopped a system that would give people a chance of employment. If that is not bad, do you know what the advertisements now are for? They want teachers for secondary schools. Do you know what they want the applicants to do? Remember you are applying for a job as a teacher. They want you to send two recent photographs.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: It was always so.

Mr. H. Partap: I do not know it was always so. Why do you want my photograph if I am applying for a job? Is that the first level of discrimination? I want to eliminate you if you do not like my head? Suppose I was ugly and you do not like ugly people, does it mean that you eliminate me? Suppose my face was fat, you would eliminate me because you do not like me? I am asking, why do you want two photographs of an applicant before you give him the job? I have absolutely no problem if after I am offered the job you tell me, "give me two photographs because I want to put it on the file". There is nothing wrong with that.

Mr. Hinds stands.

I am not giving way to you because you are indisciplined and you disobey your leader. I am taking up for your leader today. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please. Hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant, please let the Member speak and let us give some silence to the Member, because if this House continues the way it is going I will definitely suspend the sitting. So continue, please. You have two more minutes of your original time.

Mr. H. Partap: I may not take all of the extension. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, why do you want two photographs?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: It was always so.

Mr. H. Partap: If it was always so, change it. Maybe that is the reason they do not want to implement the Equal Opportunity Act, because anybody who sees that advertisement can go to the Equal Opportunity Commission and lodge a complaint. I would have done that if I did not have a job. That is a serious thing and it must be changed.

They are going to bring in four categories of workers under this amendment, but do you know what they are doing in the Ministry of Education as well? When the applications come they put them on a pile and the people who apply first are not being considered and you have all kinds of appointments being made, but people's applications are at the bottom of the pile. I am asking the Government to have a different system. Treat people fairly. Maybe it is important that you introduce the Equal Opportunity Act so people can fight for their rights and they can get equal treatment.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Nariva 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. H. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would not be long. I just want to raise another point. While the Government is anxious to have this passed so they can open our labour market to these four categories of workers, you have the differently-abled people crying out for employment. I make a plea today for the Government to act urgently to assist these people. Do not be unkind to our differently-abled people.

The reason I have a passion against this particular amendment is because I am afraid that if these four categories of workers were allowed to come in, they would put a strain on the resources and the infrastructure of the country and I fear that the Minister of Works and Transport may not be able to fix the Cunapo Southern Main Road which I have been asking about for years. It is over two years now I have been asking, even longer. We had started work on it and it was stopped by the PNM. Now I am asking them to continue. I hope he will hear the cries of the people of—

Mr. Speaker: Cunapo Main Road has nothing to do with this Bill, you know.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that if we bring in these workers they would put a strain on the infrastructure and I may not be able to get my roads

fixed, so I hope the Minister would hear. While I am at it, I am glad that WASA has started running water in some of the areas in my constituency after four years of begging. Again, if these people come in, there might be so much pressure on the infrastructure that I may not get the water in Nariva.

They have started in Plum Road; they have gone to Sadu Road; I am glad. I want them now to go to De Gannes Trace, to Train Line in Cumuto, Caratal and Ecclesville, because they want Ecclesville. Bring the water for them.

This is the contribution I would like to make. I thank you so much for your time.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Mr. Speaker, I rise to satisfy the Member for Nariva that I can still speak. He seems to have had some concern about my voice and my absence from the debates, so I just rise to calm his fears and to remind him that whenever he gets up in the Parliament and treats us to an explosion of tedious repetition, that we are able to respond.

If what the Members on the other side have been saying all evening was, in fact, the situation that we are dealing with, then their fears and concerns would have been very real and would have been shared by those of us on this side. Contrary to all that you have heard coming from the other side, we are not an irresponsible Government. The very concerns that they raise about an unmanaged free-for-all with respect to access to the territory of Trinidad and Tobago, would be of concern to us here, because we, too, represent people and we, too, understand the effects of unmanaged entry into Trinidad and Tobago.

That is why I entered the debate because the Member for Nariva, in his normal mischievous and untruthful way, seeks to confuse the issue to make the point that he wants to make. He left home wanting to make a point and notwithstanding what the issue is, he intended to make that point. When he draws my record of *Hansard*—and I take his word for it, because do you know something? The *Hansard* he was quoting from was in writing. I did not see a copy of his printed *Hansard*, but the scrap of paper that he claims to have transcribed from *Hansard* makes sense. So it could not have been his statement; it could have been mine. So therefore I accept it. What he was saying was that somewhere in the *Hansard* in this building, on the country's record, at an earlier time, I would have said that we cannot have a free-for-all entry into Trinidad and Tobago; we cannot have unrestricted movement of persons; we cannot have freedom of movement within the Caricom area without first laying the groundwork.

If he said I say so, then I say I said so because I would say that. That is the kind of thing I would say. What I would not do is to come here and seek to give

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the impression that the matter before the House today is a free-for-all. Because the point he was making was that at one time I was saying no free-for-all; no freedom of movement, and today I am supporting that, giving the impression that the matter before the House is to create this general free-for-all.

I heard all my colleagues on the other side who spoke, talk about what is going to happen with the man with the guitar and the mouth organ turning up in Piarco Airport, the shed of shame. What self-respecting man with a mouth organ would come to that shed of shame if he could help it? The impression they are trying to give is that all these poor Haitians, 3.6 million of them, would leave Haiti, jump on their logs and start to row to Trinidad and Tobago; all the Grenadians would leave Grenada, leave Guave, jump on the bus; come down on the port and end up on the Port of Spain wharf; also the Vincentians.

All they have been saying all afternoon is that all these people who are out there knocking at our door, what this Bill is going to do is to open the door and they would flood us. That has been the presentation of my colleagues on the other side. That is what they came here to say, because anybody who accepts that argument from them would deem the Government of Trinidad and Tobago irresponsible to open a situation now to allow all Tom, Dick and Harrilal, according to my friend from Siparia, to come and take over Trinidad and Tobago because they want to spend our money; they want to get our food and they come to vote; all kinds of nonsense you heard this evening.

But what does the document say with respect to persons coming here? Before I go to that, I want to point out that this administration did not initiate this action. This administration is following through on an action that was initiated by those who found themselves on the other side, having squandered their tenure through corruption. [*Desk thumping*] The electorate, having rectified our management, what was in the pipeline for the country to do is what this administration is doing. They initiated this; we supported it.

All that this amendment is doing is creating a slightly wider pool of Caricom persons who can access our territory and those persons are listed in clause 5. They are artistes, musicians, sports persons and media workers. But they spent the whole evening trying to give the impression that persons from those unfortunate territories would turn up here all claiming to be artistes, musicians, sports persons and media workers and would take over Trinidad and Tobago.

It is the folly of the Member for Chaguanas that he is perpetuating there—
[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I want to quote clause 4 so you would understand why what they said all afternoon was not correct. Clause 4 says:

“This section applies to a citizen of a qualifying Caribbean Community state who holds a passport issued by such a state and presents on entry to Trinidad and Tobago, a certificate issued by the Government of a qualifying Caribbean Community state...”

What that means is that any person who is seeking entry into Trinidad and Tobago under the provision of this Bill would have to first get a certificate from his or her country identifying such a person as a purveyor of the skill described. So coming from country “A” or “B” to Trinidad and Tobago, in your home country you have to be certified by your government as being accredited as a media worker, an artiste or a musician; not just blowing a mouth organ or strumming a guitar as our friends say. You have to be of some accomplishment so your government could recognize you as having attained that standard. When you get that certificate from your government, you can then come to Trinidad and Tobago or apply to Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs was very careful to spell it out. They were not listening, because they came here to make mischievous statements. So they were not listening. Even after you have that certificate from your government of origin and you come to Trinidad and Tobago, the matter still falls to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago because clause 5 says on application you must prove to the Minister of Trinidad and Tobago that you are what your government says you are, because it is Trinidad and Tobago’s authority which will prevail.

So even getting a certificate from your government is no guarantee you would get into Trinidad and Tobago. But to be treated with under this law, you must first have the certificate from your home country to be able to apply to our country for entry as a media worker, a sports person or an artiste, as the case might be. Then you are required to prove that, and that proof would take the form of your accomplishment of some sort. It cannot be any Tom, Dick and Harry. How are you going to prove you are a musician if you have a guitar?

It clearly says in operationalizing this law that there is going to be some element of investigation on your application. If you are not already a virtuoso, widely known here in Trinidad and Tobago or elsewhere in the Caribbean, the investigation would find out where you come from; where you got this reputation from, and if here we are satisfied that you are a fit and proper person to enter

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Trinidad and Tobago, only then would the Minister for Trinidad and Tobago's interest issue you with a certificate and only then would you be allowed into Trinidad and Tobago under this law.

That is what is before the Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and they know it, you know, because they can read and they can understand, but they are on a mission to paint Trinidad and Tobago as going to hell; they are on a mission to create racial strife; they are predicting doom; they are predicting destruction; nothing would please them more than to hear tomorrow that a plague has descended on this country and we all have 24 hours to live. They want nothing good for this country; they are happiest when they hear somebody cut somebody's throat. Do you not see the glee with which they talk about crime?

The crime issue which we are all facing; we are going through a phase of excessive crime in Trinidad and Tobago, but do you see the glee on their faces? Because they believe it is only in that situation of hell and havoc will they have a chance of getting back into office. [*Desk thumping*]

Even when the circumstances do not warrant that kind of intervention, they create it. So they come to Parliament and see a bill that says that Caricom countries would have to certify their artistes and their sportsmen and then they have to apply to our authorities and only when we are satisfied with what they have applied for, then we certify them to enter, but they spend the whole evening talking about being drowned by Haitians, Grenadians and being flooded by Vincentians and so on.

Ask yourself, Mr. Speaker, do these people wish Trinidad and Tobago well? Then when you tell them they have a difficulty with the truth, they get upset; when you tell them that they are irrelevant, they get annoyed; when you tell them that they are obstructive and mischievous, they get provoked. Do you understand? We could have gone home a long time ago. This is something that the UNC and the PNM support, you know, Mr. Speaker.

I would tell you one thing. I am advocating now that it would do a lot of good in this Parliament and in this country if the House Committee meets very soon and one item on the agenda ought to be a reduction in the speaking time for Members of Parliament, to some considerably reduced figure, with an extension of some sort, so as to force Members to make their points and sit. They should not be allowed in these modern times to get up and talk for 75 minutes, talking foolishness, talking "dotishness" and repeating themselves over and over.

My friend from St. Joseph wants to go home. We all want to go home. We could have gone home a long time ago, but Members get up one after the other,

misleading the Parliament and the country, misrepresenting the facts on a simple amendment on which both sides agree. Save your powder for a real fight! When an issue comes up that we have a difference on, let us battle over that, but do not spend the whole evening on something that both sides agree on, perpetrating untruths and misrepresentations and trying to create fear in the country; talking about protecting local workers and labour movement; not wanting to look after workers' interest, when all the Bill seeks to do is to create motion among Caricom nationals who have reached a certain standard.

I would tell you one thing. In case you go anywhere in the Caribbean, you would meet more nationals of Trinidad and Tobago in other people's country than you meet in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Everywhere you go you meet our citizens accessing other people's countries. But we get up here and behave as though we live in a walled city and nobody must come here. There is not a soul in Port of Spain you can meet and point a finger at who cannot tell you, "I have some cousin, brother, uncle, nephew in somebody else's country within the region."

I would tell you something else too. I do not think the Opposition understands the extent to which Trinidad and Tobago is dependent on the Caricom economies for our own job-creation and job support here in Trinidad and Tobago. So all this talk about trying to disparage Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica and other places, does us no good. It is small-time cheap politics, ineffectual as it is, because I must tell you it is having no effect on the election results, not now or ever. What it is doing is wasting Parliament's time and making charlatans of men who profess to be men of the cloth.

My friend from Nariva is supposed to be an exemplar in this country, both in the Parliament and the church, but he is leading the lies in the Parliament. Do you understand what I mean, Mr. Speaker? You are supposed to look up to these people, a man of the pulpit, but he is leading with documentary misrepresentation and coming to the Parliament and wasting time.

I have nothing more to say except that the Bill—

PROCEDURAL MOTION

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

Question put and agreed to.

IMMIGRATION (CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY SKILLED NATIONALS) (AMDT.) BILL

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, my colleagues from Siparia, Caroni East and some other Member on the other side, whenever we on this side said that they were not supporting the Bill they said very loudly, “We did not say that; we are supporting the Bill.” It seems to me the one concern that they tried to raise was the concern of openness and how we would manage this thing. That concern is a very valid concern but it is taken care of in the legislation. So while no one can argue about such a concern, it should suffice that the way it is going to be operating is the need for certification in their home country; the need for application to our country; the need for issuing of a certificate from our authorities, and only then would such a person enter our country.

I think we have satisfied the concerns and I think Members can quite properly support this Bill.

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

The Minister of Culture and Tourism (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Mr. Speaker, the concerns raised by the Members for Chaguanas, Nariva, Siparia and, to a lesser extent, Oropouche, in terms of the concerns of the safeguards, have been properly dealt with by my colleague from Diego Martin West so I do not propose to go over that again. I would just deal with some points raised by the Member for Oropouche, particularly because he has continued to remain in the House to hear the response.

The Member for Oropouche said that he was in possession of a letter dated June 20 and that was a letter that would have caused the Government to bring this matter before the Parliament. I am sure that you are aware that there is a letter that is dated prior to that letter to which the Member for Oropouche spoke about. The letter is actually dated June 18 and that letter was written to all Members of the House of Representatives and it was a summons to attend a special meeting on Wednesday, June 25, 2003. So this letter speaks for itself and I would not want to further elaborate.

What I would want to make very clear, therefore, is that the evidence of the letter dated June 20 that the Member of Oropouche sought to use to claim to justify that was why we brought this matter before the House, clearly was an attempt to mislead the House. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to say further that the Member for Oropouche also sought to indicate that we brought this Bill before this House with some measure of urgency and that on a previous occasion when the UNC, at that time in government, brought

legislation before the Parliament, that it was on somewhat different circumstances and they had a lot more time. If you would permit me—and I am referring to the debate dated Friday, May 18, 2001 at approximately 2.40 p.m., the then Attorney General, Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, asked for the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Bill to be taken right away and to suspend the debate on the Occupational Safety and Health Bill. On that occasion the Bill had actually been passed since 1996 and in 2001 it had not yet been proclaimed and Mr. Assam at that time, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, indicated to the Parliament that it was absolutely urgent that they suspend the debate on the Occupational Safety and Health Bill in order to take that particular Bill all through the proceedings.

Certainly when arguments were raised by the Opposition, the then Attorney General said:

“The Government is at liberty. This is an important measure. It is needed for the Caricom Heads. We want to ensure that we do that. We will come back to this Bill in a short time.”

He further said:

“The Government is of the view that it has to go ahead with this debate because of its urgency. We will come back today with this measure.”

Therefore they proceeded with the Bill. But even in that discussion, the Attorney General indicated that the Bill was not proclaimed; that there were some difficulties. So 1996 to 2001, we are talking about five years and that time speaks for itself.

So when the Member for Oropouche wants to say that there is a letter dated June 20 and we are here debating on June 25, they took a period of 1996 to 2001 to have the Bill proclaimed and then came with urgency to interrupt the proceedings of another Bill to ensure that they were ready to go to the Caricom Heads.

I want to quickly respond to the Member for Oropouche again who seemed to want to make the matter of wire bending a very trivial one. I am really very surprised at him because whether we accept it or not, Carnival is Trinidad and Tobago; 'mas is Trinidad and Tobago and people are asking all over the world to export our culture. [*Desk thumping*] So if my friends on the other side seek to trivialize the importance of wire bending, Peter Minshall recently received an award for the same wire bending, because when you look at the production of his costumes, it is wire bending.

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Further to that, “Tan Tan and Saga Boy”, is all skilled wire bending. In the next couple months Trinidad and Tobago will be celebrating Ramleela and in the creation of Rawan, it is the skill of wire bending.

So I am proud to stand up here as the Minister of Culture and Tourism and say that when requests come from throughout the Caribbean for wire benders from Trinidad and Tobago to go up the islands, I am proud of it and I say that is an important activity. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, many of the speakers on the other side got up and sought to spend their time talking about the Bill being used for voter padding. If during their six years in office, their Bills and activities were focused on doing things for voter padding, that is not the purpose of the People’s National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] As the Member for Diego Martin West said, this was a Bill previously brought by the UNC and all we are seeking to do is to widen the categories of persons who could benefit.

I want to remind all of us here that when we talk about movements of people, all of us sitting in this House would not have been here today. Some of us came as a result of free movement and some of us came because we did not want to move freely. [*Desk thumping*] Had it not been for that, many of us would not have been debating here today.

I end by saying that sports, in particular, our Brian Laras, our Vivien Richards, our Gary Sobers, many of our West Indians, the standards that they have achieved today have been as a result of playing cricket elsewhere; not in the Caribbean, but in England, in county cricket [*Desk thumping*] and many of our artistes, musicians, calypsonians, chutney singers, many of our dancers in Indian, classical and other music, have been able to excel because they went to India and other places and have returned to Trinidad and Tobago and we have been able to benefit from that. [*Desk thumping*]

8.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about free movement; when we talk about movement of skills; when we talk about culture; when we talk about sports and musicians that is what we are talking about. The Member for Diego Martin West was very clear to point out that this Bill does not talk about a free-for-all, as they wish to mislead Trinidad and Tobago to let the population believe that this Government is trying to have a free-for-all and have the whole Caribbean come here.

I stand very proud and say my grandparents are from Grenada and from Barbados. [*Desk thumping*] And many of us here, if we had the opportunity to say

where we are from—we are from all over the Caribbean. So the movement was taking place a long time ago. [*Desk thumping*]

There are things that the UNC would have done when they were in Government. Some of the things were good. When they did some good things the PNM followed. When they did bad and corrupt things, the PNM did not follow. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, having said that, 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 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5.

Question proposed, That clause 5 stand part of the Bill.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Chairman, with respect to clause 5, I again ask that there be inserted this new section 9A which should carry a subsection which would outline the criteria and limit these persons to work only in the field in which they have been admitted.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Chairman, we heard the Member for Siparia. I think that it has been said that there is a constraint; we would want to have this Bill in operation and if it proves to be a difficulty we could come back with that amendment. But I think we are all aware, as on the last occasion, of the constraint under which we are operating.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: What is that constraint?

Mr. Valley: The Heads of Government meeting is next week.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: But your draftsman is here!

Mr. Valley: Yes, but then it would have to go back upstairs.

Mr. Chairman: Members, before we get into argument—Mrs. Persad-Bissessar, if you wanted to propose an amendment you should have circulated it before.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Chairman, with due respect, we got this Bill over the long weekend.

Mr. Chairman: But you had all afternoon to—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: No, no, Mr. Chairman. Our constraint was there too—in terms of the time.

Mr. Valley: I am giving you a commitment that if it proves to be a problem—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: But it would not be a difficulty; you would have already opened the gate.

Mr. Manning: We are not going back to the Senate before this weekend.

Mr. Valley: That is right.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: So you are constrained and you do not want to go back to the Senate. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Valley: I think Dr. Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West, made the point that, first of all, there must be a certificate from the home state and there would also be an endorsement by the host country, Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Chairman, through you, whilst that may be so, the very Members on the other side, both Diego Martin West and East—from the *Hansard* record—were very concerned about the criteria, even for university graduates and insisted that those things be put into the substantive law. I am saying that if you do not have the time to do it now and you are prepared to, but you are saying: “If you have a difficulty”. The problem is, what is the difficulty? It is only if a lot of people are coming in, therefore, the commitment has to be an open commitment, not a commitment that “only if there is difficulty”. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Valley: You are talking about two things, you are talking about that and you are talking about Haiti.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: No, we have not reached to Haiti as yet.

Mr. Valley: But I am saying that if there were a difficulty we would come to the Parliament seeking an amendment. Other than that I do not know why we would want to interfere with the Parliament.

Mr. Manning: If it is working well.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Working well means what? Thousands of people coming here?

Mr. Manning: No, we do not want that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Then if we cannot change anything else let us put in a quota that you cannot have more than a certain number of persons. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to urge the Member for Siparia, we have listened carefully to what all Members opposite have had to say on this Bill. I think the hon. Members opposite are also aware that we have a difficulty; that the Heads of Government meet this weekend in Montego Bay, Jamaica. We would like to complete this process before we get there. If we make an amendment now, then the Bill has to go back to the other place, which does not meet until next week Tuesday. Therefore, while we are sympathetic to some of the positions that have been adopted on the other side, the commitment we are making is that if in the conduct of the operations of this legislation we find—having regard to the comments that have been made—that some difficulty arises, then we give the assurance that we would come back to this Parliament and make appropriate adjustments.

It would be difficult for us to give an undertaking to amend a bill that is working well. If the Bill is working well there is no need to touch it. So the hon. Members opposite need not fear, nor should hon. Members opposite fear the intent of the Government in this matter. The Government has no intention to allow any flood of people to come in, from wherever it is, in the context of this freeing up of movement in the Caribbean.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: So am I then to understand the censure of the Caribbean heads is what is determining what we are doing in this Parliament today?

Mr. Manning: I am sorry?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You do not want the censure of your colleagues when you go to Jamaica and that is why you want to pass this without any changes. The Caricom heads is more important than the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Manning: But our colleagues cannot censure the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, we are a sovereign government.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Then what is the constraint?

Mr. Manning: We have made a commitment which we would like to honour. It is a question of good faith and trust. That is what it is.

Question put and agreed.

Clause 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7.

Question proposed, That clause 7 stand part of the Bill.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Chairman, with respect to clause 7, I am again asking that 7(b) be deleted, that Haiti be left out of this Schedule. [*Interruption*] I have nothing against Haiti. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Order, please!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: I need to put on record, Mr. Chairman, that we are not supporting clause 7(b). I gave my reasons during the course of the debate: my concerns about the development level; the fact that other Caricom nations have debarred Haiti, others who are in a lesser economic position than we are. We have this concern with respect to clause 7(b) and therefore we would not be supporting it.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Chairman, we respect the right of the Member to put that on the record. First of all, as we have said, this is model legislation and secondly, Haiti is a Member of Caricom, we do not believe that we can discriminate against Haiti.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 7 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 the House do now adjourn to Friday, June 27, 2003, at 1.30 p.m., and of course that day is Private Members' day.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate on that day we will be dealing with Motion No. 1, which deals with the issue of crime.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.11 p.m.