

THE
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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON OCTOBER 17, 2002

SESSION 2003—2004

VOLUME 7

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 07, 2003

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I was informed that the Prime Minister wishes to make a statement but not at this time and asked that it be deferred to 4.00 p.m.

NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY VESTING BILL

Bill to vest certain lands belonging to the State, in the National Housing Authority to enable the Authority to grant leases in respect of such lands [*The Minister of Housing*]; read the first time.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Ann's East has stepped out of the Chamber for a few minutes. It might be appropriate to take a 10-minute break.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for 10 minutes.

1.34 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.42 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

FIREARMS (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 31, 2003]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank you very much and to apologize to you and this honourable House for any inconvenience.

Firearms (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, November 07, 2003

Mr. Speaker, while I was on my feet at the previous sitting I recall congratulating both Members on the other side for the contributions they made where they acknowledged the seriousness of the Bill before this House, the Firearms (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill. One would have thought that having made that admission they would have made a positive and constructive contribution to the debate. We on this side are prepared to give consideration to any positive contribution they would have made so that we could have a proper document coming before this House in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Instead, what we saw was a dramatic display by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre to the extent that that contribution degenerated to the base to which they have grown accustomed to. In her contribution the Member boasted about her vast experience in the courts and the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago. I recall at some point in time, when she was a Member of the former government—I believe she was, at one time, the Attorney General—but I wonder how that experience she has boasted about benefited the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Why did the UNC government not bring the necessary legislation at that time that would assist in curbing crime in Trinidad and Tobago? Instead, we find that the Member wasted this Parliament's time in questioning why the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation did not come to present the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the important thing is that the PNM brought the Bill before this Parliament. That is what is important, it is not a question of who brought it or who presented it. If the hon. Member has a fixation on the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation, I suggest to her that she should call the Minister and, I am certain he would take care of her concerns.

The Member went on to question this Government's holistic approach as it relates to fighting crime and criminal activities in Trinidad and Tobago. She was very right when she explained the meaning of "holistic". She indicated it means comprehensive, and I agree with her. I give some credit to her level of intelligence and I suspect that the real problem is her association and she needs to look at that. She needs to look at that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take some time now to seek to explain to the Members on the other side what we on this side mean when we say it is a holistic approach. I really want to take some time because it is like a good teacher taking some time to deal with slow learners.

When we say "holistic" we mean that we intend to adopt several approaches to combating crime in Trinidad and Tobago. I recall that in my contribution I

mentioned two areas: penal reform and prisoner rehabilitation. I recall my friend, the Member for Chaguanas, questioning what we are doing under penal reform. I have said on several occasions that in the prison system today we are moving from the old retributive system which has not all worked in Trinidad and Tobago and we are moving to the restorative model.

I have indicated in this House as well as that when someone is convicted and is taken to the institution, the first thing that would happen is that the person will be thoroughly assessed to determine the weaknesses and the deficiencies so that the prison system could now adopt corrective measures. That is what we intend to do. If someone coming into the system is a drug addict, I indicated to this House that the person will be treated. If the person is illiterate, he or she would be given an opportunity to become literate. If the person does not have a skill he or she would be taught a skill. This is what we intend to do in the new prison penal reform system.

I also recall indicating that this Firearms (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill is also part of this Government's crime fighting initiative. We are sending a clear message to the offenders, those who believe that they must hold an illegal firearm. We are giving the courts the tools so that they would be able to deal effectively with these offenders. If someone has an illegal firearm, it is clear to me that the intention is to commit some kind of felony.

I recall that the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation in this House, during the budget debate, informed this Parliament, and the national community, of the intention of this Government to increase the manpower of the police service; that, too, is part of the initiative. He talked about increased training and equipment for the police service. In his contribution he also mentioned additional vessels, well equipped so that we could heighten the vigilance and to patrol the coastline to prevent the smuggling of the same illegal firearms and ammunition in our beautiful country.

Mr. Speaker, I recall, as well, in the budget presentation by the hon. Prime Minister, he informed this House and, by extension, the national community, of the crime-fighting unit headed by Brigadier Joseph. I recall, as well, that in this House during the debate Minister Kangaloo outlined Government's social programme to deal with poverty eradication, assisting the less fortunate among us in this society. Other Ministers of Government outlined other employment generating initiatives in their contributions; all this is what could be considered to be this Government's holistic approach when it comes to dealing with crime. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre was very correct, it is a comprehensive approach.

Firearms (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, November 07, 2003

Mr. Speaker, that is not all. This Government brought to this House legislation to upgrade and reform the police service. We brought a kidnapping bill to this House and the Members on that side refused to give it their support. These measures would give the courts of Trinidad and Tobago the means to effectively deal with persons who are bent on disrupting this society. That is what we meant by holistic.

I understand the problems of our friends on the other side, as they sit there, looking on this side and seeing a serious Government on the move, committed to making Trinidad and Tobago a developed nation on or before 2020. That is their real problem. They have realized that they have missed the opportunity—or rather, they have thrown away the opportunity—to develop Trinidad and Tobago because of their misbehaviour in office. Some of my friends would like to say, because of the kinds of attitude with sticky hands in the cookie jar. That is the problem so I can understand.

So, instead what they intend to do is not to work with this Government. Their approach is to destroy the credibility of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what they are doing, civil disobedience. That is what they are mouthing. The Member for Couva North would hardly make an address without talking about civil disobedience or his attempt to divide the people of Trinidad and Tobago; inciting citizens to break the law; encouraging them to make jail. If the Member wants to go to jail he could make his jail by himself. I indicate that to him. If he chooses to be a prisoner I could assure him that we are making the necessary preparation at Golden Grove. It is a reckless kind of behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important Bill before us and we are going to make some amendments to clause 17 and to include a clause 26. We are going to make these amendments at the committee stage. I repeat that this Government will continue to have a holistic approach to dealing with crime in Trinidad and Tobago. Notwithstanding their attitude to it, I still appeal to them hoping that they will display some kind of responsibility and understanding the plight of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I appeal to them to support the Bill.

I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

Firearms (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill

Friday, November 07, 2003

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 14 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 15.

Question proposed, That clause 15 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Chairman, there is an amendment to clause 15, the effect of which is to change the age at which one can be granted a licence from 18 years to 25 years. I beg to move that clause 15 be amended as follows:

Delete the word “eighteen” occurring in proposed subsection (2A) and substitute the word “twenty-five”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 15, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 16 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 17.

Question proposed, That clause 17 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Chairman, there is a circulated amendment with respect to clause 17 to avoid what was perceived to be some vagueness with respect to this clause. I beg to move that clause 17 be amended as follows:

Delete clause 17 and substitute the following new clause:

Insert after section 26 the following new section:

26A. (1) There shall be compiled and retained by the prescribed authority, a database of all licensed and, where possible, unlicensed firearms and ammunition located in Trinidad and Tobago.

(2) In this section “prescribed authority” means an authority prescribed by Regulations made by the President under section 36.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 17, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 18.

Question proposed, That clause 18 stand part of the Bill.

Firearms (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill

Friday, November 07, 2003

Mr. Valley: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 18 be amended as follows:

In proposed subsection (4A) of section 27 delete the words “police officer” and substitute the words “member of the police service, the Department of Customs and Excise, the Immigration Department or the Defence Force”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 18, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 19 to 27 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

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

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POSTAL CORPORATION
(AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL**

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That the Bill to amend the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Act, No. 1 of 1999 to extend the period of exemption from taxes and other charges be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill seeks to amend the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Act, No. 1 of 1999, to extend the period of exemption from taxes, duties and other charges provided to the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation.

The main purpose of this Bill is to amend section 34 (1) of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Act, No. 1 of 1999, by deleting the words “for a period of three years from the commencement of this section” and substituting the words: “from the 10th day of February, 1999 to the 30th day of June, 2004.”

Clause 2 of the Bill would amend section 34 of the Act by extending the period of exemption.

Mr. Speaker, TTPost has advised that due to the late commencement of operations and delays in finalizing arrangements relating to the World Bank loan

facility, approximately 21 months of tax exemptions under section 34 of the Act have been lost. However, TTPost anticipates that it would procure goods and services estimated to cost TT \$28 million over a 15-month period commencing at the end of February, 2002.

The delay in the drawdown of the World Bank loan facility was occasioned by three main factors. Although the DMA was signed in February 1999, TTPost did not commence trading operations until July 1999. There were protracted negotiations relating to the finalization of arrangements in respect of the World Bank facility; there were delays arising from the need to modify the World Bank facility arrangements as a result of changes in governmental arrangements, administration and the reconfiguration of ministries in 2001.

Mr. Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation was established by the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Act, No. 1 of 1999, as part of the strategy to reform the postal sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

The specific objectives of the reform initiative were stated as:

- (i) The creation of a financially self-sufficient postal service with the capacity to finance its growth, investment and new product development needs.
- (ii) The provision of universal Postal Service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, that is, a delivery network that reaches all parts of the country, a counter network that provides reasonable and convenient access to postal services for all residents and the provision of at least one category of letter mail service at a universal rate within Trinidad and Tobago.
- (iii) The achievement of high quality standards in the provision of postal services, while maintaining reasonable, affordable and efficient prices for mail categories, subject to monopoly protection.
- (iv) The stimulation of real growth in the postal services via an enhanced portfolio of services and products that were customer and market driven focusing on creating increased choice and availability of communication and services including paper based and emerging electronic opportunities.
- (v) The modernization of the postal infrastructure and strengthening of management capacity to maximize the future value of the enterprises, its assets and its workforce; and
- (vi) The development of a highly motivated work force, which is committed to the organizational objectives.

T & T Postal Corp. (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

Friday, November 07, 2003

Mr. Speaker, as part of the postal sector reform strategy, the Government of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago contracted the management of TTPost to Transcend Worldwide Limited, formerly New Zealand Post International Limited, under a five-year delegated management arrangement or DMA.

2.10 p.m.

Among other things, the DMA specifies five annual performance targets to be met by Transcend Worldwide Limited. In terms of universal delivery service, transit time, customer satisfaction, total postal revenue and net income, there were also certain project objectives to be accomplished including a change management strategy, human resource management training, management information systems establishment, a capital investment plan and the modernization of the postal infrastructure.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago negotiated a US \$11.4 million World Bank loan to facilitate project implementation including inter alia modernization of essential facilities to involving the procurement of equipment, et cetera. The assumption underlying section 34 of the Act was that the procurement of the required equipment would be completed within three years of the establishment of TTPost.

Section 34 of the Act stipulates that TTPost will be exempt for a period of three years from the commencement of this arrangement from all taxes, duties, fees or other charges or imposts incurred in the performance of its functions. The exemption included value added tax. Given that the Act was assented to in February 1999 the exemption expired on February 09, 2002. Based on the foregoing considerations, it is proposed that the exemption provided to TTPost under section 34 of the Act be extended to June 30, 2004 the expiry date of the DMA.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wish to reiterate that the main objective of the Bill is to amend the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Act, No. 1 of 1999, to extend the period of exemption from taxes, duties and other charges provided to the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation. I expect and hope for the full cooperation and support of hon. Members for the passage of this Bill.

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak briefly on this Bill entitled the “Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill,”

2003. As the hon. Minister indicated, this is merely an extension of a time period and he indicated the need for a delay for a 21-month period because of the delay by the multilateral lending institution, the World Bank, the change in ministries in 2001 and the change in government in 2002. Those are the three reasons I got from his presentation. I congratulate the hon. Minister for following the script that we left when we demitted government on December 24, 2001. He has followed the script with respect to TTPost—every line, every word, every comma and every full stop.

Mr. Speaker, the transformation of the postal services in this country, if one were to use the context of the cinema world, is a blockbuster. TTPost's transformation is a blockbuster and the problem with which the current Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment is faced—I do not know whether or not he will be shuffled this afternoon—is really how to match this blockbuster transformation with the sequel, TTPost II. How are you going to deal with that?

One would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Minister would have come to this House and would have indicated, “Look, the delegated management contract is coming to an end next year June/July of 2004.” What are the options available to this country? What is the thinking of your Ministry and your Government on this issue? You have a blockbuster on your hands. You have the transformation of a public sector organization on your hands. What are you going to do with it in order to ensure that the gains we have made in TTPost are sustained and carried into the future as you articulate your vision for 2020?

Mr. Speaker, I would indicate, you know, the hon. Minister has been very supportive of TTPost and no doubt in the newspaper clippings on Thursday, May 22—as recent as May 22, 2003—the hon. Minister in the *Business Guardian* at page 19—the “Public deserves better public utilities”. That is understandable. It is an ongoing programme to bring about change and I would read an article by Juhel Browne, Mr. Speaker:

“Long lines at, and slow response times from, public utilities like TTEC, TSTT and WASA will not do in a nation striving to achieve developed nation status in the next 17 years, said Public Utilities Minister Rennie Dumas, who says the utilities need to join the 21st century.”

I read further down from the article, Mr. Speaker.

“During his address, Dumas put WASA, T&TEC and TSTT on notice.”

T & T Postal Corp. (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. SINGH]

Friday, November 07, 2003

I notice you are very quiet on this TSTT issue; this industrial relations impasse that is taking place, the sabotage and the intimidation of people at TSTT; the cutting off of thousands of lines, the cost to the taxpayers of hundreds of thousands of dollars—but you are very quiet.

I continue, Mr. Speaker:

“We are clear that we can no longer passively witness poor infrastructure...”

Mr. Valley: TSTT is not under the Minister.

Mr. G. Singh: Well, the Minister is making claim to TSTT in this, “eh”. I do not know.

“We are clear that we can no longer passively witness poor infrastructure, low worker morale, bad business practices, poor organisational structure and a disregard for the customers who constitute the large citizenry of this country.”

He is continuing the script that I laid down with respect to customer service that the *raison d’être* for the existence of the utility system is to serve the customers of the country, the ordinary citizen, and I agree with that.

“In fact, he said if they want to know how to step into modern times, all they need to do is take a page from the book of TTPost.”

Take a page from the book of TTPost. Congratulations, Minister, congratulations.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the Minister is not alone in his recognition of the public sector transformation that took place in TTPost. The World Bank in a publication entitled “The Postal Industry in an Internet Age Case Studies in Postal Reform”—and the “Case Studies in Postal Reform” traverses countries throughout the world, Mr. Speaker—Costa Rica, Indonesia, United Republic of Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Central and Eastern Europe. So, you see, the transformation of TTPost is recognized within the context of a small island economy, its aim for competitiveness in the world sphere, and this is what the conclusion of the World Bank article on Trinidad and Tobago said. Their conclusion and the unique feature of this model is important for us for purposes of articulating how we got it right in TTPost. The conclusion at page 35 of this article says:

“The case of Trinidad and Tobago Post (TTPost) provides an example of the rapid and significant improvement that can be achieved with an ambitious postal reform process. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and

Tobago has transformed a government dependent postal agency into an autonomous government-owned corporation. Management of this new entity has been arranged on a contract basis with measurable performance targets and defined responsibilities. A productive combination of policy framework adjustment, commercialization, restructuring and rehabilitation of the national operator and increased private sector participation have produced rapid and dramatic changes in terms of improved financial and operational performance. Major improvements in universal service coverage, overall quality of service, and customer satisfaction have been achieved in just over a year. And perhaps most importantly, improvements in postal services are already benefiting remote rural areas of the islands and will continue to play a critical role in increasing access to communications.”

Mr. Speaker, the World Bank went on to point out the unique feature of the transformation diagnostic for TTPost. It says the “Unique feature” at page 36, “achieving better postal performance through a management contract”.

“After considering various concession arrangements and even divestiture, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago opted for a management contract for public postal operations with measurable performance targets and defined responsibilities. This was one of the earliest examples of having the management of a national postal system turned over to a foreign business entity. The benefits of this approach have been rapid and significant. A key factor for success in any management contract (as has often been demonstrated in other sectors) is the precise definition of performance targets and an appropriate mechanism for determining fees, incentives and penalties. In the TTPost case, the management operator has a strong financial interest in seeing that the project succeeds. The compensation package includes a management fee for the day-to-day costs of services provided by its management team and for the completion of special agreed upon projects. This compensation is enhanced with an incentive mechanism for exceeding certain performance targets. The management fee can also be reduced if one or more of the performance targets are not achieved. Finally, the management operator will share in profits as TTPost’s financial performance improves.

There are also some valuable lessons that can be derived from this case for use in future management contract arrangements. One of these is the importance of clearly and precisely defining targets (including base reference numbers) and performance indicators. It is also critical to clearly and precisely define the management operator’s span of control and responsibilities.”

T & T Postal Corp. (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. SINGH]

Friday, November 07, 2003

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this World Bank publication, “The Postal Industry in an Internet Age Case Studies in Postal Reform” points to the success and the evolving success of TTPost in the context of proper policy prescription—proper diagnostic, proper policy prescription and proper implementation.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister is on record as saying that he is reshuffling the Cabinet because he needs to get the budget of 2003/2004 implemented. So here you have a case that is properly formulated and properly implemented. That is why the hon. Minister ought to tell us today, at the end of 2003. Do not wait until 2004 to tell us what are you going to do with TTPost come June/July 2004. What is the current situation? Mr. Speaker, I say so because in an article in the *Executive Times* of July, August 2003 TT—*[Interruption]* I “doh” want to know people’s business. It is you who gave a commitment to accountability and transparency. So that there is absolute need—when you have a five-year management contract, you need to tell us if you are in the process of formulating your position, what are the constraints under the delegated management under which you operate and then, in your winding up, I expect you to deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, in the *Executive Times* July/August 2003 it says, “TTPost to declare early profits...as the postal agency moves ahead of its production targets”. It is an article written by Laura Dowrich and I quote:

“Boasting one of the most remarkable turnarounds in the regional state enterprise sector, Trinidad and Tobago’s Postal Agency (TTPost) is poised...”

It is not “Agency” really, Mr. Speaker, it is the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Service:

“is poised to surpass its targets by delivering a profit for the first time in its long history.

By the end of its financial year in July, the agency will announce that it has exceeded its performance targets for productivity and profits and company executives are confident that their business model will become the new standard for state, as well as private sector, enterprises across the region.”

Mr. Speaker, with a little over a year before the five-year management contract between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago the agency’s New Zealand administrators, Transend Worldwide, comes to an end, the management of TTPost

is expressing confidence that the company will surpass the profit targets projected initially four years ago. I quote, Mr. Speaker:

“At the end of our fourth financial year in July, it will be revealed that the company is ahead of schedule and is on course to surpass the targets set out in the management contract with Government. We will make a profit this year,’ says Chris Abley, Managing Director of TTPost, without providing more detail on the size of the surplus.”

Mr. Speaker, they have indeed made a profit. There is a duty and an obligation upon the hon. Minister to tell this House the size and the quantum of the profit, if any at all, but I am merely reading from an article in the *Executive Times*.

“The five-year contract between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the New Zealand postal giant, Transend, stipulates that TTPost must achieve profits of at least TT \$17.5m in its fifth year.”

You see, Mr. Speaker, so it must—that is part of the clear objective, specific objective, and the Minister must tell us what, if any, profit was made, and whether they are on track to realize this profit of \$17.5 million or whether this attempt to extend the period of tax exemption is another way of realizing a profit when, in fact, it is not a profit. So you must come and tell us that. Let us get an appreciation of how we are proceeding. Let us get a clear appreciation of that.

The article goes on, and I want to quote from the end:

“Abley said in the early days of TTPost, new revenues accounted for four to five percent of total revenues. Today, he boasted, new revenue accounts for 30 percent.”

Very good.

“The introduction of local courier and bill payment services, as well as an international courier partnership with TNT...”

I might add Federal Express:

“to expand their customer’s reach to the world was launched in late May. The extension of product lines and the development of merchandise ranges have all boosted revenue.”

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the article Mr. Abley says:

“What government is currently doing is looking at what the postal market will be doing in the next five years and what extent of regulation, what extent

T & T Postal Corp. (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. SINGH]

Friday, November 07, 2003

of competition and what extent of private vs. public sector involvement in the whole mail service will be allowed. Once that has been finalised, Transend might be interested, but it depends upon what government decides.”

Mr. Speaker, you have a situation where there is a dramatic transformation of a public service entity, it has received acclamation and accolades from various institutions, the local business sector, the local private sector, the regional sectors and the World Bank. What you need now to do really is to give this country an appreciation of your next step, as I indicated, the sequel to what has transpired over the next five years, so to speak, as you build on a five-year planning framework into your 2020 mis-vision.

Mr. Speaker, one would have thought that the hon. Minister also would have dealt with the issue of the Postal Savings Bank. When we left office that matter was being dealt with by the Ministry of Finance. What is the status of the moneys in the Postal Savings Bank? What is being done? Is it going to be hived off? Is a new business model to be created with respect to that? What is the Government’s policy position? I do not want any errata here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I want a clear demarcation, a clear enunciation of Government’s policy position on that issue also. So that is your obligation. That is your duty.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Government has a success on its hands. When the hon. Minister spoke about the World Bank loan and everything else, the only thing he did not say was, “I wish to thank the Members on this side for that innovative thinking, for that—[*Interruption*] the Members on this side for that transformation, the Members on this side for that creativity”—[*Interruption*] you see, Mr. Speaker—well, you know, you can say that but he would not be as generous as that. You see, Mr. Speaker, I am waiting for the blockbuster sequel II of TTPost. We got it right in the first instance, it is now for you to get it right for the sequel.

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

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I think there were some truths told earlier in the contribution from the Member for Caroni East. There might have been some innovation, there might have been some creativity and there, in fact, was a blockbuster 1, but I think the Member asked for some information. I think the first he asked for—what is the question of profitability? I read from a letter that I have, written by the GM of TTPost.

“This letter provides further background to my letter of October 21, 2003 in which I advised that TTPost’s negative cash flow position had become critical and the business would be unable to meet its November 2003 payroll obligations without assistance. This is still the case. When TTPost was established in 1999 approximately \$16 million of working capital was put into the business. The reason for the low level of working capital was that the strategic plan for the business assumed that TTPost would become profitable in its second year of operation thus ensuring a positive cash flow. However, the expected profit never eventuated.

I think there is a difference, Mr. Speaker, between blurbs for public consumption sometimes by managers who are seeking the continuation of a management contract in which they are very well taken care of by poor marginal decisions made in an earlier time as against the truth given to a penetrative, careful, well-trained manager to whom they need to report.”

The letter goes on, Mr. Speaker:

“There are three main reasons for this, one, the decision by government in 1999 to fund the land purchase and construction of the national mail centre from the commercial market rather than from the World Bank loan has cost the business an additional \$6.8 million per annum in loan interest and principal repayments. As you know, the World Bank loan repayments were intentionally deferred until year five of the delegated management arrangement in order for the business to become stable and profitable so the loan could be repaid as well as the business having a sound financial base to move forward into the long-term arrangement.”

In other words, Mr. Speaker, the long-term arrangements spoken about and referred to by the Member were put at threat at the beginning of the total arrangement.

“Second, the decision 2001 to remove stamp duty payments from TTPost reduced revenues by \$10 million per annum. The three-year delay in the vesting of properties to TTPost means that the business has not had the opportunity to realize cash from ongoing property related income. The impact of the above has resulted in the following losses that have now completely drained the original \$16 million of working capital as shown on the following table. The net negative impact amounts to \$34,980,485.”

But there was a fail-safe, you see, Mr. Speaker, which comes to put this totally at the feet of the Government, payable now.

“In the event that the total revenue of TTPost is insufficient to meet its operational and capital expenditure, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall assume responsibility for such deficits.”

That was the poor arrangement made. That was a clause of the DMA, this DMA we boast about. Mr. Speaker, this Government has taken and will continue to take steps to support the long-term transformation of TTPost but the arrangements that were put in place by the last administration resulted in the scenario we just painted. That is reality, but, you know, you always come to the question of, what is the explanation? Why would such decisions be made?

Mr. Speaker, the scenario unfolds if you take a careful look at what has happened in a sequence of dates. The DMA was signed in February of 1999—February 25, 1999. I am reading from a memorandum to Doug Mc Clean, Managing Director of TTPost and this is in reference to a purchase of land at Golden Grove road, Piarco.

“At the inaugural TTPost board meeting of March 4, 1999...”

This is memo from Phaedra Ram, General Manager of TTPost:

“At the inaugural TTPost board meeting of March 4, 1999...”

That was seven days after the signing:

“the Managing Director reported that the Minister was proceeding with the option of the Government developing a new building on a design/build arrangement which is then to be handed over to TTPost. One site identified as a six-acre field at Golden Grove road, the New Zealand Post International Limited was assisting the architect Bernard Mackay. The board noted same. The Chairman indicated that he was not familiar with this issue and would endeavour to familiarize himself.”

Mr. Speaker, at the board meeting of April 01, the board meeting of April 15, by a letter of May 13, 1999 and thereon, it is a trail of activity in terms of manipulating the TTPost board, giving direction—I think I heard the word autonomy—it was made quite clear that the Minister was determining what happened—

Mr. Singh: Will the Minister give way? Is there not a clause in the TTPost Act that any direction that the Minister gives the board must be in writing?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, this is a letter signed by A.S. Atwell on behalf of E. George, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Utilities re construction of the new administrative headquarters and sorting centre for the

Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation at Golden Grove Road, Piarco. It is addressed to a Mr. Paul Dalton, Managing Director Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation, General Post Office, Wrightson Road, Port of Spain. It is dated June 02, 1999. It is coming out of the Ministry of Public Utilities, Sacred Heart Building, 16—18 Sackville Street, Port of Spain:

“I wish to advise that the Cabinet at its meeting of May 13, 1999 agreed in principle

- (a) That the new administrative headquarters and sorting centre for the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost) be located on a parcel of land comprising approximately six acres owned by Mr. Sonny Baboolal and situated at Golden Grove Road, Piarco as identified in the survey map attached to the note;
- (b) That the Ministry of Public Utilities direct TTPost to acquire the parcel of land referred to at (a) above;
- (c) That the corporation invite tenders for the construction of the new facility using the build/own/lease/transfer mechanism.”

This is not policy. This does not leave TTPost with any autonomy. This is the argument I was responding to.

Mr. Singh: Could you give way? Just for purposes of the record, Mr. Speaker—and I thank the hon. Minister for giving way—the choice of that location came about as a result of a consultancy—which you can check with the records of your Ministry—from Bruce Allan Hamilton, in which they indicated that, having regard to the fact that 98 per cent of the mail coming into Trinidad and Tobago was airmail then, therefore, you ought to relocate from Wrightson Road because Wrightson Road was built at a time when the principal source of mail was surface mail—only 2 per cent was now surface mail—and after searching the whole area and after looking at several locations, including inside the Piarco Airport compound in which the industrial area they said would not be available until three years, the Chin Lee building in Mausica and the Sabga building in Bestcrete and including what was then a chicken farm, which is now the headquarters of TTPost, those were the locations sought out. So that therefore in the context perhaps the hon. Minister would want to refer to that. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, order.

Mr. Ramnath: You must speak the whole truth, Minister!

Mr. Valley: He will, he will.

Mr. Ramnath: “All dese set ah insinuations and so on.” [*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, I made no suggestion of anything wrong. I am just responding to the question of autonomy that was raised and I am making the point that you cannot claim that the development of the sector, the transformation, was autonomous, that it was because of these rules—these are the words you used. Mr. Speaker, I am referring specifically to the issues raised and the way they were raised by the Member. I am making no insinuation. [*Desk thumping*]

On the question of the post office, number one on the page:

TTPost was required to move out of the general post office at Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.

The reason given—the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had required the property for other development. It does not bear out what I was just told. [*Interruption*] Well, unfortunately I could only go by the record. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, the question that arises further is that of decision-making. One of the rules and principles in management is that you make decisions at the margins and you count what the cost is at the margins. This is the circulated minutes of the board of directors of TTPost dated August 06, 1999.

Whereas the board is desirous of purchasing a parcel of land for the establishment of a new mail centre for the corporation, the Ministry of Public Utilities has, by a letter dated 30 July, 1999, directed that a parcel of land identified at Golden Grove Road Piarco comprising approximately six acres be purchased by the corporation for such purpose.

Whereas Mr. Savitree Baboolal as the legal personal representative in the estate of Prakash Baboolal in whom the relative parcel is vested by letter dated 26 July, 1999 has offered to sell the said parcel to the corporation for a sum of \$4 million, such offer to be valid only for a period of 14 days from the date thereof.

Whereas the valuation by Messrs. Raymond and Pierre disclosed a concern in respect of flooding which was addressed by the Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry was for an amount of \$2.7 million...

Mr. Valley: How much was the valuation? You are going too fast. How much was the valuation?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: An amount of \$2.7 million.

Mr. Valley: And how much they paid for it?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Four million dollars.

Mr. Ramnath: “Well wait nah?” You are—

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Based on an assessment of the land—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: And whereas the board should consider an offer from a third unrelated party had been received by the owner.

Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting that if you had decision-making like this, you cannot consider this a blockbuster. If it is a blockbuster it is a horror movie.
[*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I really believe that some people thought they had their hands on a good thing. I would draw again a fax to TTPost to Mr. Ash Seagal:

“Ash, I spoke to the Minister today about this and he advised that Cabinet had approved TT \$30 million for the project and that it be managed by TTPost. This means the valuation will be done by us so I have not forwarded the attached letter to the Ministry as we had originally planned.

The attached letter, Mr. Speaker, included—

Mr. Singh: Who is that from?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Paul. “Cheers, Paul”, it is signed. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: Paul Dalton.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Paul Dalton, the New Zealander who was sent here—

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: I am just pointing out we had this person congratulating our chairman on the fact that the valuation would not go through the normal tendering procedure of the government. So the New Zealanders were happy that it was not going through the normal tendering procedure.

Mr. Valley: Thirty million.

Mr. Ramnath: Did you tender for CEPEP?

Mr. Valley: Who me?

Mr. Ramnath: Yeah.

Mr. Valley: “If I tender for CEPEP?”

Mr. Ramnath: Did you tender for CEPEP?

Mr. Valley: “I doh have a CEPEP.”

Mr. Ramnath: Your government tendered for CEPEP? [*Interruption*] “What you talking about?”

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order!

Mr. Ramnath: “You pick all your party people and give them contracts and you talking such nonsense here today?”

Mr. Valley: “What I say again? He pay \$4 million for something that is valued \$2.7, yuh interfere with me. Wha you interfere with me for? Is he who pay de \$4 million, not me. It value \$2.7 and he say is a blockbuster. You interfere with me.”

Mr. Singh: “When Gift value”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, TTPost is a critical factor in our development and therefore the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is attempting to have this Bill passed as it would facilitate the rescue job we have to do on this matter. In the situation, because of the delays, we come to the Parliament seeking that extension. It is just a matter to clear up the perception that this great thing was going on and making sure that we all recognize that we still have work to do to pull the postal sector into this era that I just had to correct the record that was placed. I still expect and I still hope for the support of the Members of this House in getting this Bill passed.

I so move, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

T & T Postal Corp. (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill

Friday, November 07, 2003

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the third time and passed.

NATIONAL LOTTERIES (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That an Act to amend the National Lotteries Act, Chap. 21:04 to alter the definition of “financial year”, be read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, this is a simple piece of legislation. Members would be aware that in 1997 the financial year for government accounting was eventually changed to a year-end of September 30. Members would of course recall that the government, at that time, passed that legislation with a simple majority. Members would also recall that around 1993 the previous government—PNM which was the government at the time—had brought similar legislation to the House and the government of 1997 which was, of course, in Opposition in the period ’92—’93, refused to support that legislation, simply showing the acrobats we have on the other side, Mr. Speaker.

However, the fact is that the financial year for government accounting was changed in 1997 but this legislation, which is to amend the financial year for the National Lotteries Act, is consequential on that. As a fact, in February 2001 the former administration took the decision to amend section 2 of the National Lotteries Act to provide for a change in the financial year from December 31 year end to September 30. However, like so many other things, the necessary legislation to give effect to that decision was never brought to the House and our purpose today is to correct that—I think it is lacuna they call it—in the law, Mr. Speaker, to correct or to right the wrong that has been left over by the last administration.

It is simple legislation. I do not think anybody would have difficulty with this and, therefore, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on what is a very simple matter before this honourable House. The way my

colleague, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, laboured over this, looking at the time, I know that he is half expecting the Prime Minister to walk in with the reshuffled Cabinet. [*Interruption*] Reshuffled Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple matter and it calls for the alignment in terms of financial year but it gives us the opportunity in this House to deal with a certain issue which has arisen with respect to the National Lotteries Control Board. In the debate in this House under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, the hon. Prime Minister indicated, when I raised a certain matter, that he had no knowledge of the matter and he indicated it is not so, when I raised the matter of the National Lotteries Control Board entering into a five-year contract for \$70 million with GTECH. I read from the *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, at page 3, under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, October 27 at 5.07 to 5.35 p.m.

When I made—with respect to the fact that NLCB had a contractual arrangement with GTECH, this is what the Prime Minister said:

“Mr. Manning: It is not so.

I indicated, Mr. Speaker:

“If it is not so, fine. Time alone will tell. The jury is out on that issue. If as head of the Government he is saying it is not so, then I take his word. It is not so.

Mr. Manning: The Prime Minister knows of no such thing.

Mr. G. Singh: You see, you do not know everything that is happening within the Government.

Mr. Manning: Then we will stop it.”

So there was a clear indication, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister indicated to this honourable House that he had no knowledge of the fact that the National Lotteries Control Board had entered into an arrangement with GTECH. You see, Mr. Speaker, I listened to what the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central is saying—they better had not enter into any arrangement.

I would like to read two newspaper releases, one from the Betting Levy Board (BLB) and one from GTECH. Under the rubric “GTECH signs five-year contract to provide complete video lottery solution in Trinidad and Tobago”, this is found on the net at GTECH NLCB July 29, 2003 and it says:

“GTECH Holdings Corporation...today announced that its wholly-owned subsidiaries, GTECH Latin America Corporation and GTECH Global Services

Corporation, signed a contract with The National Lotteries Control Board and The Betting Levy Board (NLCB/BLB) to provide a complete video lottery solution, including a central system, video lottery terminals (VLTs), and communications network, in Trinidad and Tobago. The term of the contract is for five years and includes a two-year extension option.”

I quote, Mr. Speaker:

“‘This contract is further validation of GTECH’s ability to deploy and manage comprehensive video lottery solutions for our customers,’ said GTECH President CEO W. Bruce Turner. ‘We are excited about the opportunity to partner with the NLCB/BLB to inaugurate a video lottery program in Trinidad and Tobago. By choosing GTECH to be its technology supplier and integrator, the NLCB/BLB will have a single point of responsibility for all aspects of the program including communications, and central system.

Mr. Turner continued, ‘This contract also allows GTECH to utilize its existing data center in Port of Spain, thereby reducing operating costs for both NLCB/BLB and the Company.’ GTECH has been the online lottery supplier to the NLCB since 1994.

Under the terms of the contract...”

The Prime Minister is saying, Mr. Speaker, that he knows nothing about this contract. Well I could understand the Prime Minister knows nothing but you have three other junior Ministers of Finance. Who has responsibility for BLB and NLCB and those who have that line responsibility, they do not know anything? Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*] “Ah coming to Lee Sing because Lee Sing is Selwyn Cudjoe partner.”

Mr. Ramnath: Just propping up the racism.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker:

“Under the terms of the contract, GTECH will provide a variety of ongoing services including installation and maintenance of the video lottery terminal central system, VLTs, communications network; game development and testing; marketing and advertising services; hotline management; field services; and personnel training.”

This is a detailed contract. Now, Mr. Speaker:

“GTECH will also provide NLCB/BLB with the Company’s Enterprise Series Video Lottery central system, which will monitor the security and integrity of

National Lotteries (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. G. SINGH]

Friday, November 07, 2003

approximately 500 VLTs to be deployed at gaming centres by NLCB/BLB. The number of VLTs in the network, which will be procured by GTECH from leading industry suppliers, is expected to grow over time.”

Five hundred is the starting point.

“The company expects the video lottery central system to be operational in January 2004.”

This is November 2003.

“With respect to its five-year contract with NLCB/BLB, GTECH anticipates generating revenues of approximately \$70 million.”

A \$70 million contract, the head of the Government knows nothing? The line Ministers with responsibility for NLCB and BLB know nothing? *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, this brings into context this whole concept of ministerial responsibility and accountability. It brings into direct context this question of ministerial responsibility and accountability. To whom are these boards accountable? To whom is NLCB accountable—to which Minister—*[Interruption]* I will come to that point—because it deals with the issue of corporate governance in this society? So ministerial responsibility accountability and corporate governance in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker, you are beginning to understand the hypocrisy of those on the other side.

Early in their administration they boasted a seminar on corporate governance in which the now reshuffled Attorney General, the hon. Glenda Morean, strode across the podium and talked about all kinds of issues under corporate governance but here is an issue, a live issue, of corporate abuse taking place, and the hon. Prime Minister, as head of the Government, knows nothing. So that those are two issues here, you know, Mr. Speaker, ministerial accountability and responsibility. How can the Ministers and Prime Minister be accountable and responsible when they have no knowledge of what is happening underneath them—no knowledge? They say so. They tell this House. They tell the Parliament. What is this?

Mr. Speaker, I would read on—you have in several Internet press releases the same content that I read earlier and I would not be repetitious, but the point I wish to make is, how are we going to deal with this issue in which there is an obvious breach of corporate governance in this country? There is an obvious breach in the whole nexus and alignment of ministerial responsibility.

Now, in many instances you have a situation whereby Members are not aware and I can understand that. The chairman of the National Lotteries Control Board

is Mr. Louis Lee Sing. Mr. Louis Lee Sing is a well-known activist of the ruling party, the PNM. This is Lee Sing. Mr. Lee Sing, you know, has a history of breaching the law. When he worked in BWIA, Mr. Speaker, he sat on a toilet seat from Jamaica to Trinidad and Tobago in breach of all FAA regulations so that you have a history of breaching the law, Mr. Speaker, but I want to deal with this issue. *[Interruption]* Mr. Lee Sing—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, before I deal with the issue of corporate governance, I want to deal with the issue of ministerial responsibility. Ministerial responsibility is sacred in the context of the Westminster system or the Whitehall Model, which we practise. I read from chapter 11 of the text *Constitutional and Administrative Law* the 3rd Edition by Hilarie Barnett under “Responsible Government”, under the rubric “Ministerial Responsibility”.

3.10 p.m.

“The convention of ministerial responsibility is central to the constitution, and plays a fundamental role in the relationship between the executive and the parliament. For the doctrine of government under the law to be observed, it is essential that government be both accountable to Parliament and to the electorate, and that government be conducted in a manner sufficiently open, subject to the requirements of the national interest, to inspire public confidence.

The origins of ministerial responsibility are traced by FW Maitland to the principle that ‘for every exercise of royal power some minister is answerable’. Marshall and Moodie describe ministerial responsibility as follows:

Ministers are responsible for the general conduct of government, including the exercise of many powers legally vested in the Monarch; and ultimately, through Parliament and parties, to the electorate.

The doctrine thus has two limbs—individual and collective responsibility. As with so much of the constitution, there is vagueness...”

I am talking about the British Constitution, which is an unwritten Constitution, Mr. Speaker.

“on occasion as to the distinction between the two limbs which are both closely related and also complimentary of one another. In order to facilitate analysis, the topic may be broken down into three aspects:

- (a) the collective responsibility of the Cabinet to Parliament, and ultimately the electorate, for policy and administration;”

Collective responsibility of Cabinet. So when Mr. Conrad Enill said it was an error—

Mr. Valley: You are jumping.

Mr. G. Singh: No. I am telling you it was an error. We are dealing with collective responsibility. The principle of collective responsibility. And Minister Keith Rowley said “No, it was not an error” and Minister Danny Montano said, “No, it was not an error” and then the Prime Minister said it was an error and an errata sheet has been circulated. Then that was collective responsibility. Every person who was a Minister and who planned to remain a Minister ought to have saddled behind the Prime Minister on that issue, but yet, Mr. Speaker, in the breach of collective responsibility, there were those who went and said, “I stand by what was stated in the document.” We shall see in the reshuffle.

- “(b) the individual responsibility of Ministers for the policy and administration of his or her Department;”

So Mr. Danny Montano ought to have taken individual responsibility for what transpired in his department. So, in the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Speaker, who is the Minister with line responsibility for NLCB? Who is that? Is it you, Minister Valley? No, it is not my business. It is the people's business. Who has that responsibility, that individual responsibility for the policy and administration of the department?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the honourable Member would have been correct if at a fait accompli there were video lottery games in Trinidad and Tobago. That is not so, and until that is so, I cannot see how he can ask about ministerial responsibility. The fact that he reads some article on the Internet dated July, perhaps the Chairman just wanted to avoid any run on the shares because he was kicked out of Saskatchewan. Understand that.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I am not entering into the realm of speculation. That is what the honourable Member is entering into. The realm of speculation. I would expect that as the Minister being a responsible Minister, would get up and say, “I have enquired of the National Lotteries Control Board—I have enquired of the Chairman of National Lotteries Control Board and the Chairman of the Betting Levy Board, and they have indicated to me that they have not signed any memorandum and that the press release coming from NLCB and the BLB which

also points to a five-year agreement which they have entered into, GTECH, is also an error.”

I expect the Minister to come and say that, but Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with what is before me, what is in the public domain. I am not entering into the realm of speculation. Mr. Speaker, therefore, we have the individual responsibility of ministers for their department.

Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the principle of collective responsibility, this is what lord Salisbury says at page 402:

“For all that passes in Cabinet every member of it who does not resign is absolutely and irretrievably responsible and has no right afterwards to say that he agreed in one case to a compromise, while in another he was persuaded by his colleagues... It is only on the principle that absolute responsibility is undertaken by every member of the Cabinet, who, after a decision is arrived at, remains a member of it, that the joint responsibility of Ministers to Parliament can be upheld and one of the essential principles of parliamentary responsibility established.”

So, Mr. Speaker, the writer, Barnett, goes on to say:

“The rationale for the convention lies in the need for government to present a united front to Parliament and the public in order to maintain confidence. A government which exhibits public disagreements over policy matters...”

As we have seen over the last week.

“is one which will be regarded as weak, and will be subjected to challenges to its authority to continue in office.”

So, Mr. Speaker, in that kind of setting where you have what is before us, what is in the public domain, in this National Lotteries Control Board sending out press releases, the BLB sending out press releases, there is a five-year \$70 million contract, and you know what, Mr. Speaker, the PRO—to add fuel to fire—the PRO of the National Lotteries Control Board says in an *Express* article that the Lottery Board does not have the right to go out for central tenders. They have the right to award this contract by virtue of their agreement with GTECH.

Mr. Speaker, I have perused an agreement between GTECH Corporation and the National Lotteries Control Board and nowhere can I see in this agreement that the National Lotteries Control Board has that power to enter into this \$70 million

National Lotteries (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. G. SINGH]

Friday, November 07, 2003

five-year contract with GTECH. Nowhere, but yet, the PRO says so. So the Minister is saying no they have not entered into it, and the PRO, the Chairman and the Board are saying, “Yes, we have entered into it.” I want clarification here today, Mr. Speaker. Because you see, we come to this House and we hear all kinds of things with respect to collective responsibility, individual responsibility, and there are instances in which Members say things that have no basis whatsoever.

For example, one would expect that from the time the hon. Prime Minister indicated that he had no knowledge, that the Chairman would have been called in, but instead, the Chairman was on Saturday attending a meeting with Cudjoe at the La Joya auditorium. The Chairman attended.

The donation policy of the National Lotteries Control Board in which, you know, they are changing the financial year, and if they are saying they are giving donations to specific organizations, then it will be incorporated in the financial year.

For example, \$60,000 was given to one Selwyn Cudjoe to print a book, *Beyond the Boundaries*. The book was not printed in Trinidad and Tobago, notwithstanding we have those facilities, but taxpayers' moneys, by virtue of the close relationship between the Chairman—

Mr. Valley: Taxpayers' money?

Mr. G. Singh: It was given as a donation to print this book. Because the moneys from the lottery ought to go to the Consolidated Fund. How do you mean that is not taxpayers' money?

Mr. Valley: I do not read Cudjoe nor Sat.

Mr. G. Singh: I am glad you do not read Cudjoe because you do not have time for that racist bigotry. You see, in several instances we have here a lack of knowledge. I would put it at the lowest or the highest. A lack of knowledge. That lack of knowledge perpetuates an ignorance. On the last occasion, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, in his contribution said, in dealing with figures:

I quote from the *Hansard* of October 27, 2003:

“When you came into office you met 2,500 students at John Donaldson; you downgraded that number to 800 and you built TTIT in Couva. By the time they were finished with it, it was down to 350.”

So, the honourable Member said, when we came into office, they had over 2,000 students at John S Donaldson, but when we demitted office, it was 350.

Lo and behold, his guru—as he is following his political mentor, the honourable Member for Laventille East/Morvant says so in his article that appeared in the newspaper. Where did he get his figure? Did he get it out the parliamentary debate?

He got his figure of 350 students out of the parliamentary debate, perpetuating an untruth, because I want to read into the record the kind of—because you see it is important we correct these things, very important that we correct these things. These are returns, statistical returns of technical institutes of the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Speaker: As much as we have interest, you have to make it relevant to the Bill before us. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. G. Singh: Yes, Mr. Speaker, because you see—

Mr. B. Panday: Do not criticize the PNM. They could get away with saying anything.

Mr. Valley: You are going back to the old debate.

Mr. G. Singh: It is not an old debate. It is the correction of a wrong, and I want to correct that wrong in the context of—

Mr. Valley: It is a personal explanation.

Mr. Speaker: Order! You must relate it to the Bill.

Mr. G. Singh: It is the correction of a wrong in the context of what is in the debates in the Parliament. You see, it is important that the truth be told. I am saying that the Prime Minister is saying that he has no knowledge of the GTECH agreement with BLB and NLCB. He has no knowledge.

The Member for Diego Martin West—and I am saying, look it is in the public domain, you ought to have knowledge but I am bringing it to your attention. Similarly, when the Member for Diego Martin West said we downgraded John D to 350, correcting that kind of thing because it is in the public domain. I want to read in the records as a result of corrections in the domain.

Mr. Ramnath: Let the man talk. Are you afraid of the man?

Mr. G. Singh: Reading from the Ministry of Education, Annual Statistical Returns, Technical Institutes. Of September, 1994—July, 1995, name of

National Lotteries (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. G. SINGH]

Friday, November 07, 2003

principal, Dr. Jason Hernandez, number of students in September, 1994—July, 1995. 2,052. So, Dr. Rowley was right. There were over 2,000 students when we went into office.

But I want to read the rest. In September, 1997, the same statistical return, of the Ministry of Education on technical students, John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, September, 1997—July, 1998, total number of students, 1,968. September, 1999—July, 2000, John S. Donaldson Technical Institute—same principal as before—Mr. Fitzroy Richards, total number of students, 1,919. And this is a ministry document, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I come into 2001. I am going chronologically. Have patience, my friend. Mr. Speaker, September, 2000—July, 2001, principal, Mr. Fitzroy Richards, the number of students, 1,887.

Where did you get your 350 from?

Mr. Ramnath: They lied!

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Couva South, you know that is not permissible to sit—

Mr. B. Panday: We have been called liars in this House a hundred times!

Mr. Speaker: Order please, Member for Couva North!

Mr. B. Panday: So what? "Doh shout at me!"

Mr. Speaker: You cannot sit and cross talk—

Mr. B. Panday: "You doh shout at me."

Mr. Speaker: Well you cannot—

Mr. B. Panday: "You doh shout at me, you understand!"

Mr. Speaker: Are you threatening the Speaker?

Mr. B. Panday: Yes. Put me out. Put me out of here.

Mr. Speaker: I am calling on the—one second please. The House will be suspended for five minutes. I would like to see the Leader of Government Business and the Chief Whip.

3.25 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

3.40 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Ramnath: You have to suspend everybody. You have to suspend me too.

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. B. Panday: I am ready.

Mr. Ramnath: I stand behind my leader.

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Hon. Members, the display this afternoon in this House by the Member for Couva North—

Mr. S. Panday: It is you!

Mr. Speaker: Is not befitting a parliamentarian of his years of service.

Mr. Sharma: Says who?

Mr. S. Panday: You!

Mr. Speaker: It makes me sad! Order please.

Mr. S. Panday: You cannot shout at people like that.

Mr. Speaker: I am informing all Members that any flagrant breach of the Standing Orders as displayed by the Member for Couva North will, in future, be met by the full force of the authority vested in me as Speaker. I am warning all Members, all Members be aware, in deference to his years as a Member of Parliament in this House.

Mr. B. Panday: Do not patronize me. “Doh patronize me!”

Mr. Speaker: I am deferring the action I could have taken.

Mr. B. Panday: Take action.

Mr. Speaker: Please continue, Member for Caroni East.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I was dealing with the concept of ministerial responsibility and the necessity for truth to dispel ignorance. I was pointing out that under the annual statistical return on the technical institutes of the Ministry of Education for September, 2000—July 2001, that we had 1,887 students attending John D.

Mr. Speaker, so when the UNC demitted office in 2001, 1,887 students was the enrolment at John S. Donaldson Technical Institute. I do not know where the

National Lotteries (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. G. SINGH]

Friday, November 07, 2003

hon. Minister of Planning and Development got 350. I do not know where the Member for Laventille East/Morvant got 350.

It is important to note that what both Members mention is the figures of the students currently enrolled in John Donaldson Technical Institute under the PNM. You see, Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Education, technical institutes, annual return, under the rubric, John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, students currently enrolled for 2003, the total enrolment in 2003 is 406 students! In 2001 it was 1,887. In 2003 it is 406. Who is in government in 2003? So the honourable Member for Diego Martin West obviously fudged his figure of 350.

Mr. Speaker, in the Annual Statistical Return of John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, January, 2004 enrolment, look at the bottom, and I am willing for Members to scrutinize this document, in particular, my friend from Laventille East/Morvant who perpetrates the untruth in an article in the *Guardian*. Perpetrates the untruth!

He says:

“When the John Donaldson Technical Institute was whittled down from 2,500 plus to 350 students under the UNC, there was no such cry.”

I am telling you, hon. Member, that there was no whittling down under the UNC. It is the whittling down took place in 2003, and in 2004, as of January of this year, the total enrolment at John D is 504 students. I make these documents available to you.

So you understand, when Members come here and start to perpetrate, and Ministers, in particular, perpetrate the untruth, we have to seek the knowledge to deal with the untruths perpetrated by those on that side. Mr. Speaker, I went into that diversion in order to deal with the concept of ministerial responsibility and also to deal with the issue now, as I indicated, of corporate governance, because we are dealing here with a multimillion-dollar enterprise.

The National Lotteries Control Board and the Betting Levy Board. Whilst the legislation before us deals with the change of the financial year of the National Lotteries Control Board, the NLCB, what we have before us is a real issue of corporate governance. What is this issue of corporate governance? As I indicated, under ministerial responsibility, the Prime Minister, as head of the Government, says that he does not know.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central says he does not know. I do not have the Minister Conrad Enill or Minister Christine Sahadeo to ask whether in

fact they know, but the fact of the matter is that under the concept and the convention of ministerial responsibility, someone ought to be held responsible for that agreement entered into.

Mr. Speaker, the Member says nothing has happened as yet, but there are press releases by GTECH, BLB and NCLB, and unless they can put something concrete for me in writing, they cannot tell me nothing has happened, because as I indicated earlier when the Minister of Planning and Development said there were 350 students in John D, I have demonstrated that there were thousands of students over the whole period of the UNC. It is under the PNM there was enrolment of 400 and 500.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, hon. Senator Conrad Enill, Minister in the Ministry of Finance, made a contribution, a speech at the Auditing Seminar hosted at the Crowne Plaza, Port of Spain on Wednesday, October 08, 2003. This is what he says with respect to corporate governance. He was dealing with the issue of corporate governance. I quote from page 1 of his speech:

“We are ensuring that the state enterprise sector meets the highest standards of transparency and accountability through continuous monitoring of its internal operations. Each enterprise would be required to adopt new By-laws under which a Code of Best Practice would be instituted. The publication of semi-annual financial statements and final audited accounts by the sector would be a key element in the new corporate governance of the state enterprise sector.”

Who is doing the monitoring of the internal operations of the National Lotteries Control Board? Mr. Speaker, you understand? So that this internal operation is not yet in place. They will be setting up.

Minister Enill goes on to state:

“Mr. Chairman, recent corporate scandals, in particular in the United States, have led to a wide-ranging re-examination of the frameworks for corporate governance in that country and elsewhere, as well as their underlying principles. Corporate governance, as we have become very much aware, concerns itself with the relationships between the management of a business and its board of directors...”

The Board of Directors of BLB, the Board of Directors of the National Lotteries Control Board, its shareholders and lenders. The shareholders of both these enterprises, people of Trinidad and Tobago, and its other stakeholders such

as employees, customers, suppliers and the national community of which it is part.

“Corporate governance thus represents a framework through which business objectives and the means of monitoring and attaining them are set.”

Mr. Speaker, when you understand what is happening, here it is you have, based on newspaper reports, both in the local and in the international media, indicating that they have entered into this agreement, it brought to mind a statement made in the movie, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. Mr. Speaker, it goes like this: “The men may be the head of the house, says Laney Kazahn—” In an oft-quoted line from *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. “—but the women are the neck and they can turn the head any way they want.”

So, when they understand, and I want to understand, therefore, in the same way, the Prime Minister may be the political head of the country, but the Chairmen and Directors of the National Lotteries Control Board and other state enterprises are the neck, and they can turn the head of the Government to gaze in any direction they want. You understand, Mr. Speaker? Because he cannot tell me as the Minister of Finance with three Junior Ministers of Finance, he does not know. That is unacceptable to me. That he does not know and he does not know after it is brought to his attention.

It appears to me that we are producing in this country, in several areas of the state enterprise and statutory authorities sector, a mandarin group of people. A group which is using their particular positions to enter into arrangements. So, therefore, if the Government is not aware, they cannot plead that they do not have knowledge. They cannot plead that. They need to go out there and find out whether it is so or not so. If it is so, say so to the country. If it is not so, then say it is not so.

Mr. Speaker, there is that situation emerging in that enterprise, the National Lotteries Control Board, and it is clear to me that Louis Lee Sing is a sacred cow. They cannot touch him at the National Lotteries Control Board. Mr. Speaker, I just quoted from *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and I now see. I want to quote that again: “The men may be the head of the house, but the women are the neck and they can turn the head any way they want.”

Mr. Valley: Come on man. Do not go there.

Mr. G. Singh: Perhaps the reshuffle is an indication—the coming reshuffle is an indication of how the neck turns the head. Mr. Speaker, what we are saying, is

there is need for ministerial accountability. There is need for proper corporate governance on this issue, and you cannot claim the issues of transparency and accountability unless you come in with a clean breast on this issue. Make a clean breast.

Come and make full disclosure. That is what is required. The Member for Diego Martin Central, as the Minister piloting this Bill, ought to tell us. Has he made any enquiries? On what basis did the NLCB give GTECH a \$70 million contract? On what basis? The Lotteries Board gave a \$70 million contract? It cannot be on the basis of the agreement.

So you see, they have flouted ministerial responsibility. They have flouted proper corporate governance, and therefore, it is necessary that a clean and full disclosure be made in this Parliament. I am hoping to raise this matter for the last time in this Parliament, because on the last occasion, the Prime Minister indicated that he had no knowledge of this GTECH contract, and if it is so, he will put a stop to it.

It is therefore incumbent upon his Minister, for the time being, who has the responsibility to pilot this piece of legislation to make a full disclosure on the issue.

Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I wish to thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Nizam Baksh (*Naparima*): Mr. Speaker, I take the opportunity to make a very brief intervention here today on this Bill to amend the National Lotteries Act, Chap. 21:04.

I want to use a quotation from the Holy Quran, Chap. 2, verse 219 which says:

“Concerning wine and gambling

In them is great sin

and some profit for men;

But the sin is greater than the profit.”

Mr. Speaker, this is an Islamic viewpoint and I know this is not an Islamic country, therefore, this is not binding on everyone, but it is good and worthy of emulation for the development of moral and spiritual values.

We know that moral and spiritual values fluctuate. They are not static. They are like a pendulum which keeps moving up and down. Mr. Speaker, as a Muslim I do not indulge in gambling, but it does not preclude me from speaking on the subject. As a matter of fact, I can view gambling from a different standpoint.

I want to take the opportunity to look at some of the social issues with regard to gambling. We are aware that there are different types of gambling, those that are run by the state, the Lotto and the Play Whe, and those that are run by the private ownership, the recreation clubs and private members clubs, and there is also a third category, illegal gambling which we know as “whe whe” and the cock fighting.

Mr. Speaker, I know that those which operate under the state ownership, the intention there is to raise revenue to assist in programmes in the national community. But in doing so, we recognize that the type of commercials and advertisements that are undertaken here sort of lead the population to get involved in gambling, and I can say for a fact that these commercials have a tremendous appeal and influence because of the scope and content in which these advertisements are being done.

What it is really doing is creating a society of a get-rich-quick mentality, and this, to me, is affecting those citizens that are beneficiaries of lower income in our society. I observe that when the time comes for Play Whe and the National Lotteries, and so forth, we see people lined up and if we look at the lines, the people in those lines are many old aged pensioners. Those people who receive public assistance. Sometimes we see school children. I know too in that category there are a lot of unemployed people. Because when the time reaches, there are a number of people who will approach to obtain a few dollars to go into the gambling line.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention here today that the above groups that I have indicated here and identified use their depleted and meagre earnings to play these games. What it does here is end in tremendous losses and it enhances the poverty. What I observe too is that this encourages a lot of domestic violence, because when the head of the home goes and gambles the income, they find that they have nothing to purchase their foodstuff and this creates disturbance in the home.

It also shows that people have the inability to pay their rents and utility bills. Sometimes this affects the education of the children in the home.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, an item on the agenda, “Statements by Ministers”, was deferred until 4 o'clock. It is now that time and I beg to move that the statement by the hon. Prime Minister be taken at this time.

CABINET RESHUFFLE

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning):
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to make this statement to this honourable House and to the national community. Notwithstanding two general elections, the present Cabinet, with just one or two exceptions, has been managing the affairs of Trinidad and Tobago for just under two years. I must compliment all Members of the Cabinet for the very good work they have all done, individually and collectively, in unusual and trying times as Trinidad and Tobago made a crossing through the uncharted waters of unprecedented political development.

Mr. Speaker, as Prime Minister and head of the country's Cabinet, I have the privilege to review in detail the operation of the Cabinet as a whole. I am, therefore, I believe in the best position to improve its effectiveness. It is an essential part of my responsibility as Prime Minister to always monitor the situation to discern where in terms of the overall objectives of the Government there is the need to deploy more resources and greater strength.

Mr. Speaker, we need to strengthen the foreign ministry of Trinidad and Tobago if we are to effectively pursue the interests of our country in the fiercely competitive global environment. We need a combination of strong leadership and technical expertise as we simultaneously chart new directions and conduct present negotiations for the benefit of our people.

By way of example, this country is today involved in critical international discussions including the Cotonou Agreement which establishes the trade relationships between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, the World Trade Organization negotiations, which will establish a new World Trade Order, and the negotiations for the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

At the same time, there is the need for Trinidad and Tobago to continue the pursuit of its vital interests in several capitals of the world. We are in the fortunate position to have the talent to serve the country's objectives in this area.

I therefore wish to advise this honourable House and the national community of the following new appointments:

Mrs. Glenda Morean as High Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Kingdom with accreditation also to Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Germany.

Cabinet Reshuffle
[HON. P. MANNING]

Friday, November 07, 2003

Ms. Donna Carter, the Minister of Cabinet of 2002, as this country's first high Commissioner to South Africa.

Former Senator Pundit Maniedeo Persad as High Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago to India.

And Mr. Manniram Rambissoon, a senior career diplomat, as Trinidad and Tobago's High Commissioner to Nigeria.

The Cabinet experience of Mrs. Morean will be especially relevant to the initiative of investment promotion in Europe on which the Government is about to embark.

Mr. John Jeremie, Head of the Faculty of Law of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, will join the Government as the new Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, for this Government, delivery is the key. We are very determined to ensure that our plans and policies touch the lives of all our citizens in a most meaningful way. Parliament recently passed the largest budget in the history of Trinidad and Tobago which anticipates an expenditure of some \$22 billion in fiscal year 2004.

This is no accident, Mr. Speaker. Our goal is concrete improvement in the lives of our people. Therefore, for this Government, there could be nothing more important than implementation. Consequently, we have been streamlining procedures in the public service to remove the long outstanding constraints to getting the job done. All Ministries have been asked to establish a list of priorities for fiscal year 2004, with implementation timelines for the consideration of the Cabinet. In this way, and on the basis of quarterly reports, the Cabinet could more clinically monitor the implementation process.

Additionally, the Ministry of Finance has taken steps to ensure greater accountability, planning and performance by granting quarterly instead of monthly releases to the various Ministries.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister also took possession recently of a report of a team headed by Prof. Ken Julien which comprised persons from both the public and private sectors and which was mandated to make recommendations for full employment for Trinidad and Tobago in a reasonable timeframe. The team recommended full employment. That is to say, an unemployment rate of 5 per cent in a timeframe of three years. To pursue this objective of implementation,

and other goals that we have already outlined in our Vision 2020, I propose, Mr. Speaker, to make the following Cabinet changes:

We shall now place greater emphasis on tourism and shall establish a separate ministry for this sector. Tourism must now be brought to the centre stage of economic development. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the new Ministry of Tourism will be headed by Sen. Howard Chin Lee whose expertise in this area is widely acknowledged.

Sen. Martin Joseph shall now assume the portfolio of Minister of National Security.

Minister Jarrette Narine will now be the new Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Sen. Rennie Dumas shall be the new Minister of Local Government.

Minister Penelope Beckles shall be the new Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment.

Minister Colm Imbert will be the new Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis shall be the new Minister of Planning and Development.

Sen. Danny Montano goes to the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams will now preside over the expanded portfolio of Minister of Community Development and Culture.

Dr. Keith Rowley shall be the new Minister of Housing.

And Mr. John Rahael shall be the new Minister of Health. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, our two Parliamentary Secretaries have now served their period of apprenticeship and are ready to assume greater responsibility. Sen. Satish Ramroop is now appointed Minister of State in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and Mr. Anthony Roberts shall be the Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and in the Ministry of Housing.

The Ministry of Social Development will have added to its portfolio, the portfolio of Gender Affairs and Minister of State Diane Seukeran is transferred to this Ministry.

These new arrangements, Mr. Speaker, will take effect from Monday.

Cabinet Reshuffle
[HON. P. MANNING]

Friday, November 07, 2003

Mr. Speaker, we are relentless in the pursuit of our vision for Trinidad and Tobago. This country must become a developed nation early in this new century. We shall never deviate from this path. All that we do as a government serves that end. Ours is a vision for all the people of this country. This is a government, Mr. Speaker, for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. These Cabinet adjustments have been made solely for the welfare of the people. All the Ministers know that.

All support the vision. I have full confidence in the team that I lead, Mr. Speaker. I have no doubt that they will work harder than ever. I am daily inspired by the enthusiasm of my colleagues and I am confident that the Cabinet will continue to be the most effective in the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of the House will be suspended earlier than usual for tea and we will return at quarter to five.

4.11 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

NATIONAL LOTTERIES (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL

4.46 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. N. Baksh: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that gambling is having a negative impact on the lower income people of our society. I feel that we are creating a society of gamblers and dreamers. If you look at these people when the time approaches for betting, you can see the long lines. This is destroying the ethics of hard work and thrift industry. People are neglecting their work and going to gamble, and this is something we need to address if we are to really change the thinking of the people in our society. It is important for us to address some of these situations and look at laws that deal with enforcement.

We know that law enforcement in this country is a problem. There are a number of rules that apply to several other areas that deal with the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), the traffic and planning laws, where we see that people have a flagrant disregard for law. We need people to enforce the law. Very often we think about putting additional laws, but not strengthening the enforcement aspect of them. So we need to ensure that the gambling rules are enforced. We have to ensure that the minors who now participate in gambling, do not do so any more. Sometimes we see children in school uniform in the Play Whe lines, so this is something we have to address as well.

We have to look at what mechanisms are in place to ensure that only members of clubs are engaged in gambling. We have a proliferation of members' clubs in this country. We have to ensure that only the members of these clubs participate in their activities. We have to put checks and balances in place to regulate the membership.

Mr. Speaker, I have been emphasizing on the social structures with regard to gambling. We need to also look at advertisements. If I may just make reference to tobacco advertisements at the end of which you see a notice saying that cigarette smoking is harmful to your health. I think the time has come when we should put similar advertisements to advise those people who are now addicted to gambling. We have to let them know that their chances for winning might be one in 1,000, or something like that, so that this would sensitize them to not throw their well-earned money after gambling, hoping to get rich quickly. This is something that we need to address.

Since we are talking about the lotteries, and we know that we have a number of lottery agents throughout the country, I want to raise the issue with regard to the mechanisms in place to ensure that there is transparency in the allocation and distribution of local agents for both lottery and Play Whe. People come to our constituency offices and tell us that they have applied for these lotto agencies for a number of years, but they are not getting any word, and they cannot have redress for this. We need to let this process be transparent so that people would know the names of those who applied and are benefitting and the conditions under which they got these agencies.

We all know that the University of the West Indies undertakes several researches on various subjects over the years. I want to suggest here that the university should commission some research to determine the extent to which gambling and other games of chance are affecting the fabric of the family and, indeed, the economic lifestyle of our people. This is something that could help us in our social planning. We know that so many—270,000 persons are under the breadline today, so that if you do a survey you would recognize that a number of these people are involved in gambling, and they could ill afford it. Those like my friend from Diego Martin Central could certainly afford it.

Mr. Valley: Afford what?

Mr. N. Baksh: Gambling.

Mr. Valley: My religion does not allow me to.

Mr. Singh: But you do it anyway.

Mr. N. Baksh: Mr. Speaker, this is a hot news item at this point in time. I want to read an article from *The PROBE* of Sunday, October 19, 2003:

“Casino Scandal

While Prime Minister Patrick Manning has poured scorn on casinos, he is sidestepping laws in bringing in a new type of gaming system.

The gaming scheme, which is expected to yield more than \$70 million over five years, is being handed out without tendering.

The lucky company is Rhode Island-based GTECH, which already operates State-owned National Lotteries Control Board’s (NLCB) online games.

The PROBE found that the Government is planning to amend existing gaming laws to accommodate new video lottery terminals (VLT), which are really slot machines.

GTECH is expected to walk away with some \$35 million over five years, according to a previous statement by NLCB’s Chairman Louis Lee Sing.

But GTECH has been the subject of six FBI investigations in the US.

The company has been accused of bribery to gain contracts to run State lotteries.

GTECH was also ordered to pay Virgin Atlantic’s CEO Richard Branson more than TT \$1 million by a jury at London’s High Court, as well as legal costs. And in yet another matter, a GTECH employee blew the whistle on how a 1998 software malfunction in the United Kingdom lottery had gone unreported to customers.

A GTECH national sales manager was imprisoned for paying lobbyists in the US, so it would win New Jersey State Lottery. And the company was involved in the bribery and kick-back investigations in New Jersey and Texas.”

This company has a bad reputation with regard to bribery, and we wonder whether this is happening in the situation with our own NLCB. This needs to be investigated and the public needs to be aware of this as well.

I take the opportunity to read from this correspondence from the Association of Private Members' Clubs that went out to the members:

“Dear Operator,

As you are well aware, during the reading of the budget on October 7th, 2003 our Finance Minister, The Honorable Mr. Patrick Manning once again increased our taxes by as much as 500% in some cases, *effective immediately*. As stated by Mr. Manning, ‘the gaming industry continues to thrive in Trinidad & Tobago.’

Last year we were faced with a 300% tax increase...and made representation to the Government to review their decision as the increase was totally ridiculous and would lead to the closure of many clubs, unemployment, illegal gambling, etc. However, our argument fell on deaf ears, as the Government’s decision was final.

For those of you that were not aware, an article was published in the Trinidad Guardian on August 1st, 2003 where Mr. Louis Lee Sing, Chairman of NLCB stated that the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) and the Betting Levy Board (BLB) had signed a contract with GTECH to provide a ‘*New Type of Gaming*’ called Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs)...”

It goes on to ask the question:

“Does the Government know about this? If so, is this the same government that one year ago said that they found gambling to be ‘immoral’ and stated in the reading of the budget of October 7th, 2003...‘we have seen a proliferation of new devices in particular slot machines...’

Why is the Government trying to put us out of business? Is this a morals issue or does the Government of T&T have their own agenda?

I know that no matter what we say our argument will again fall on deaf ears as this Government has a clear agenda. We shall wait to see how the NLCB and BLB plan to operate their VLTs. Will they operate as a Private Members Club (MEMBERS ONLY)? How will their taxes be structured? I propose we wait silently but be prepared to defend our positions.”

We recognize that the stakeholders in this industry are very concerned.

In the *Express* newspaper of Friday, November 07, 2003:

“Gaming club workers hit the road in protest”

This is because of their fearing unemployment. In an article by Daniel Martin it states:

“About 300 employees of gambling clubs...”

They started marching at 11.00 a.m. today.

“Holding up multi-coloured placards reading, ‘High taxes leaves us unemployed’, ‘No work, no future, Mr. PM’ and ‘Work pays, crime don’t help’...the marchers, sporting red T-shirts, enlivened the normally quiet section of Port of Spain.

Phillip revealed that Prime Minister Patrick Manning spoke with them saying that if they did indeed lose their jobs, Government would provide alternative employment.”

Maybe they will be given Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) contracts.

“However, Phillip argued that the ‘alternative employment’ referred to was URP and CEPEP.

He added that at present the workers at these clubs, who range mainly between 18 and 26 years of age earn well above the minimum wage.

The workers also sought to disprove the perception that the clubs were involved in drugs and prostitution.

Phillip said that 60 per cent of employees were single mothers.”

So we recognize that one industry is in jeopardy because of the actions being taken by the Government.

Another article on page 18 of today’s *Guardian* newspaper states:

“Casino workers protest over new gambling taxes

Singing to the tune of ‘Rum till I die’ the protesters sang ‘Tax till we die, Tax till we die, Manning you doh love we and that’s the reason why.’ [Laughter]

They are preparing for calypso season. I hope that the increased taxes would not encourage open doors for the proliferation of illegal gambling in this country. We ask that the Government declare its policy on gambling, for the benefit of the national community and, in particular, the stakeholders in the industry.

Mr. Speaker, with these few comments, I thank you, and best wishes for the weekend.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this House is to amend the parent legislation to change the financial year from January 01—December 31, to October 01—September 30. There seems to be no objection to that. I have taken silence as consent, because neither of the two speakers spoke on that issue. However, there were a number of side issues raised and, perhaps, I should spend about three minutes commenting on them.

I have to deal with the Member for Naparima's contribution first. I continue to make the point that credibility is everything. The Member started out by telling us that as a Muslim he was against gambling and spoke of the ills of gambling, but half way into his contribution, one thought that he was lobbying for the private members' clubs, and not only that, he also seemed to be lobbying for the lotto terminals. We must be consistent.

The Government has taken the position that we have sufficient gambling in Trinidad and Tobago and that private members' clubs ought to be aware of that. As I said, when we were dealing with the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, that we have to look at the legislation with respect to the members' clubs and ensure that they are, in fact, members' clubs. We must be consistent. That is why I can say here, without a doubt, that there will be no video lottery terminals in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the clear position of the Minister of Finance. People can do whatever they want. We do not have to run around asking people what they are doing. The Government is the Government, and the Government is saying that we will not allow any further gambling in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Singh: If the Member would give way, just for my clarification. There is a specific issue before us with respect to the National Lotteries Control Board entering into this agreement. Are you saying that there will be no video lottery terminals emanating from that agreement, or any extension of gambling as a result of that agreement?

Hon. K. Valley: I am saying that the NLCB and/or the BLB will not, as state agencies, be involved. That is the clear directive of the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, the Member went on a long train about the concept of ministerial responsibility and collective responsibility. Ministerial responsibility is not a before-the-fact issue. The concept of ministerial responsibility is saying, given that there is some clear decision under that minister's portfolio and it falls squarely under his portfolio, then he is accountable. Now, there is no decision

National Lotteries (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[HON. K. VALLEY]

Friday, November 07, 2003

that is implemented as yet, and we cannot be groping in the dark looking for jumbies, as it were. That is the point I am making.

I have heard about this thing also, and it is not \$70 million; I understand that GTECH said it was some investment of \$420 million. I will tell you what I have heard, that GTECH made a statement shortly after it was put out of Saskatchewan, and the interpretation that the analysts put on that was the fact that they wanted to shore up their share price; that is all I am saying.

[Member for Caroni East stands]

Let me just finish the point; I will give way. You know I always give way, unlike the Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: What is wrong with me?

Hon. K. Valley: You are a beautiful person.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: What else?

Hon. K. Valley: Very little else.

Mr. Speaker, it cannot be that because people are going about and saying things—as long as they have to come to the Government for approval, then the Government has the say. This is the other issue that one must make. *[Interruption]* That is another issue. The Minister earlier today spoke about giving state companies autonomy. We are taken to task, from time to time, about interfering with companies. This afternoon we heard how the then minister interfered with a particular company.

Mr. Singh: “Nah, nah, nah!”

Hon. K. Valley: Let me finish, please.

Mr. Singh: There was never the minister interfering; that is not true.

Hon. K. Valley: All right, the Government. It says that the then government directed that a six-acre piece of land which was valued at \$2.7 million, be sold for \$4 million.

[Mr. Singh stands]

Mr. Singh: “Nah, nah, nah”, Mr. Speaker. Let me correct it; on a point of correction. That is not so.

Hon. K. Valley: Let me just finish; one more second. What I said was that it was 50 per cent higher. The Member is arguing that it is not 50 per cent higher. I do not know if when you move from \$2.7 to \$4 million, \$4 million is exactly 148 per cent of \$2.7 million; that is what it is, but we do not do that. Even if the

original agreement that set up GTECH allowed or the NLCB Act allows them to enter into such an agreement without Government say-so, the Government will get involved. We are saying that is not happening, and that is categorical. Let me give way to my colleague.

Mr. Singh: Two points of clarification, one: Are you saying that there is no agreement or memorandum of understanding signed between GTECH, BLB and the NCLB? If categorically there is no agreement pointing that out, I am saying that there is. The second issue is: If there is, then, clearly, that is an issue of ministerial responsibility.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, let me say categorically, that the Government is not a party to any agreement; that is where ministerial responsibility comes in. The Government is not a party to any agreement to establish video terminals in Trinidad and Tobago. I do not know what other people do, that is their business; understand that. I said the Government. [*Crosstalk*] Do you understand that? Furthermore, the Government has given no authority to any state company or agency to so enter into any agreement, and will not.

Mr. Ramnath: But they can enter without your authority?

Hon. K. Valley: I do not know if they can. I can tell you that the Minister of Finance has already spoken to that state agency. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: I just want to have clarification. When the Member says “the Government”, I am getting the distinct impression that he is really saying Cabinet.

Hon. K. Valley: Government is a defined term.

Mr. Singh: But government has a linkage down to the state corporations. I want to know whether government incorporates state corporations or is it a confined Cabinet issue. That is for my clarification.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, first of all, one would assume that the Member who has been in this House since 1991 and a former Cabinet member, would know the ordinary meaning of government. Does he think that a chairman of a state company or a board member is part of the government? Government has an ordinary meaning.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned to a date to be fixed. Let me inform Members that we are not sitting next week. I have taken the point made by some Members that November 21 is a critical day on the Muslim calendar given that Eid ul-Fitr is on 25 November 2003, and that Friday is important. What may happen, as I have discussed with the Opposition Chief Whip, is that we may want to sit on the Wednesday of that week. I would have to consult on that, otherwise the House will sit on November 28th, 2003, which will be Private Members' Day. That is why I am adjourning to a date to be fixed. I do not want to agree that it would be on November 28, 2003; it may be that the Government wishes to have a sitting on the Wednesday of that week.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform this House that on that day the Government is desirous of doing Bill No. 5 on the Order Paper, the Occupational Health and Safety Bill. *[Interruption]* We would also want to do the Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) (Amdt.) Bill. There will also be on the Order Paper the National Housing Authority Vesting Bill, 2003.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, in recognition of the Eid ul-Fitr celebration, omitted to extend cordial greetings of Eid Mubarak to the Muslim community. I know he would join with me in sending felicitations and holy blessings on them.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, it was in recognition that it was likely we would sit before, that I deferred it to that time. I shall continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker: I thought so myself.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.19 p.m.