

*Leave of Absence*

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to advise that the hon. Member for Couva South (Mr. K. Ramnath) would be absent from today's sitting. He is out of the county on official business. Also, the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro-Enterprise Development, the hon. Member for Point Fortin, (Hon. L. Achong) has asked to be excused from today's sitting. The leave, for which these hon. Members seek, is granted.

Hon. Members, I also wish to inform you of the passing of Sen. Arnim Smith, hon. Senator of the other place, and later on in the proceedings I will take condolences.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Export-Import Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 2000. [*The Minister of Trade and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation for the financial year ended June 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Systems Audit into Selected Areas of the Water and Sewerage Authority conducted by a firm of Chartered Accountants under the Supervision of the Auditor General. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Report of the Ministry of Social Development for the financial year 2002 to 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers 1 to 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

**INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC LIFE REGULATIONS****Joint Select Committee Report****Presentation**

**Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (La Brea):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table the report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the:

- (i) Integrity in Public Life (Prescribed Forms) Regulations, 2003, and
- (ii) Integrity in Public Life (Furnishing of Information) Regulations, 2003.

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

**Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding  
GTECH**

1. Would the hon. Minister of Finance indicate:
  - (a) Whether the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) and the Betting Levy Board (BLB.) entered into an Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with GTECH for the provision of Video Terminals in Trinidad and Tobago?
  - (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative would the Minister:
    - (i) indicate the terms and conditions of this agreement?
    - (ii) advise whether this agreement was approved by the Minister of Finance? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding  
(Aluminum Smelter)**

3. Could the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries indicate:
  - (a) Whether the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has entered into an Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.) to build an Aluminum Smelter in Trinidad and Tobago?
  - (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state:
    - (i) the parties to the Agreement/MOU;
    - (ii) the signatories;
    - (iii) the terms and conditions? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

### Proposed Caribbean Gas Pipeline

4. Could the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries state:
- (a) Whether a pre-feasibility survey or a feasibility survey has been conducted or is being conducted on the proposed Caribbean Gas Pipeline?
  - (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister indicate:
    - (i) the findings of this survey;
    - (ii) the cost of it;
    - (iii) the name of the entity that was awarded this survey contract? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I ask the indulgence of the honourable House to defer the questions on the Order Paper today for a one-week period.

**Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East):** Mr. Speaker, I hear the request of the hon. Leader of Government Business, but I wish to indicate these are the first questions that appear on the Order Paper for this session, and I would hope that this pattern of behaviour does not continue on the part of the Government.

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

### DEFINITE URGENT MATTER (LEAVE)

### Indiscipline and Violence in Schools

**Dr. Adesh Nanan (Tabaquite):** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I seek your leave to move the adjournment of this honourable House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the failure by the Government to deal with the unprecedented high levels of indiscipline and violence in the nation's schools.

The matter is definite because it refers to specific acts of indiscipline and violence in the nation's schools. The matter is urgent because in many schools there are acts of indiscipline and violence stifling the education of the nation's children.

*Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)*  
[DR. NANAN]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

The matter is of public importance because many schools are affected and further, the future of the nation is at risk by this breakdown in the education system.

**Mr. Speaker:** The leave for which the hon. Member for Tabaquite seeks is denied. And, may I suggest to the hon. Member that he utilize the provisions of Standing Order 11, subsections (2) and (3).

#### SENTENCING COMMISSION (NO. 2) BILL

Bill to repeal and replace the Sentencing Commission Act, 2000 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time

#### ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

**Mr. Gerald Yetming** (*St. Joseph*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion in my name:

*Whereas* Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination states that “Particular efforts shall be made to prevent discrimination based on race, colour or ethnic origin, especially in the fields of civil rights, access to citizenship, education, religion, employment, occupation and housing”; and

*Whereas* Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that “Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”; and

*Whereas* on November 3rd 1973, Trinidad and Tobago ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination; and

*Whereas* section 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes and declares that in Trinidad and Tobago there have existed and shall continue to exist, without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex, certain fundamental human rights and freedoms; and

*Whereas* the National Anthem of Trinidad and Tobago resonates with the aspiration that “Here every creed and race find an equal place”; and

*Whereas* section 7 of the Education Act, Chap. 39:01, states, “No person shall be refused admission to any public institution on account of religious persuasion, race, social status or language of such a person or of his parent”; and

*Whereas* since December 24th, 2001 there has been a renewal and an institutionalization of the victimization of and discrimination against employees of State Enterprises, Statutory Authorities, Government Ministries and Public Authorities by the PNM Government; and

*Whereas*, throughout our nation, through victimization and discrimination by the PNM Government, citizens are denied the opportunity to access jobs, contracts and loans in the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP); the Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO) and other public programmes; and

*Whereas*, throughout the nation, citizens are denied equality of treatment in accessing training opportunities in the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA); On the Job Training (OJT); Helping You Prepare for Employment (HYPE); Geriatric Adolescent/Partnership Programme (GAPP) and other public programmes; and

*Whereas* the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and Minister of Housing has publicly affirmed a policy of racial and gender discrimination as contained in the *Social and Economic Framework 2004* policy document, notwithstanding its deletion as an “Errata”:

*Be it resolved* that this House re-affirm its commitment to the elimination of discrimination in all its forms and the right of the individual to equality of treatment from public authorities.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons for this Motion, not the least of which is the fact that I do not think there was any time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, when there has been the feeling of alienation and discrimination by a section of the population as we have today. At no time have we had the divide between our peoples as wide as we have today; at no time has the tension between our peoples been as it is today. And this is not just the Opposition speaking. In fact, some commentators are talking about us coming to the brink. All of this has happened within recent times, we believe, rightly or wrongly, because of the policies being pursued by this People’s National Movement Government.

Reginald Dumas in an article in the *Express* of November 17 said “...race is the single most difficult continuing issue with which we have to deal...” in this country.

This must have prompted President Max Richards to form a committee to improve race relations, headed by Prof. Ken Ramchand. I do not think that he just

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[MR. YETMING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

did it because there was no reason for it. It is what would have prompted the Prime Minister to talk about re-establishing the Centre for Ethnic Studies. It is what would have prompted him to establish this committee on race relations and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, when he established the committee on race relations this is what he had to say:

“The intention of this committee is to establish a dialogue because we feel that much of the animosity and acrimony in race relations has come about because there is a misunderstanding of the positions of others.”

And, he is absolutely correct. He formed this committee on race relations.

Mr. Speaker, it is my view that committees might be all well and good, but the problem of race relations in this country, which one speaker defined as the single most difficult issue, is one that would not be resolved by some committees being set up to talk about it. The fact of the matter is that any matter of national importance, anything that has the potential to damage this country is a responsibility of this Parliament. And far too often for the past year while we on this side might have felt by virtue of things being done by the Government or policy positions being enunciated, that there have been acts of discrimination, we have raised them at opportunity really as side issues rather than as the main event. The problem, of course, has to do with how do we raise, debate and provide the evidence and the reasons for us feeling in that particular way, and how does the Government respond. Every time we have raised the question of discrimination as a side issue, probably because of constraints all we get from the other side is a self-righteous dismissive approach. And, therefore, what the Prime Minister intended in his committee on race relations, when he talked about misunderstanding the positions of others, we would never until we have full debate on the issue, come to a full understanding of each other which is why this Motion has been filed. We want to talk about the issue as a main event. We want to talk about it frankly and openly, and I am hoping that in trying to understand the positions of others we would listen to each other.

I do not intend to approach this debate calling names and attacking anyone. What we want to do from this side is to put to the other side the reason why we feel the way we do, to put to the other side the evidence that we believe we have in the hope, without name calling, without personally attacking anyone, in the hope that the other side would listen and would respond logically, would respond with fact, would respond with reasoned arguments so at the end of this debate we would both understand each other and hopefully contribute to the narrowing of the divide in this country. This is what I hope out of this debate.

We may be passionate in our arguments, some more than others, but I would hope that we do not have to insult one another and that we do not have to get personal with each other. I want to believe and I speak for this side that we could elevate this debate to the point where an understanding of our respective positions could be arrived at and that we could jointly narrow the racial divide in this country. We could do what all those committees that have been formed cannot do.

I want the other side to convince me we are wrong. And I want them to understand that after they have convinced me that we are wrong, they have to do twice as hard to convince my colleagues.

When I spoke in the budget debate I warned the Government that they were taking us down five roads to instability; one road was the road of discrimination in the country and I said at the time that I had hesitated for a while before I got into this discrimination talk. At the time I spoke in the budget debate I said that I had been sufficiently convinced that the People's National Movement was pursuing policies that were discriminating against half the population. I never said racial discriminating. I never used the word racial. I said that the People's National Movement was discriminating against half the population. The problem, of course, is that in Trinidad and Tobago where we have the main political parties constructed the way they are, when we talk about party or discrimination in favour of party, or discriminating against party, it is difficult for anyone not to construe that to mean racial.

The United National Congress, under Basdeo Panday, had been making serious attempts through the years—in fact, Mr. Panday, from the days of the Workers and Farmers party to the NAR, had been making serious attempts at uniting the country and being part of building a party that was broad-based. Under Prime Minister Manning, I see serious attempts being made by the People's National Movement to do the same thing, and all of that would be to the country's benefit. In fact, Prime Minister Manning said at some point when he was talking about the broadening of this base and I quote: "It would be a glorious day when the composition of the PNM is a reflection of the society from which we come."

And I share that sentiment. It would be a glorious day when both parties can reflect the society from which we come. And, in fact, when that time comes if it should come in our lifetime, a lot of this race talk and suspicion would not happen. I wish the other side well in their pursuit and I hope and I expect on our

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[MR. YETMING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

side we would do the same. The difference might be and I could be wrong, that I believe when Basdeo Panday took this approach years ago I think that he was doing it out of a sincere belief and a sincere interest in uniting the country and that is what was required in this country.

I might be of the view that Prime Minister Manning today, in pursuing that course within the PNM might be doing it out of expediency. I might be wrong, but it does not matter. I make the distinction between the two if only to suggest that if you do it out of a genuine desire, then the policies that you pursue would be out of a genuine desire to please all. [*Desk thumping*] If you do it out of expediency it is for show and it does not necessarily mean that your policies are going to reflect that. But, your policies are likely to be what is deep-seated within you and I could be wrong. But I never said racial discrimination. That view was not a view limited to the UNC or to Yetming. I had quoted from an article at the time in the budget debate and it is worth repeating for this debate. It is an article written by Tony Fraser where he said:

“There are however, more than a few questions to be raised about the nature of CEPEP and URP and other direct social welfare projects.”

He asked:

“Are the projects being equitably distributed throughout the country and not to the political constituencies of the ruling party?”

This is Tony Fraser speaking. He went on to say what I said in a different way. He said:

“The Ministers involved must convince the nation in this budget debate that the transfers are not directed to political patronage.”

He challenged them in the budget debate to convince us, convince the nation that these transfers are not for political patronage.

Mr. Speaker, I said in the budget debate, and I quote:

“You need to come out with the facts to convince the population and the people who believe or perceive themselves to be discriminated against who feel it in their hearts and in their pockets that this is not so.”

And in that budget debate the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, in his contribution came out and attacked me for going down into the gutter.

He believed when I talked about discrimination—he interpreted it as racial because he went on to talk about how many Indian votes he got in Platanite and



Kernahan and so on, suggesting that we were taking a dangerous course by talking about this racial thing. But I never referred to race. The point is when the bases of the respective parties are broad enough then we would have less suspicion about the policies being pursued by the respective governments.

In this debate I would touch on some of the reasons that gave rise to my feeling and to our feelings of discrimination in this country. Subsequent speakers, I expect, would re-enforce those points with more detailed information and evidence so that the other side could understand that our concern and our charge is not based on some feeling or some desire to create discord in this society. We would provide the evidence and I will touch on a few of them just to get the start off on this debate.

We have raised the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme on a number of occasions in this honourable House, and I do not think that we need to detail although I am sure one of our subsequent speakers will detail the recipients of the CEPEP contracts to show that there has been discrimination in favour of the supporters of the PNM in this CEPEP and, therefore, discriminating against others.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro while he was speaking, we broke for tea and I asked him a question after he attacked me for raising this discrimination issue when he was on his feet. I said to him—this is not privileged information because I asked it in the presence of others and he responded loudly in the presence of others. I said, you know, you are attacking me. How do you explain CEPEP? And his words to me were that is a one-time thing. CEPEP, he told me, was a one-time thing. What is a “one-time thing”? CEPEP was not a one-time programme because the Prime Minister had announced about increasing the allocation to CEPEP long before. What I interpreted “one-time” to mean, was the manner in which CEPEP was treated in that period would not be repeated. To me it was an acknowledgment of a certain abuse of state funds in allocating this money to the friends and supporters of the People’s National Movement.

### **2.00 p.m.**

Nobody questions the fact that when parties get into power there is a certain degree of patronage that is dispensed, but I have said—and I think the country believes—that the manner in which it is being done through the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and other programmes is excessive and abusive and is one of the reasons there is this very strong feeling in large sections of the country that there has been discrimination.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[MR. YETMING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

Once one has discriminated in favour of one's party, it will be seen as discrimination in favour of one group of people in the country.

I do not think there is any secret in the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). There was a man, a week ago, chaining himself against some door in Chaguanas—an Afro-Trinidadian—because, according to the report, he has been benefiting from URP for over 20 years under different administrations and suddenly he is being told that he cannot engage in URP unless he shows a PNM party card. If that is not evidence of party discrimination, what is?

We raised in this House before, without adequate response, the facts that came out a couple months ago about the women's URP. The newspaper had reported that there were six women's gangs in every PNM constituency and only three in every UNC constituency, with the exception of Barataria/San Juan and St. Joseph, for obvious reasons. That charge has never been defended.

So, if there is that hard evidence of party discrimination, why is it so difficult for the other side to accept that maybe there is basis for us to respond and react the way we do? Why is it so difficult for them to reflect and say, "You know, maybe we need to adjust our programmes, policies and utterances accordingly?"

The National Entrepreneurship Development Company (NEDCO) is another example. We have not had the information we have asked for. My information is that the list of beneficiaries for NEDCO loans is not unlike the list of people benefiting from CEPEP contracts. So, there is the same pattern within NEDCO as there is in CEPEP, URP and all the other social programmes.

We have referred to the dismissals at WASA—and others will speak about that; we referred to Petrotrin, as examples—and we have more, which we shall present—

**Mr. Bereaux:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. G. Yetming:** You are still employed with them?

**Mr. Bereaux:** Yes. [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. G. Yetming:** —and which have given rise to the belief that there is discrimination taking place in the employment practices of these organizations.

I make reference to a matter that I raised in the budget debate as another example of perceived discrimination. In the budget debate, I referred to a statement about additional revenues estimated at \$249 million made by the Prime Minister in his budget statement. They were speaking about the increase in the

levy on oil producing companies from 3 per cent to 4 per cent. That increase of 1 per cent was going to increase the revenue intake of the Government by \$249 million, which, in the budget statement by the Prime Minister, he said was going to be spent on a number of programmes geared to poverty alleviation and job creation.

He went on to talk about the reforestation programme of \$50 million and increasing the allocation to URP and CEPEP—both of which we know about—and then he spoke about drainage and other community projects in La Horquetta, Maloney, San Juan and Laventille, in the sum of \$50 million.

I asked in the budget debate, if they were going to raise \$250 million by virtue of an increase in taxation, why limit the drainage and community projects to La Horquetta, Maloney, San Juan and Laventille—constituencies of theirs and one which they want to have real badly.

The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro got up and attacked me for making that reference. I quote from the *Hansard*. He said:

“In the 2004 budget, because the Prime Minister announced that there will now be drainage projects in the upper reaches of the river, on the slopes of the northern ranges and mentioned Maloney, La Horquetta, San Juan and Laventille, the hon. Member for St. Joseph took that as the reason he would jump into the discrimination ring, because the Prime Minister said he would fix La Horquetta.”

He went on to say that the Prime Minister meant that they intended to deal with the upper tributaries of the Arima River, the Tacarigua River, the Tunapuna River, the Curepe main drain, the San Juan main drain, some drain in Laventille, the Malick River, Coconut Growers Association drain, the St. Ann’s River, Cascade River, Maraval River, La Horquetta, Diego Martin River and so on.

He said what the Prime Minister meant to say. How in heaven’s name could we know what the Prime Minister meant to say? The Prime Minister said that the \$250 million would be geared to programmes of poverty alleviation and job creation. He never said flood control. So he should not attack me for raising the spending of the \$250 million as an issue of discrimination in favour of their own constituencies. It has nothing to do with a programme for flood control.

I thought that the response from the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro was weak. I think that in his new position he needs to set a better example because more and more people would be listening to what he has to say. It is not a personal attack

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[MR. YETMING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

on him. I think that he saw an opportunity to respond to a charge that I had made and he responded, but we can all tell from what was said in the budget statement and what he tried to convey on the basis that this was what the Prime Minister meant to say. If we are misreading his actions and taking them as discriminatory—in this case, he wants to tell us it is because of poor communication on their part—then he must accept. It means that maybe in the future he would be clearer and more explicit in what he wants to say, so that there is no ambiguity and little room for misunderstanding on our part. [*Interruption*]

Well, we want you to say that. As the debate progresses, we will provide harder information to support why we believe that there is discrimination and we expect that the other side would listen to us and respond.

I want to deal with a matter in the Motion that might be considered the most contentious. It has to do with the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago's (COSTAATT's) policy matter and the charge we have laid in the Motion that the Member for Diego Martin West has affirmed a policy of racial discrimination.

I was not in the House when the Member for Diego Martin West got up to defend that position, but I read the *Hansard* report of his contribution very carefully. This is not a personal attack on the Member, but he was very unconvincing in his contribution on the day in question. First, he blamed the technocrats and said that we have technocrats who are American-trained and maybe one of these technocrats, because he was accustomed, in the United States, to classify by race, did the same here.

The Member for Diego Martin West acknowledged that they have not, as a practice—and I am quoting—“identified groups in this way”. He went on to say that, in fact, it was the first, in his record, that they had identified a particular group, and observed that the problem was largely associated with one ethnic group against another and usually they spoke more globally. He went on in another part of his contribution to say that under formal circumstances they would not refer to a problem in that way. He acknowledges that.

He went on to make reference to some proposition in the California election where they were now seeking to take the racial classification out because, as he acknowledged, the Member for Princes Town was taking the same position as the persons in the United States; the suspicion that the state would use the information from the racial classification to do things in a racist way.

So, while they are trying to take it out of the United States, this technocrat comes to Trinidad and Tobago and puts it in a policy statement in a Government document without the approval of a minister. I do not buy that. If he did not agree with it, why did he get up to defend it? In the Senate, one minister said it was a mistake, let it be; but he gets up to defend it and has made things worse, as far as I am concerned.

The Member for Diego Martin West said that it is one thing to say that it should not be presented in that way because it might lead to disquiet and suspicion—and if he had seen it before, he would have known it was going to do that—but to say that it was proof of racism was nonsense. Why not racism? What else could it be? It is not just the UNC talking racism: two newspaper editorials dealt with it.

In the *Newsday* editorial of Sunday, October 26, it said:

“To begin with, we must say that we are quite alarmed that...the Government should see the need to have such a racially biased recruitment programme.”

The *Newsday* editorial went on to say:

“We believe that, in a multi-ethnic society such as ours, where every creed and race should find an equal place, such programmes will inevitably be seen as inequitable, discriminatory and provocative and will only lead to an aggravation of social tensions which are already a serious cause for concern.”

This is the *Newsday* speaking. This was before the Member for Diego Martin West defended the statement.

In the *Guardian* editorial on October 29, after the Member for Diego Martin West defended the policy, it says:

“Mr. Montano...”

—I am sure they meant Dr. Rowley—

“...tried to explain that the policy wasn’t an attempt at affirmative action, but with such a demographically specific target, it is hard to see how else it could be interpreted.”

It went on to say:

“It was such a careless political move that the Government itself, caught off guard, could not muster a coherent position on it, could provide no statistics on which it might be based or rationale for pursuing it.”

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[MR. YETMING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

After the Member for Diego Martin West spoke, this agreed with my earlier statement that the Member for Diego Martin West did nothing to help us have a better understanding of that supposed error in their policy statement.

After trying to explain it by this American-trained technocrat, he went on to try to defend the policy statement. He said that Government had a responsibility to identify special problems in the society and to develop specific initiatives to deal with those special problems—and he is absolutely correct. He gave examples. He talked about orphans, the differently-abled, teenage pregnancies, single mothers, farmers, fishermen, Tobago and Caroni.

Not one of those special problems has a race bias or statement in it. If they identify teenage pregnancies as a special problem and they want to develop a special programme to deal with it, and perchance 99 per cent of the pregnancies are among one ethnic group, so be it. Nobody in the country would argue if they have a solution to deal with teenage pregnancies and 99 per cent happens to be Afro-Trinidadian or 99 per cent Indo-Trinidadian, nobody would see it as racist. It is the same with single mothers.

When they are dealing with farmers and they deal with 75 per cent are Afro-Trinidadians, nobody would see that as racist. If they are dealing with fishermen and they have a special programme and 75 per cent happens to be of Afro-Trinidadian descent, nobody would see it as racist. So why, in identifying this other problem, do they need to go down this race road?

The problem, as I understand it from the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin West, was underperforming Afro-Trinidadian males in primary schools, secondary schools and at university level. That, as I understood it from his defence of the statement, was the problem. Why could he not say that their concern as a government was with underperforming students at primary schools, secondary schools and at university level? If perchance 80 per cent is Afro-Trinidadian, so be it. Nobody would have a concern with that and nobody would see it as racist.

Do not tell me that in lifting one, they do not have to bring down the other because if they want to lift the underperforming youth, they should lift all. The way their policy is stated, they are attempting to lift the underperforming Afro-Trinidadian male, and not the few—if they say it is a few—Indo-Trinidadians and others. They should not come with this talk about lifting some and not taking down others.

The next question is: How will the COSTAATT policy deal with that? How would COSTAATT, targeting Afro-Trinidadian males of 17 to 24 years, deal with the problem of underperforming Afro-Trinidadian males at primary, secondary and university levels? To me there is no relationship, or little relationship, between the problem and the solution and I would submit that what he says is a solution had nothing to do with the problem he identified. In any case, if an American technocrat wrote that nonsense, who decided that COSTAATT is the agency that would deal with underperforming males in primary, secondary and university levels? And how does COSTAATT intend to deal with it?

The Member for Diego Martin West asked why we were putting the worst construction on this. Before I get to that, after he tried to explain the policy, he went on to confirm the policy in spite of the fact that a couple days before a minister said that it was a mistake. I advance that he did so in at least three statements in his contribution. I submit that he confirmed that racist policy when he said:

“Mr. Speaker, in education, if you take time to look at the statistics; if you take time to talk to the social workers, the fact would be demonstrated that the Afro-Trinidadian male is an underperformer in the national community of Trinidad and Tobago. The bottom line is that the Government acknowledges that that is a problem and has to deal with it.”

So, he confirmed the policy.

He went on to say:

“So, if the Government in its development programme, identified and in fact, is as specific to say as we have not been saying before that we identify a problem in the Afro male community and we deal with that, what is the problem with talking about the Afro-male?”

In another part of his contribution, he said that they had a problem and if we do not want to acknowledge that problem, those in the Government had a duty to acknowledge it and that they would treat with it.

So, it is my reading of his statement that after he explained the policy, in spite of its withdrawal elsewhere, he confirmed it. He refused—because I think the Member for Couva South asked about the withdrawal in the Senate—to acknowledge it ever took place and he wanted to know why we would put the worse construction on something he believes to be simple.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[MR. YETMING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

The answer to that is that when we have the evidence as we see it of the Government's policy with respect to CEPEP and URP and NEDCO, it is difficult not to put a discrimination label on this policy. We also have to view it in the context of the uttering and the relationship between the Government and a gentleman called Selwyn Cudjoe.

It is not co-incidental that it was around budget time—August thereabout—that Mr. Cudjoe started to talk about 80 per cent of students at UWI and 75 per cent of the students at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology being Indo-Trinidadian and spoke about criteria other than grades being considered for admission. We have Prof. Cudjoe talking about this imbalance in the student composition at UWI and the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology and about changing the admission criteria. Is it coincidental that one or two months later, in the policy document of the Government, there should be this bias towards Afro-Trinidadian males by COSTAATT? It cannot be coincidental.

I do not think that they have recognized that that theory and recommendation by Prof. Cudjoe did not appeal to the thinking people of the country. Even Sen. Danny Montano said that, as far as he was aware, the imbalance at UWI was not race related. He put it as financial.

Prof. Julien Kenny attacked it. He said the attack by Prof. Cudjoe was founded by other than academic reasons. Selwyn Ryan even considered the proposal to be sociologically and politically incorrect, but they embraced it. Prof. Cudjoe came out not much later to talk about Indian teachers and African students. There is nobody fanning racial discord in this country than Prof. Cudjoe.

Reginald Dumas came out against this talk about Indian teachers/African students by saying that unsubstantiated, generalized musings on the possible attitude of Indian teachers to African students are racially provocative. They divide; they fragment. In that way lies the danger of societal disintegration, which is part of the reason for this Motion. Thinking people—intellectuals—are seeing the divide, the fragmentation and the disintegration of this society. So, let us talk about it.

I would have thought that in an effort to ensure that there is no misunderstanding or that nobody got the wrong impression of things, the Government would have taken the opportunity to distance itself from Cudjoe forthwith.



**2.30 p.m.**

In fact, when Prof. Cudjoe spoke about Indian teachers and African students, I do not recall the Minister of Education speaking out against that nonsense in defence of the people in her employ. People who are in her employ, she never came out and defended them—never came out and spoke. Trevor Oliver did it but not the Minister, not the numero uno in education, which is to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that there is a close relationship between the People's National Movement and Prof. Cudjoe, which is to suggest that there is a close relationship between his utterances and his beliefs with respect to adjusting criteria for admission to tertiary—with respect to the imbalance in UWI, a relationship between those and that COSTAATT policy.

In fact, Lloyd Best, in speaking about Cudjoe and the Central Bank appointment, criticized the Government for scandalizing, and I quote him, Mr. Speaker, “scandalizing the character of what ought to remain one of the most dignified institutions.” That is to tell you the regard with which this person is held. So that when the Member for Diego Martin West questioned why we put the worst construction on that policy statement, and put it as racial, I have explained why, Mr. Speaker.

Now, subsequent to the Member for Diego Martin West attempting to defend the policy, the Prime Minister came out and said that that is not policy. Well, too many things have been said about that COSTAATT policy and I think that the Government has an opportunity, not as a side issue, to make clear, unambiguous statements with one voice, so that there could be no further misunderstanding of their policy position on some of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I see correct signals now being sent and I would like the Government to build on that. Specifically I quote from the Member for Diego Martin Central when he was closing the budget debate and he spoke about:

“...the whole emphasis of our social programmes will have to be national treatment or national spread.”

“We want to kill this race issue once and for all.”

This is the Member for Diego Martin Central and he goes on to say that:

“All the programmes will have national treatment come fiscal 2004.”

I could interpret that to mean that, well, in 2003 it was not national and that might be an admission or acknowledgement, which is fine. Better you admit it and let us move on than try to defend it. So that some correct signals are being

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[MR. YETMING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

sent and in this debate while we continue to lay charges with evidence, they have the opportunity to properly logically respond.

The Prime Minister, in closing the budget debate, also said, Mr. Speaker, quoting him:

“We also propose to examine a system that would target our social benefits to the people for whom they are really intended.”

He goes on to say, referring to the social sector committee:

“We are going to spend our time next year trying to make existing programmes more and more efficient, and to ensure that existing programmes are given a completely national reach. We admit that some of our programmes have not yet attained that level...”

So we look forward to the Government’s approach next year in dispensing its social programme obligations to ensure that it has the national reach.

What I have a problem with, however, is, in the Prime Minister’s closing remarks, he spoke about increasing the expenditure at the social level and he talked about the problems, however, and that the hot spots in the country are by and large in the East/West corridor. I would only say to the Prime Minister that if you are going to be trying to use state funds—social programmes—to deal with the unemployed or the unemployable, as a general policy hot spots will fall in that but do not gear your social programmes to the hot spots because you are not going to have the reach to the national community and one can argue that we could create more hot spots because if in order to qualify for social benefits you need to be in a hot spot, it is not difficult to create a hot spot and therefore I would caution the Prime Minister, your policy must be carefully directed. Direct them to the unemployed; direct them to the unemployable. We do not have a problem with that.

I think that if we have a certain body of unemployed people in this country, until we can create the opportunity for them to get better jobs, I firmly believe, as they do, that we have a responsibility to these people to help take care of it. We did it. The UNC did it in government, they are doing it, except that I do not think any one of us knows what it is like to be a parent to go home and tell a child, “I cannot feed you because I ‘doh’ have the money to buy food for you.” I do not think any of us has been in that situation because if we ever were we would never treat with the policy in the context of hot spots but we will treat with the policy in the context of unemployed people wherever they are. [*Desk thumping*] If we

have to increase the allocation, so be it, and you are increasing the allocation and we do not have a problem with it.

I make, in closing, Mr. Speaker, two recommendations to the Government. The first recommendation is that they ought to consider producing a directory of social programmes so that everybody will know where and what—what they could access and where they can access it. We filed a question for written response, “Could the Minister identify how many social programmes are being run by the Ministry and list each programme” and we got a reply that there are 14 social programmes provided by the office of the Minister of Social Services Delivery. When I looked at this written response, it is extremely vague with respect to procedure for access. Under “Urgent Temporary Assistance”, they said applicants must apply in writing to the public assistance local board responsible for the area.

If a citizen wants to access this programme, do you tell that person to apply in writing to the public assistance local board representative in their area? Where does the person go? What I would suggest—and this is just coming from one Ministry—is that in the Government—whether it be inclusive of CEPEP or URP, inclusive of NEDCO—there are some full page ads being run right now by the Community Development Fund, excellent ads, trying to promote the fund and its benefits for people to access. Every week we get the cable TV—whatever it is—we get three of them, one from each newspaper. Could the Government not, as a recommendation, publish a comprehensive directory, embracing all ministries, of all the social programmes that are available to individuals? If individuals know of people who can benefit, they can help them. It does not have to depend on MPs, it could depend on normal citizens in the street. So I make that suggestion as a means by which there could be national reach of these programmes.

The second recommendation that I really wanted to make to the Prime Minister is that I believe that, the current state of mistrust in the current feeling of alienation and discrimination in the country, one of the other mechanisms that I feel should be employed or can be employed is for the Prime Minister to appoint a Minister of Cabinet rank with the sole responsibility for reviewing all the programmes and policies of the Government to ensure that they are being implemented in accord with their wishes because we also accept that ministers do not necessarily know what is going on beneath them. Members of boards of state enterprises can only go—they do not interact with their minister that regularly to be given policy directives. They have to go sometimes by what they read in the newspapers as pronouncements from ministers and the Prime Minister.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[MR. YETMING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

Maybe the time has come, in the light of the severe mistrust, in the light of the brink that some people believe we are at, to appoint this minister so that when we express concerns in Parliament, when members of the public express their concerns publicly, when we view some of the programmes beneath ministers with suspicion, that person could go on behalf of Cabinet, on behalf of the line minister, to ensure that there is no room for misunderstanding. To me, Mr. Speaker, that would go a long way in helping to come up with resolutions to the divide that is being created. Make no mistake about it, it is not just the politicians who are creating it.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the responsibility is now with the Prime Minister. I hope, as I expressed earlier in my presentation, that this debate will be taken as an opportunity to fully ventilate our respective concerns. I am not really interested in hearing what happened in '95 to 2001. I am interested in hearing what is happening now and the frequency with which the response has been, "Well, you know, in '95 and '96 and whatever it is, what happened and what did not happen", I do not think that is necessary in this debate. I would like to think that at the end of the day, at the end of this debate, we would all have a better understanding of each other and that we will, all 36 of us, affirm our commitment to the elimination of discrimination in all its forms and the right of the individual to equality of treatment from public authorities.

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

**Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to second the Motion and reserve my right to speak in this debate.

*Question proposed.*

**The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is clear to me that the Member for St. Joseph did not really want to present this Motion in his name. In fact, I believe he was sent to do so. He spent quite a significant part of his presentation apologizing for the Motion. In fact, I timed him. He spent 17 minutes apologizing for the Motion and then, Mr. Speaker, the rest of his time was spent regurgitating *Hansard* and reading from newspaper articles and so on and I am truly disappointed in his presentation.

In all the time that he spent, the hour or whatever it is, he has not presented a single shred of evidence or proof to substantiate these very strong allegations that he has made in this Motion—not a shred of evidence, not a single statistic, not a single research document, not a single published article, nothing to prove these

ridiculous, scandalous and disingenuous statements that he has made in the preambles to his Motion; but let me deal with a number of the issues in the Motion. Since the Member for St. Joseph has not dealt with them, I will deal with them. Since he has presented no information and no evidence to back up his allegations of racism and discrimination, I will deal with these issues, Mr. Speaker.

Now, what bothers me in particular is that as a member of the former UNC Government for some period of time—I know he was not there from the beginning but he was there for long enough to have some understanding of what the UNC policy was. COSTAATT, for example, was formed under the UNC by the Member for Caroni East, I believe, and the Member for Caroni East will correct me if I am wrong. I believe that the Member for Caroni East—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Singh:** Will you give way?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Certainly.

**Mr. Singh:** No, it was the Member for Arima at that time who brought that legislation into being.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Whatever. The Member for Caroni East in his capacity as Minister of Human Development—[*Interruption*—it is all right. The Member for Caroni East and the UNC government formed COSTAATT and since the Member for St. Joseph professes to be ignorant of the thinking and the policy behind the formation of COSTAATT, I will refresh his memory because I am certain that he is aware of it. I am absolutely certain.

Now, this is the UNC policy that formed COSTAATT. COSTAATT was conceptualized by the UNC as a multifunctional community college based on the North American model, and, let me repeat that—based on the North American community college model. So that debunks immediately the repudiation of the Member for St. Joseph of the fact as stated by the Member for Diego Martin West that COSTAATT is formed on the North American system.

**Mr. Singh:** He never said that.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** It is intended, Mr. Speaker, to address many of the current deficiencies and problems of both the local secondary and university education systems. It was envisaged by the UNC as a bridging institution which, through a wide variety of academic programmes and support services, would create multiple paths for a diverse array of students to access tertiary education.

**Dr. Rowley:** Repeat it.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** It was developed as a bridging institution which, through a wide variety of academic programmes and support services, would create multiple paths for a diverse array of students to access tertiary education. The community college on which COSTAATT is modeled and was developed by the UNC in the US higher education system, is sometimes referred to as a people's college or a democracy college because of the key role that it plays in ensuring that higher education performs its normal function of promoting economic and social mobility for all citizens through a deliberate policy.

This is why I am so disappointed in the presentation of the Member for St. Joseph because the UNC, of which he was a part, formed COSTAATT and gave COSTAATT the mandate to promote economic and social mobility through widening access to particular groups in the society, groups that are described as at-risk groups, students who are categorized as at-risk groups. This is how COSTAATT was formed under the Members on that side; was to identify and target at-risk groups who are academically underprepared, financially in need, physically disabled, suffering from deficiencies because of rural or urban situations or of particular groupings, religious, ethnic and so on. That was the foundation for the formation of COSTAATT by the Members opposite.

It was intended to seek out, target and assist at-risk groups, Mr. Speaker, and it was intended to design teaching and learning interventions that treat not only with students' aptitude but also with the socio-economic, emotional, financial and cultural factors that may impact on the success or failure of students. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, the recruitment function is critical. The recruitment function within community colleges has a marketing dimension—and the Member for Caroni East is well aware of all of this—that frequently involves identifying the characteristics of a particular group or community that, for some reason, may be having difficulty in terms of enrolment, in terms of retention into the tertiary education system, and targeting these groups for outreach activities to encourage them to enrol in the college's programmes. That was the UNC policy.

This document from which I am reading is the UNC policy that set up COSTAATT. [*Interruption*] Oh really! Let me repeat, Mr. Speaker. At-risk groups are defined as students who are academically underprepared, financially in need, physically disabled, suffering from rural or urban deficiency or of particular groups such as ethnic and religious groups—at-risk groups. That was the UNC policy.

Let me deal now with the facts as they relate to male underachievement, Mr. Speaker. Let me deal with the facts because there was a lot of “ol’ talk” in this Parliament and in the country at large by people who should know better. When one goes into the literature, when one goes into the academic publications, when one goes into the research documents on education in the Caribbean and in Trinidad and Tobago in particular, the literature is replete with published research that points to male underachievement as one of the biggest social problems in the education system in the Caribbean and in Trinidad and Tobago in particular, Mr. Speaker. So let me prove, as the Member for St. Joseph—I know he is not a man of letters, so I will excuse him—was unwilling or unable to prove, some of the hypotheses on which his Motion is based.

Let me deal with them and let me first deal with a document, the Caribbean Education Strategy Paper, Mr. Speaker which was prepared by the Caribbean Education Task Force with contributions from a number of ministries throughout the region, from Antigua right through to Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos, incorporating all the countries of the Caribbean region and agencies such as the Caribbean Examinations Council, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, the United Nations Education Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) and so on, Mr. Speaker. Let me give you some of the findings since the Member for St. Joseph is either unaware of them or unwilling to confirm them.

Gender equity.

I am reading from page Roman VIII of this document.

In terms of gender equity, both boys and girls have equal access but there is growing disparity in participation rates between boys and girls at the secondary and tertiary levels. Fewer boys gain a place at secondary school when there is competition for places. They perform less well and there is a higher attrition rate among boys than girls. As a consequence, they are outnumbered by girls at the tertiary level. The ratio at the University of the West Indies is 67 to 33 in favour of females.

Two-thirds of the students enrolled at UWI, Mr. Speaker, at this time, are females, one-third are males.

Recent studies on gender emphasized the need for measures to be taken to promote the motivation of boys and higher level of performance.

These are the findings of the Caribbean Education Task Force which included representatives from the Ministry of Education of the Government of Trinidad

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

and Tobago. So those are the facts, Mr. Speaker. This is one document which confirms that there is male underachievement, especially within our secondary and tertiary education system, and the Caribbean Education Task Force recommended that in order to reduce inequities in the school system you must systematically identify the various groups and analyze the factors which contribute to poor performance.

So the concept of identifying at-risk groups within our secondary and tertiary education system is well developed within the education and academic system throughout the entire Caribbean and particularly in Trinidad and Tobago, and I am certain that the Members opposite are familiar with this document. Maybe they do not read but at least one of them must have taken the time to pick up this document and take a look at the findings of the Caribbean Education Task Force. This, I believe, was in 2000 or 2001.

**Dr. Rowley:** When they were in government?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Yes, when they were in government.

Now, let us move to Gender and School Achievement in the Caribbean, Department for International Development November 1997 and I do believe that the hon. Members opposite were in government in November 1997. In fact, I think the Member for Tabaquite was in the Ministry of Education at the time—correct me if I am wrong—and this document, Mr. Speaker, published by the Department for International Development, is part of a series of education papers and it looked at case studies in a number of Caribbean countries—in Trinidad, in Barbados and in St. Vincent. The purpose of the project was to deal with some questions that were arising because of male underachievement within our secondary and tertiary education system.

One of the questions raised out of a study done in 1990 by Jules and Cupnic was, “Why are females succeeding so consistently within the classroom and the educational system and are female educational strategies distinct from the strategies displayed by males at the classroom level?” Again, this document showed that the differences in examination attainments between males and females show that sex differences are mediated by the level of education, females attaining higher than males at the ordinary level, while males catch up in a number of subjects at the advanced level, sex differentiation in secondary school subject choices, changes in female attainment over the last three decades, over the last 30 years, and it points to one of the problems, male disaffection and discipline problems in schools, and a number of research papers have been published on this particular problem.



One of the summaries of this research document, Mr. Speaker, published in 1997, was that teachers, schools and classrooms played a major role in the development of children's attainment. Selection to secondary school showed no significant difference between male and females but, within class achievement, the difference between boys and girls is sharply significant but the success of girls is most likely to be attributed to the encounters in the school and the attitudes that girls develop towards schooling. Lowest attaining children, boys, displayed poor social skills and social skills are at the centre of cooperative learning and social support and the development of social skills is necessary to enhance the level of achievement of boys in the classroom.

The document goes on and on. Lowest attaining children, again boys, displayed poor reading skills. When called upon to read in the classroom, they were often embarrassed and put down when more competent readers, primarily girls, were called upon to continue reading at the appropriate level. The quantitative studies showed girls attaining at a higher level in the classroom, in Trinidad in particular, and that the within class attainment attained by girls was consistently higher than boys across the three countries and in particular in Trinidad and Tobago. So this is a document of which the UNC must be aware, published in 1997, which again demonstrated the problem with male underachievement in our secondary and tertiary education system.

Again, you have published research papers at the University of the West Indies and I point to a paper being funded by the Dutch government, Gender Differentials in Secondary and Tertiary Education Systems in Trinidad and Tobago by Rhoda Reddock, Jeanette Morris, June George, Jennifer Mohammed and Cynthia James and this is a summary.

This island wide research project arose from current concern about male underachievement in education and entails an exploration of perceived gender differentials in educational performance at the secondary and tertiary levels in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is a detailed assessment of this serious social problem done by some distinguished researchers at the University of the West Indies, again—*[Interruption]*—1997. So that it is very difficult for me to believe that the Members on the other side are not aware of male underachievement. These papers go from '96, '97, '98, '99, 2000, 2001 and I have only brought a fraction of the research material available that point to male underachievement in our secondary and tertiary systems.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, November 28, 2003

I have another document here and this asks the question, “Why Do Boys Underachieve in Caribbean Schools?”

Boys’ early socialization and society’s expectations about male behaviour have been a handicap in West Indian schools.

It goes on to say that boys have increasingly resisted schooling as being girlish and that Creole languages are linked to the hard male image. English as an instructional language puts boys at an increasing disadvantage. Girls aspiring to male fields are considered as ambitious and the reverse is not so for boys aspiring to female fields, and it goes on in some detail into why boys are underachieving at secondary and tertiary education levels in the Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago. So there is no doubt whatsoever, the literature is replete with studies, with research, with documented statistical analysis proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is a significant problem with male underachievement within the secondary and tertiary education systems in Trinidad and Tobago.

I have already pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that COSTAATT was set up on the American model, which targets at-risk groups within the society. So clearly, if all the educational research, all the research being done at the university and all the research being done by all of the international institutions, by UNESCO and so on, point to males as an at-risk group, then clearly it has got to be one of the functions of COSTAATT, since it is based on the principle of identifying at-risk groups within the community and targeting them for recruitment, clearly males are an at-risk group. There are no two ways about that because—[*Interruption*]—we are coming to that. We are coming to that as you—you have done some education.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Oropouche has a modicum of tertiary education. We are not sure how he got it but at least we know he attended some classes and we are coming to that point. However, Mr. Speaker, you will know that in order to develop a point one must first lay a foundation. So I have laid the foundation to prove that male underachievement is a significant problem, it is a well-known problem, it is heavily researched, heavily publicized, well known, and therefore male are an at-risk group in terms of our secondary and tertiary education system.

I mean, look at the enrolment in UWI. I need to repeat that. Two-thirds of the students are women and one-third is men and the situation is no different in Jamaica, you know. One of these papers I read from asked the question, “Why are 30 per cent of today’s graduates from the Jamaican campus of UWI male, while in 1948 the figure was 70 per cent?” So between 1948 and 2003—this document is a 2003 document—the participation of males at the University of the

West Indies has declined from 70 per cent to 30 per cent. So 70 per cent of the students in Jamaica in 1948 were males, 30 per cent were women. Now it has reversed—70 per cent are women, 30 per cent are men. In Trinidad, it is 67 per cent females, 33 per cent males.

So, let us move now to what appeared in the Social and Economic Policy Framework Document because, you know, this is where all of this confusion has arisen and this forms a major plank of the presentation from the Member for St. Joseph, although he did not articulate anything and he presented no information. Let us move to that. Why did this appear in this document? Because one has to ask the question, and I ask the question, why did this thing appear in the document? Where did it come from? Why was it there?

I am advised that there were a number of discussions among all of the colleges that comprise COSTAATT. These discussions had been going on for years, long before the PNM administration came into office in its present incarnation, and, for years, well before the PNM was in office, in the UNC's time there had been studies done on enrolment patterns in COSTAATT, in our secondary and tertiary education system and a trend was emerging. A trend had emerged, since way back in the early 1990s, which suggested that males were not accessing tertiary education programmes at the same rate as females. A trend was emerging and this discussion had been going on. It was going on under the UNC and it has continued under the PNM and at the core of the discussion it centred around reasons why male students might be self-selecting out of tertiary education and the type of outreach programmes that might be designed to encourage them to enrol, including information about the college's remedial education programmes.

So that this discussion had started under the UNC and continued under the PNM. Why were males dropping out of the system? Why were they not enrolling in the secondary and tertiary education system and what sort of outreach programme could be designed to encourage them to enrol? This is the genesis of the words that appear in the—[*Interruption*—I am coming to that. Have some patience. This is the genesis of the words that appeared in the Social and Economic Policy document, that a trend had emerged that males were dropping out of the secondary system, not accessing the tertiary system and there needed to be a recruitment programme to encourage young men in particular to enroll in the community colleges within COSTAATT and that is what COSTAATT is all about. If the Member for Caroni East and his other colleagues are honest, they know that is what COSTAATT is all about.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

COSTAATT is all about getting into communities, reaching into communities, identifying at-risk groups, identifying groups of young people who are not accessing tertiary education, finding out why and developing outreach programmes and recruitment programmes to encourage these at-risk groups to get into the tertiary education system. How else would a country such as Trinidad and Tobago develop from its present situation into the developed nation status unless you go into the communities, find out why our citizens are not accessing tertiary education and develop recruitment programme and remedial education programmes to encourage them to come in and also to improve their educational qualifications so that they meet the requirements to enter COSTAATT?

It is very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that there was confusion between recruitment and enrolment. There is a big difference. You can have males within a system who have the relevant five CXC passes but, for some reason or the other, poor socialization or other financial problems or other deficiencies and so on within a community, they are not motivated to access the tertiary education system. I have already shown you that there are a number of studies showing that females are far more motivated than males with the same educational background, with the same five CXC passes and so on. Females are far more motivated than males to access the tertiary education system and, in particular, community colleges such as COSTAATT.

So it is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that there was a complete confusion between recruitment—all recruitment is, you go and find persons who meet the educational standards and encourage them to enrol. There is no relationship between recruiting people and lowering the admission requirements. There is no relationship whatsoever and, as I have said before, the social underpinning of COSTAATT is to develop outreach and recruitment programmes to go into our communities, identify the at-risk groups and encourage them, those who meet the minimum standards, to come in, and those who do not meet the minimum standards to formulate and implement remedial education programmes for them so that they can raise their qualifications and meet the admission requirements. That is what this is all about and it is just unfortunate that the question of targeted recruitment was interpreted in the Social and Economic Policy document as being a policy of lowering admission standards and racial discrimination.

I shall now come to the whole question of young African males because the Members on the other side like to pretend, “eh”. They like to pretend. I have saved this document for last and this document was done by the World Bank. Report No. 20088-TR, *Trinidad and Tobago Youth and Social Development An*

*Integrated Approach for Social Inclusion dated June 2000. Let me repeat. Trinidad and Tobago Youth and Social Development An Integrated Approach for Social Inclusion dated June 2000. This is a document of the UNC, Mr. Speaker. It is a UNC document. [Interruption] “Do not try dat. Do not try dat.” Mr. Speaker, the Change Management Unit of the Ministry of Social and Community Development and representatives of the division of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs worked closely with the mission team. I am reading from the document. I knew they would deny its parentage.*

**Mr. Singh:** Nobody is denying it.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I knew they would deny its parentage so let me repeat that this was done by the World Bank and the Change Management Unit of the Ministry of Social and Community Development under the UNC and the Division of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs under the UNC worked closely with the mission team to develop this document. In other words, the Member for Chaguanas was pivotal to the development of this document. Let us go into the findings of this document.

**Mr. Singh:** Tell us the objectives, please?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I told you, An Integrated Approach to Social Inclusion and let us go in.

“Inequity and quality, absenteeism, dropout and academic performance.

The ongoing educational reform process will eventually remove the physical barrier to inclusion for most youth in Trinidad and Tobago, however, some inequity and quality problems will likely persist in terms of at-risk youth.”

Interesting, “eh”, they also denied the parentage of the term “at risk” but I am reading from a UNC policy document:

“In terms of at-risk youth these issues are critical since they relate closely to absenteeism, dropout and academic performance.”

I am reading from page 12 of the UNC document Trinidad and Tobago Youth and Social Development.

“Students of self declared African origin...

**Dr. Rowley:** Who? Who?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** “Students of self-declared African origin have been significantly more likely to score lower than those of mixed or Indian origin.”

**Dr. Rowley:** In that document?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** A UNC document, UNC document—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** UNC, making reference to race.

**Dr. Rowley:** Making reference to race?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Yes, it is a UNC document.

**Dr. Rowley:** A World Bank document?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** World Bank UNC document.

**Dr. Rowley:** I do not believe you.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The purpose of this study was to define and identify at-risk groups within the secondary and tertiary education system.

**Dr. Rowley:** Of which country?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Of Trinidad and Tobago, done by them; and I will read it again.

“Students of self-declared African origin have been significantly more likely to score lower than those of mixed or Indian origin. This stratification reinforces perceptions of inferiority and low self-esteem among the students who perform poorly.”

[*Interruption*] Students of African origin. But, you see, Mr. Speaker, they wanted to hide this—[*Interruption*—June 2000. [*Interruption*] June 2000, Mr. Speaker. They knew very well and I am only reading one little part of it, you know. This document has 95 pages, and listen to this:

Preliminary comments from the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Who was the government of Trinidad and Tobago in June 2000?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** UNC.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** “It wasn’t me.” It was you, and let me see.

The report recognized that investing in the youth would bring significant social and economic benefits to Trinidad and Tobago. Moreover, it recognized that significant emphasis had to be placed on addressing the plight of at-risk youth.

**Dr. Rowley:** Who were they?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Who were they?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** This is what the government of Trinidad and Tobago was saying in 2000, the UNC government, that significant emphasis had to be placed on addressing the plight of at-risk youth; and here are the strategies—the UNC strategies.

Facilitating access to schooling and retention of youth at risk in school;

Reaching youth outside of the school with additional educational options;

Improving the delivery and quality of training;

Adopting appropriate policy and legislation regarding the regulation of alternatives and reform of social safety net programmes.

Who were the at-risk groups, Mr. Speaker? Who? Young African males. [*Desk thumping*] That is what this document, which was developed by the UNC—Ministry of Social Development identified young African males as the group in the society who are most at risk.

Let me read from page 14:

“Secondary school dropout relates to risk behaviour, adolescence, financial constraints and quality of education. Dropout rates by Form 3 were highest for males, youths of African descent.”

Page 14 in the UNC document, and the published strategy of the UNC at that time was facilitating access to schooling and retention of at-risk youths. So they knew that young African males were the greatest at-risk group within our secondary and tertiary education system but they come in the Parliament and lie and say that they do not know and “is not true” and “is racism”.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, no, you cannot use the word “lie”. Rephrase that, please?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker. They come in this Parliament and tell a tissue of untruths and say that they do not know that young African males are the greatest at-risk groups, asking for documents, asking for research, asking for statistics and it is right in front of their nose. Let me read again:

“In particular the Change Management Unit of the Ministry of Social and Community Development and representatives of the Division of Youth Affairs in the UNC government of June 2000 worked closely with the mission team to develop the strategy of facilitating access to schooling and retention of

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, November 28, 2003

young African males who were declared by them to be the greatest at-risk group in the school system.”

Yet when the same thing appears in a PNM policy document, it is—“dey gone berserk”. [Interruption] Their policy was to target young African males. That is what they said they would do. [Interruption] They never did it, of course—[Interruption]—they never did it, but that is what they said they would do. [Interruption] That is their policy document, but when it appears—[Interruption] You! You were the author of the document. [Interruption] You! [Interruption] You! Mr. Speaker, when the same commentary appears in a PNM document, it is suddenly condemned as racism.

They are the greatest hypocrites who ever held government in Trinidad and Tobago—[Desk thumping]—hypocrites, and I want to give them a warning. Do not come and try to come back, you know. I have 20 documents like this so do not come in this Parliament and try to distort reality, [Interruption] because as you come I will produce the other 19 documents [Interruption] which will show that the UNC administration very well knew that young African males were an at-risk group that needed to be targeted for recruitment and retention in our secondary—[Interruption] I will produce them. You wait. I will produce them. [Interruption] This was never an official document of the government of Trinidad and Tobago? What nonsense!

Comments on report from government of Trinidad and Tobago

**Dr. Rowley:** They have a right to hide now.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** “Hide yuh face!”

**Mr. Narine:** What ministry was involved?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Listen to this.

The report of the World Bank Delegation—

This is June 2000. This is 18 months before their government collapsed under the weight of corruption.

“The report of the World Bank Delegation on Youth and Social Development has been reviewed by staff of the Change Management Unit for Poverty Eradication and Equity Building of the Ministry of Social and Community Development and the general comments of the Director Youth Affairs have also been incorporated.”



It goes on to say that the strategy of the government of Trinidad and Tobago will be to facilitate access to at-risk groups within our school system, and you are trying to tell me this is not your document?

So anyway, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]—“yeah”, go ahead, it is not your document, go ahead, disclaim parentage. So let me move on now, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ramsaran:** “Pass it fuh mih leh mih read it.”

**Hon. C. Imbert:** “Nah, you cyah have it. Go and find it yuhself.”

Mr. Speaker, let me move on. The Member for St. Joseph was also carrying on about the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT) and was pleading with Members on this side, “Doh mention it. Do not talk about the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology.”

**Mr. Singh:** He never said that.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** “Do not get into that contentious debate. Let us go forward. Do not descend into the level that others have gone” and he called names and so on. He said, “Doh go dere, doh go dere.” Well, Mr. Speaker, they like to talk, “eh”. So I have asked for a list of the students enrolled at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology, I got it this morning, so as of November 2003 I have a list of every student enrolled in TTIT. I also have a list of all faculty members at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology and listen to the name of this thing, “eh”. It is the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology. So what we have done—I have names and addresses too, “eh”. So we took a good look at the distribution of students in TTIT. Let me tell you what the facts are.

This is the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology. Four per cent of the students enrolled now at this time are from north-west Trinidad. So 4 per cent of the students are from Diego Martin, Port of Spain, Morvant and Barataria and so on. Eighty-five per cent of the students are from Central and South Trinidad. Eleven per cent of the students are from east Trinidad and 0.5 per cent are from Tobago. So in the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology, Tobagonians “ain’ reach” 1 per cent, it is 0.5 per cent, and people from Port of Spain, Diego Martin [*Interruption*] and the whole corridor, right up to the middle of the corridor, [*Interruption*] 4 per cent, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] Now, what I find disturbing—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, November 28, 2003

**Hon. C. Imbert:** What I find disturbing, Mr. Speaker, is you have the Member for St. Joseph—"I see he turning red." The TTIT was set up under his administration and I do believe he was Minister of Finance when TTIT was established or he became Minister of Finance shortly after TTIT was established and I would like the Member for St. Joseph to explain to me why more than 90 per cent of the students in TTIT established by the UNC are not from one of the major groups [*Interruption*] in the society. I listened carefully to what he said.

He started off by saying the PNM is discriminating against half the population, okay. So I want him to tell me why more than 90 per cent of the students at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology are not from another half of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] Explain that to me, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] I hear them. They say meritocracy. So you are telling me that students from Diego Martin and Port of Spain, 4 per cent—[*Interruption*]—do not have the educational requirements, [*Interruption*] do not have the advanced level passes, do not have the educational requirements, whatever it takes to get into—only 4 per cent of the one quarter of the population of this country—because from Diego Martin—[*Interruption*]

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

**Hon. C. Imbert:** No, I am not giving way to you! You had your chance. I want—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I want the Member for St. Joseph—

**Mr. Singh:** How many people from Diego Martin applied?

**Hon. C. Imbert:**—to tell me, [*Interruption*] explain to me—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Valley:** How many people from Diego Martin knew about it?

**Hon. C. Imbert:**—from Chaguaramas—[*Interruption*]—from Chaguaramas to Curepe—[*Interruption*]—explain to me why from Chaguaramas to Curepe, [*Interruption*] which is one quarter of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, how come only 4 per cent of that—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Singh:** How many applied?

**Hon. C. Imbert:**—could meet the [*Interruption*] required educational standards to enter the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology? [*Interruption*] I want to know why—[*Interruption*]

**3.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin East has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. C. Imbert:** You see, Mr. Speaker, what I find intriguing is that in a UNC document one could say that young African males are underperforming and should be targeted for recruitment, but when that is said, it is not racial. When it is published and printed in a UNC Government policy document it is not racial for them to say that young African males are underperforming and should be targeted for recruitment. They could say that!

**Mr. Singh:** At COSTAATT.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** But the Members on this side cannot say that. I want to know what was the recruitment process for the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology, because what I have not said—and they like to count heads. They have been asking all kinds of questions. They are asking for the names of everybody.

They asked a question of COSTAATT through the freedom of information legislation. I have the letter written to Mr. Kevin Ramnarine, Senior Research Officer to the Leader of the Opposition, dated November 14, 2003. It reads:

“Dear Mr. Ramnarine,

Further to your memorandum, I am pleased to provide, as per your request, the names of the students enrolled in the programmes offered by the constituent campuses of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Okay? And, of course, they asked him to treat the data with confidentiality. But under the freedom of information legislation, the UNC applied to COSTAATT for the names and addresses of every single student enrolled in every single college of COSTAATT. That was November 24, 2003. That was just a couple days ago and they got it. They were given the information on computer-generated printout just like this, because—

**Mr. Singh:** When were they provided with that information?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** November 21, 2003. Mr. Speaker, they were given the status of the student, the name of the student and the city, town or region that the student came from. I will give you an example: Fatima Ackaloo; status, full time, from Cunupia. Okay? So, under freedom of information, they applied and

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

COSTAATT gave them the name, the status and the city or town that the student came from.

I have, Mr. Speaker, the name, the status and the city or town and the students from the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT) have their name, status and their place or town. I have already shown that more than 90 per cent of the students come from areas which are not representative of one of the major groups in this society. Four per cent from Diego Martin and Port of Spain and environs; 85 per cent from South and Central, but let us go to the names.

If one looks at the names, more than 90 per cent of the students who are enrolled at this time under this PNM administration are of East Indian descent. More than 90 per cent of the students enrolled in the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology at this time, November 2003, are of East Indian origin.

What system of recruitment, targeted or otherwise, identified persons for enrolment into TTIT? What system of education? What system of marketing? What system of advertisement? I repeat, what system of recruitment resulted in more than 90 per cent of the students at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology being of East Indian origin?

Are you telling me, Mr. Speaker, that nobody wanted to go to TTIT? Is that what you are saying? Are they telling me that the people of Diego Martin, Port of Spain and Morvant were underperforming and could not get into TTIT? Are you telling me that they did not want to go to TTIT? That they had no interest in accessing tertiary education? I want the Member for St. Joseph to explain this anomaly to me.

**Mr. Yetming:** You are in Government for two years! You tell us!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** This flowed, because this recruitment pattern, these are students who are there now. They are three and four-year degree programmes. A vast majority of these students were recruited under the UNC administration. They just happened to be enrolled in TTIT at this time. They are doing their third year and their fourth year of their Bachelor's Degree programme, and so forth. They were recruited under the UNC, so I want the UNC to tell me what recruitment process resulted in that, because you see, when one goes to count heads, that is the trap that one falls into, because they are telling me it is the catchment area. They are telling me it is who wanted to go and who advertised.

Why, Mr. Speaker, are they interested in the names and addresses of students going to San Fernando Technical Institute and students going to John S.

Donaldson, and so on? Why are they interested in that? Similar arguments could be thrown out: it is the catchment area; it is who wanted to go there, who applied. That is why there is a particular distribution within the COSTAATT community college system? It is the catchment. It is who wants to go. It is who applied. It is who qualified. That is why there is a particular distribution within COSTAATT and they are now presenting the argument to me that it is who applied, who qualified and who wanted to go that went to TTIT.

Let me move on. COSTAATT is a series of community colleges, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, could you ask the Members opposite to cease and desist from their distractions?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Member for Diego Martin East has claimed that he is being disturbed. I never thought he would need protection of that sort, but please continue.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, I want them to hear. I know my Members could hear; I know you could hear. I know the people upstairs, the media and the public gallery could hear, but they do not want to hear. That is why they are making noise.

Let me read out the students enrolled at the east campus of ECIAF, that is the Eastern Caribbean Institute for Agriculture and Forestry. Now that is a COSTAATT community college. That is the place where the hon. Members opposite have declared there is racism. They have declared that there is racism in the enrolment policies of COSTAATT. I have heard them on the platform. I have heard them in the media. They come and read all kinds of articles, and so forth.

I have analyzed the enrolment in the east campus for the Associate in Applied Science in Agriculture at ECIAF, which is a community college within the COSTAATT community college system, and of these individuals currently enrolled in the 2003/2004 academic year, 71 per cent are of East Indian origin and 29 per cent are of non-East Indian origin—under the PNM administration. It seems they want all! That is the only conclusion I could come to.

We have a community college, ECIAF, under the PNM in the COSTAATT community college system, 71 per cent of the students enrolled in ECIAF under the PNM are of East Indian origin but, according to them, we are discriminating and we are practising racism in our enrolment and recruitment policies and practices within COSTAATT. So, the only conclusion one can draw based on the spurious, nonsensical allegations that they have made, that discrimination is being practised

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

at ECIAF, which has resulted in only 29 per cent of the students being of non-East Indian origin and 71 per cent being East Indians. I could only assume so.

You see, that is the danger when one counts heads. When one goes and counts heads and sees that 90 per cent of the students at TTIT are of East Indian origin, 71 per cent of the students on this list from ECIAF are of East Indian origin, only 4 per cent of people from Port of Spain and Diego Martin are enrolled in TTIT. That is the trap one falls into. One falls into the racism trap that the Member for St. Joseph has laid for himself.

I could count heads among the faculty. I look at the faculty members of TTIT. Out of 22 faculty members, 18 are of East Indian origin, four are of non-East Indian origin, including one Chinese. Three Africans, 18 East Indians and one Chinese make up the faculty, the academic staff at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology.

This must be a policy of the PNM. It is the only conclusion I could draw, that the fact that 85 per cent of the faculty members at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology are of East Indian origin and 15 per cent are of non-East Indian origin, under the PNM, but we are guilty of racism, and this is the kind of foolishness, Mr. Speaker, that flows from the foolish Motion that has been brought into this House by the Member for St. Joseph. [*Desk thumping*] Foolishness! Because if we fell into his trap, we should have a policy of affirmative action and we should have targeted recruitment programmes, so we should have quotas.

What we should do, if we were to follow the rubbish that is being proposed by the Member for St. Joseph and the other hon. Members opposite, the nonsense that they are putting forward, if we follow their foolish arguments, we should have a quota system going into TTIT and we should have targeted recruitment and enrolment policies which will reduce the number of East Indians in TTIT from 90 to 43 per cent, or whatever it is, in accordance with the last CSO document, and bring up the persons of African origin from the current 4 per cent, or whatever it is, to 42 per cent, and then the mixed race, we must make sure they are 17 per cent of the persons enrolled at TTIT.

That is the dangerous trap that flows from the nonsensical arguments of the Member for St. Joseph, Mr. Speaker. Because the more and more I dig into the facts, the statistics, the truth, the published research documents, the literature, what is available within the public domain, what is known, as I dig more and more into the system, a pattern emerges which is the complete opposite of the

foolishness that has been spouted in this Parliament today by the Member for St. Joseph.

I want to repeat certain truths, Mr. Speaker. I want to repeat certain basic truths. It has been known for the last 25 to 30 years that there is a problem with male underachievement within our secondary and tertiary education systems. Talk to any serious researcher, and if one looks at the names of the researchers, there is cross-fertilization, whether the researcher is of East Indian origin, African origin, white, Chinese, whatever, it is well-known, documented and published, there is a problem with male underachievement within the secondary and tertiary education system in Trinidad and Tobago.

If we go now to the World Bank document, Mr. Speaker, that was done in collaboration with the UNC Government in June 2000, which was largely influenced and written by the Ministry of Social and Community Development, under the Member for Chaguanas who was then the Minister of Social Development at the time and, also, in charge of the youth division, it has been known in Trinidad and Tobago, at least since June 2000, that young African males are in serious danger of dropping out of our secondary education system and not entering our tertiary education system. This has been known.

It was known by the UNC Government and it is known that young African males have a much higher dropout rate in the secondary system and a much lower enrolment rate in the tertiary system than any other grouping in the society in Trinidad and Tobago. They were deemed to be the primary at-risk group in our secondary and tertiary education system. That was known by the United National Congress.

Those are truths, Mr. Speaker, therefore I reject, absolutely, the entire Motion put forward in this House today so reluctantly by the Member for St. Joseph, because I know he does not really mean this. He is a reluctant bride. He has been dragged to the altar. He was sent to do this, to present this ridiculous notion, this nonsensical argument. I know he does not want to do it. That is why he spent 15 minutes apologizing at the beginning of his presentation.

Really, Mr. Speaker, we can continue with this Motion by counting heads. We can do it. They count heads, we count heads. They count heads, we count heads. Where does that get us? It shows us that in one part of the country there is a certain distribution of enrolment. In another part of the country there is a certain distribution of enrolment. Where is that going to get us? There are other at-risk groups in the society. Another at-risk group, which is the second at-risk group, is

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

rural women. That is also well known. Women from rural areas are an at-risk group. That is well known as well.

It is incumbent on a government and it is incumbent on a nation to seek out the disadvantaged groups within our society. We know that at least two groups in our society are at a disadvantage. One of them is young African males and the other is rural women. Therefore, we have to formulate policies which will help these groups.

We have to target rural women. I have not completed my studies on rural women. I may find out when I finish my studies that rural women of East Indian descent are an at-risk group. Perhaps the Members opposite may be able to tell me, but certainly, if we do a research study, which I intend to do, there is already, as I said, 20 years of published research on male underachievement and African male underachievement, in particular.

I am now going to conduct a study on rural women, because as I read through the documents, I pick up that an at-risk group is women in rural areas. I will do a study and if we discover that women of a particular group in rural areas are at risk, that they are dropping out of the secondary school system—because that is what at-risk is all about. People who drop out of the secondary system and do not enter the tertiary system. If I discover that, then we will develop targeted recruitment programmes to deal with that at-risk group like all other at-risk groups within the society, like they said they will do.

I close, Mr. Speaker, by reading again the policy of the United National Congress Government of June 2000:

“A strategy is recommended which involves the following:

- Facilitating access to schooling and retention of at-risk youth.
- Reaching youth outside of the school with additional educational options.
- Improving the delivery and quality of training and its relevance to the market.
- Adopting appropriate policy and legislation regarding the monitoring and regulation of alternatives.
- The reform of safety net programmes.”

The at-risk group, at that time, however, was young African males.



I endorse this policy, Mr. Speaker. I endorse this policy of the UNC that we should target at-risk groups within the society and we should develop recruitment programmes. I endorse the UNC policy of developing and targeting recruitment programmes for at-risk groups within the society. I hope they will now own up and admit that they too were aware, at least since June 2000, that young African males were the greatest at-risk group within our society.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join this debate on the Motion before us that deals with some very fundamental issues facing our country and, by extension, the global community relating to equality, discrimination and policies to address issues of social marginalization, alienation, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, poverty.

I first want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Member for St. Joseph for having the courage [*Desk thumping*] and tenacity to place this Motion on the Order Paper. I want to congratulate the Member for St. Joseph for allowing the Parliament and the nation to engage in a debate on such a fundamental issue as equality at the workplace, equality in the education system. This takes courage, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for St. Joseph was at pains to point out that it was his wish that this debate will not go in a direction where speakers and Members of this House would take a flashlight and go into every school in the country to look at ethnic origin. The Member was at pains to point out that we should not use this debate to perpetuate hate, division and our own prejudices.

Mr. Speaker, this Member for St. Joseph was at pains in asking us sincerely to keep this debate at a particular level, to deal with issues, to come forward with positive solutions, as he did. He made some recommendations before he finished, but as soon as the Member for St. Joseph completed his task, we on this side knew that the Government took this Motion for a joke: They wanted to turn it into a circus so they sent out the class clown. [*Desk thumping*] He was referred to by a commentator as the class clown to which he wrote a letter in defence of himself.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin East, who fled at this moment, confused us even further. Whereas in the national community, the Prime Minister, who is not here—for him thankfully—his Prime Minister who reshuffled him a few weeks ago, was at pains to point out that this sort of affirmative action and discrimination was not the policy of the Cabinet, the Government or the Prime Minister himself, but the Member for Diego Martin

*Elimination of All Forms Discrimination*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

East, a few days after being reshuffled, comes to the House and defends that policy, affirmed policy of his colleague from Diego Martin West, a policy of racial and gender discrimination. They defend it, and I will get into a discussion later on that matter.

What is the position of the Government? Is it the position of the Member for San Fernando East that affirmative action and discrimination on racial grounds have no room in his Government, no place in his policy agenda? Is that the position? Or is it the position of the Member for Diego Martin East that yes, they must discriminate? They must go in the direction of affirmative action?

Because he took a torchlight and went into one institute to locate how many people, 4 per cent from one place and the rest from another, and so forth, as if in this sort of old-fashioned, traditional way, when one says South and Central, one implies a particular race, and when one says North, one implies a particular race.

Mr. Speaker, with the movement of people in this country today, we can no longer do that. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro knows that. We can no longer do that. Because people are from Central does not mean they are necessarily from one group. Central is today a multicultural, multiethnic community. So is San Fernando.

When he comes to this House and takes that data, wherever he got them from, and makes that type of allegation, he is already perpetuating mischief. Like Cudjoe, he is a public nuisance to come here and do that.

The first question we want to ask is what is the policy of the Government? Is it the policy outlined by the Prime Minister or the policy outlined by the Member for Diego Martin East? They are confused. They are at war. The problem here is that they are at war with their Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin East spent an enormous amount of time, he is the newly appointed Minister in charge of tertiary education. He spent a lot of time reciting from different research papers on underachievement of different groups by gender, ethnicity, and so forth, and so, he is well qualified to speak about underachievement. If anybody could speak about underachievement, it is the Member for Diego Martin East.

So, a qualified Member on underachievement spoke at length about that, but, in the Motion tabled by the Member for St. Joseph, the Motion that the Member for St. Joseph spoke on, we are not denying on this side of the House that there are groups in this society that are achieving more than other groups. That is a fact. The social science research dealt with it. That is not the issue at all.

The Member for Diego Martin East spent an enormous amount of time with paper by the gender committee, paper by this one and that one. That is not the issue. The Member also made extensive reference to a document on the nation's youth which he refused to pass to a colleague on this side of the House. A document, Mr. Speaker, of which I have two copies in my library and, had I known that this Member for Diego Martin East would come here and seek to mislead this House, I would have walked with one copy easily.

Mr. Speaker, if he would allow us to look at that document, which he would not, you would notice that it is a document commissioned by the World Bank and written by consultants in Trinidad and Tobago, not the UNC Government, and to stand in this Parliament and say the UNC document says X, Y and Z is deliberately misleading and causing mischief. Who are the consultants that wrote that document? I know them. I will not call their names and drag them into this type of debate. I know the consultants who authored that report. That report was not written at Rienzi Complex. That is a report sanctioned by the World Bank and they contract out different segments of the report to local consultants.

Mr. Speaker, we are not denying what is in that report. Incidentally, just to put it on the record, when that report was issued, the then Minister of Education—I believe it was the Member for Siparia—had cause to write to the World Bank and the responsible agency for that report to correct certain misleading statements in that report. We did a letter to that effect of which, Mr. Speaker, I was a part, as well, reviewing that document.

I am not at any time in this debate going to deny what the Member read. I am just going to point out that the Member for Diego Martin East sought to mislead us by claiming that the document was printed at Rienzi Complex, when the document is a World Bank document contracted out to local consultants who are familiar to everybody, and they produce a document.

Mr. Speaker, this Member goes on and reads from another document, and I want to indicate one time, any document I am quoting from this afternoon, and in the future, I am prepared to pass immediately to any Member on the other side at the same time that they ask. [*Desk thumping*] So go, find the quote, and then tell me if I am misquoting or misleading, but they do not have that courage because they know they will be caught with their skirts down.

Mr. Speaker, the Member quoted from a document which he claimed purported to indicate that under the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago, there was some provision that sanctioned discrimination or special treatment for a particular group.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Do not go there. I will bring it for you.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, the Member quoted from a document which, of course, he will not allow us to see, because that is not his style. His style is to hide information.

I have in my hand here Act No. 77 of 2000. The Act may be cited as the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 2000, and this Act spells out in detail the objectives of the college. This is the law passed by the UNC administration. Whatever the Member was quoting from, whether he got it from the library, from his research staff, from Cudjoe, from wherever he got it, this is the law of Trinidad and Tobago passed by the UNC, and when he comes to the Parliament and says that the UNC is responsible for something—

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, simply, I want to ask the hon. Member whether that document he is quoting is a policy document or whether, in addition to the legislation, it is likely that there would be a policy document?

**Mr. Singh:** The law crystallizing the policy.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The policy of the UNC Government found its expression in the law of the UNC. [*Desk thumping*] I did not know he needed me to go there. When one writes up policy, one formulates policy, one's law expresses that policy. So the objectives of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts, those objectives are enshrined in law, which represent the position of the UNC Government. Let me read the objectives:

“The objectives of the college are to:

- A. Contribute to national and regional development, social equity and the development of civil society by providing broad based access to socially responsive and innovative educational programmes and by encouraging scholarly work and applied research.
- B. To provide programmes that meet internationally acceptable standards, to foster professional and personal development, to prepare students for careers and for advanced study in the areas of science, technology and applied arts.
- C. To promote a culture of excellence...”

I repeat:

- “C. To promote a culture of excellence by creating and maintaining an academic climate that fosters innovation, discipline, tolerance of diversity, criticism, self-evaluation and peer assessment.
- D. To promote cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect among peoples.
- E. To strive to be a centre of excellence for scholarly work and applied research.”

Mr. Speaker, those are the objectives of COSTAATT. Whatever the Member may have quoted from, whether it is a policy document, empirical research document, whoever may have written that, sadly for him, that did not find its way in the UNC law. [*Desk thumping*] Sadly for him. So we must be clear on this, because they come to the House and go in the garbage bin, pull out a report and come to tell us that is UNC policy. Take the law. This is what the UNC stood for.

The Member for Diego Martin East continued with this blame game that the Government is now engaged in to which the population is becoming fed up. They are there two years in office. If there is discrimination in TTIT, it is their responsibility to deal with it. Do not blame the UNC! Two years they are there! They came in with such moralizing delight to clean up Government. If there is discrimination in TTIT, then they must deal with it. Do not come here and blame the UNC. The population is fed up with that.

Mr. Speaker, when they could not deal with the doctors, they blamed the UNC. When they could not deal with crime, they blamed the UNC. When we had the unfavourable international image portrayed, they blamed the UNC. Yesterday this blame game reached the height of lunacy when the Prime Minister, taking leave of his senses, indicated at a post-Cabinet comedy meeting that the UNC is to blame for bomb threats and death threats. It is the *Express*, November 28, 2003, page three, an article by Priya Beharry:

“UNC is the culprit.

In a not so veiled reference to the UNC, Patrick Manning yesterday blamed the Opposition for the threats to the life of the TSTT Chief Executive Officer, Sam Martin, and other bomb threats across the country.

Manning added...”

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

And I want to quote. These are the words of the Prime Minister:

“Let me remind you and never forget that there is a group in this country that pledged civil disobedience. Let’s remember that, eh.”

Mr. Speaker, this is where they have reached. One would think that after the Cabinet we will get some information on some pressing matter of social and economic importance, on new policies to deal with crime, and so forth, but they chose to talk about the bomb threat and linking it to the Opposition. That is madness of the highest degree. The Prime Minister should really be chained to protect himself.

We want to warn this Government that the population will no longer accept this pious, self-righteous attitude of denying that they are responsible for the problems facing the country and blaming the UNC. The population is not going to tolerate that and they have stopped already.

The Member talked about the TTIT and found his figures for geographical—what he claimed to be some form of geographical discrimination, and so forth—and we would like to tell this Member—and he goes further, which I think is wicked, to find a list of the teachers, the lecturers at these colleges and comes now to tell us that they are of one group. How did they get there? That is wickedness. As another person in this society did a few weeks ago, to talk about one group of teachers not teaching another group of students, that is public wickedness and mischief.

Mr. Speaker, we would simply like to ask the Member for Diego Martin East if it is that those students are there by some wrong means, then deal with it. Did they qualify? Was there a selection process? Were they interviewed? Deal with it! But just to come and hold up the figure is mischief.

At TTIT, it is well known that that institute is supported by the private sector, and the private sector companies in the energy sector, chaired by an energy advisor and close collaborator of their party. So, are they now casting aspersions on the integrity of the private sector associated with TTIT? Atlantic LNG, methanol? Are they now casting aspersions on the private sector collaborators, because that is what they are doing by sneakily suggesting? That there may be some form of discrimination there, they are telling Atlantic LNG and the other partners to that programme that they are deceitful and discriminatory. That is what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, the problem we face here is a problem that I have identified. This Government, this PNM party really cannot adjust to governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. They want to govern this society as if it was the 1960s and '70s. They cannot adjust to the new challenges that face plural societies. They believe that they could continue operating as they did decades ago. Nothing has changed. There is no society-wide consciousness. There is very little communication. People do not assert themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the world has changed, but the PNM has not changed. That is the problem we face today. This is why they responded in that particular way. The Member for St. Joseph never meant that we would come here and search out all the groups and identify who is who, and so on. Never! He was speaking of a higher value.

**Mr. Singh:** He never once mentioned Chinese.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Member for St. Joseph, as the rest of us, we are concerned with the development of this country; we are concerned about using our wealth to promote development; we are concerned with equality. That is what we are concerned with, and discrimination is linked to poverty. Poverty is linked to prosperity. You cannot have economic prosperity, and so forth, if half the population is discriminated against in poverty.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are bigger issues here that they will not address. They prefer to take the torchlight and look in every classroom—that is their approach—not to look at values and ideas; not to engage in a development dialogue.

As I said at the beginning, this issue of equality at work is a global issue. It is not just an issue for Port of Spain, San Fernando, Central and Diego Martin. It is a global issue. It is a challenge facing the whole world. The International Labour Organization (ILO), Mr. Speaker, produced a global report in the year 2003, and I am willing to lend any Member on the other side, if they so wish. They produced a report called *Time for Equality at Work 2003*, in which it is acknowledged that discrimination in one form or another occurs in the world of work every day throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, this report goes on to give concrete examples of cases of discrimination. This report also defines what is discrimination. These are the issues we are about. Creating a society based upon equality, based upon equal treatment, so that the best resources of the country can come to bear on our development thrust.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

This is why, Mr. Speaker, merit, issues of standards are so important to the UNC. This Government has presided in a short period of time over the tumbling, the falling down, the dismantling of standards in this society. It has gotten to a stage where press releases and media advertisements emanating from Government departments printed in the newspapers now use bad English. That is where it has reached.

**Mr. Singh:** Sewage in the water.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Well they use bad pictures as well, but they use bad English. When the Ministry of Education produces an advertisement to publish in the newspaper and the English in the advertisement from the Ministry of Education is bad, well then we have reached. That is it. We know of other shortcomings of that Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, this Government, at every point, is concerned with removing standards. That is what they are concerned about. I want to indicate to the Member for Diego Martin East, and to the Government, that in no way am I suggesting that persons who are high risk, persons who deserve help in one way or another should not get that. There is a difference between distinction and discrimination. [*Desk thumping*] There is a fundamental difference.

What we have been saying for many years now, this type of discussion is enshrined in the Constitution of the UNC. Mr. Speaker, what we are concerned with is really promoting meritocracy and, if it is found—that is the point. If it is found that persons who are high risk, who are underprivileged, who do not reach up to the standard, we must find the policies and the mechanisms and the institutions to lift them up. Do not bring down the bar to catch them. Lift them up to the bar. That is the challenge. So, if you discover that at TTIT 4 per cent of the persons from North or Diego Martin, or wherever, are enrolled there—

**Mr. B. Panday:** Get a new representative!

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Apart from seeking new representation, they must examine why they are not there. Is it because they did not apply? Is it that they did not know this programme was taking place?

**Mr. B. Panday:** Then their representative is not functioning.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Is it that the parliamentary representative is incompetent? We suspect that, but let us find out. Mr. Speaker, is it that they do not meet the grade? Do they meet the bar? Then take action to deal with that. That is what we



are about, but do not reduce your standards to trap people who themselves are not equipped. That is all we are saying.

This thing has nothing to do with searching out people by hairstyle, by name. This has to do with promoting institutions. The mechanisms to ensure equality, equal treatment, and to ensure those persons who do not meet the grade that they can get whatever special help they may need. That is what the issue is here, and that is what they want to avoid, because they want to turn the education system into a social system. That is what they want to do.

They want to turn the education system into a social programme system, where the same way you get the URP, CEPEP, YAPA, DAPA job, that is the same way you could get university, COSTAATT, TTIT and so on. Left to them, they decide on a list for university at Balisier House once per month.

What we are saying is we need transparency, meritocracy and be very clear. Who are the people interviewing students or looking at application forms at TTIT? Find out who they are. Find out why 4 per cent from Diego Martin or Port of Spain are there, but when they promote incompetence and take people at the bottom of the pile and bring down the bar, they end up with a situation where those persons will not be able to spell, to read and to write. Those persons, Mr. Speaker, will not have cognitive ability. Their cognitive ability will be impaired. They will not understand current issues.

Mr. Speaker, a couple days ago I went to a Government building to conduct some business and one guard there saw me and said, "Mr. Minister, how are you?" I said, "Well I am no longer a Minister. That was two years ago." And he said "Oh." There are people in the employ of the Government service who may not even read newspapers.

Mr. Speaker, a couple years ago I was involved in a process assisting the private security industries with recruiting officers; young persons for jobs. This was about 1999. When we asked the young persons who was the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, they said Dr. Eric Williams. When we asked the name of one daily newspaper, they said the *Bomb*. [Laughter] That is where we are. We should not laugh. We live here. That happens when one drops standards.

We are still waiting for the examination results to the promotion of corporal and sergeant in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Force. Exams were done in August 2002 and results are not known as of November 2003. There were two examiners, one got sick. The latest we heard was one examiner lost 200 scripts. I asked whether that was reported to the police. That is where we are.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

Look in the different branches. I do not want to single out a branch of Government to appear to target, whether it is the police, civil servant, teachers, whatever. Look at the Government as a whole and those employed in the Government, and you realize that when you drop standards, you wreck your capacity to induce long-term sustainable development. [*Desk thumping*] That is what the PNM is about. That is what the Government is about. Exactly that.

**Mr. Imbert:** They should raise the standards.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** If anything raises, you will not reach. [*Laughter*] That is the issue we must confront today. In this Motion before us, the Member for St. Joseph outlined that this country is committed to international conventions and international protocols, and so forth, that deal with this issue of discrimination, that outlaws discrimination. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, more than the UN declaration, even before November 1973, do you know in November 1970 on the 26th, two days ago, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago ratified an ILO Convention, as well? It ratified ILO Convention No. 111 dealing with the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. The Government of the day ratified this Convention, and when one does that, one commits one's country to a certain course of action but, more than that, one commits one's country to certain values. One commits one's country to promoting, by way of law, certain values that promote human dignity, equality, democracy and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to read briefly from this Convention that the Government signed in 1970:

“The elimination of discrimination on employment and occupation. This Convention acknowledges that discrimination at work can occur in many different settings, in rural, in urban settings. Discrimination can affect men or women on the basis of their sex, on the basis of their skin color, national extraction, social origin, religion, political opinion...

Discrimination at work denies opportunities for individuals and robs societies of what those people can and could contribute.”

Mr. Speaker, this is a crime, you know. To discriminate is a crime, because one is robbing one's society of the value of human resources. It is a crime.

It continues:

“Eliminating discrimination starts with dismantling barriers and ensuring equality in access to training, education, as well as the ability to own and use resources such as land and credit.”

Mr. Speaker, in this Convention 111 of the ILO, the ILO indicates that:

“Discrimination and employment or occupation may be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination exists when laws, rules, practices are promoted that discriminate on particular grounds such as sex, race...”

So, when one talks about direct discrimination, the Government often jumps up and says “That is not our policy. We do not discriminate. The policy is for everybody. We have the Constitution.”

There is also indirect discrimination. According to the ILO:

“Indirect discrimination occurs where rules or practices appear on the surface to be neutral but, in practice, lead to exclusions. Requiring applicants to be of a certain height could disproportionately exclude women and members of some ethnic groups...”

I am not watching the Member for Diego Martin East.

“...unless the specified height is absolutely necessary to perform the particular job, this would illustrate indirect discrimination.

Equality at work means that all individuals should be accorded equal opportunities to develop fully the knowledge, skills and competencies that are relevant to the economic activities they wish to pursue. Measures to promote equality need to bear in mind diversity in culture, language, family circumstances...”

When we talk about equality, people always jump to race, but there are people who are discriminated against on the basis of their region, whether they are urban or rural, and on the basis of culture.

A professional in Tobago recently brought to the fore, discrimination in Tobago on the basis of those prejudices against persons with HIV/AIDS viruses. Persons who are disabled. Age, Mr. Speaker, in Europe and North America, is also a source of discrimination, that persons after a particular age—they get on in age—feel that they are thrown out of the labour market and discriminated against because of age.

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

In Trinidad and Tobago there is another issue that few people discuss. There are many working women who leave the labour force during that time for child bearing, and so forth, and they have their children and then they want to come back to work later, when they have taken care of the children and they are at a particular age, but there are no job opportunities, even when they are qualified. That is a certain form of discrimination against women who leave the labour market temporarily, but nobody, of course, is interested in that. They want to look into a classroom and check people's heads. That is the level they are at.

Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side who recognize the long-term problem that discrimination will cause, they accuse us on this side of being racist. I want to make a point. The only thing worse than discussing race is not discussing race. [*Desk thumping*] I repeat. The only thing worse than discussing race is not discussing race.

It is really to the credit of this country, to our credit collectively, that we can come to our Parliament and discuss issues of race, and we should not, in any form, be denied that opportunity to raise such important issues. [*Desk thumping*] Because there are countries, Mr. Speaker, where people do not discuss these issues in the Parliament. They discuss them on the streets, in the jungle; they discuss them with weapons, in areas of conflict in the world, whether it is Chile, in Israel, Palestine, Kashmir, India and the Far East. At the heart of those conflicts are issues of inequality, discrimination and exclusion.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended and will be resumed at five after five.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, discrimination and employment-based discrimination are fundamental issues that involve, not just discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, but several other features which impair the development of our human resources, serve to divide populations, and which really have devastating effects on the development of a country. It is not good enough for those on the other side to simply dismiss it away by either blaming the UNC for something done a few years ago, or to come to a sort of crude, naked, raw spotlighting of people's hairstyles and so on. That is simply not good enough for such an important issue like this.

As I said before, this country is committed to international conventions: the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination; the

International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention III on the Elimination of Discrimination, and so on. The country has a commitment to those conventions to ensure that there are laws, policies and institutions in place to protect citizens. The Government would be well advised to ensure that they play a very proactive role in constructing those institutions, so that citizens of all races, male and female, persons with or without disabilities and with or without HIV can have access to institutions to protect their rights which are enshrined in the Constitution. It is clear that the Government will not live up to the expectation of the majority of citizens by way of fulfilling their obligations to ensure that there is equality for all.

Mr. Speaker, I read before from a text called "Time for Equality at Work", which describes discrimination and so on. It is very important to put this in a particular perspective, because it is more than the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). Those on the other side must understand that whether it is direct or indirect discrimination, what is at stake is the development of the country and our human resources. No amount of propaganda, no amount of bacchanal and scandal could take away attention from what the Government is doing in several spheres.

I am the one who raised the issue on the National Entrepreneurship Development Company (NEDCO) during the budget debate. It is very instructive that the Member for Diego Martin East could find the time and make the contacts necessary to get a geographical spread of the student body of the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT). He got that piece of information by virtue of his ministerial position, but those of us on this side have been asking for two pieces of information for a very long time: the list of all the trainees employed with the On-the-Job Training Programme and the list of persons who benefited by virtue of getting loans from NEDCO. It is my information that both lists are available; they are at the ministry. However, when the particular ministers looked at them, they decided that they could not bring that out in the public domain; it might have certain implications. *[Interruption]* That is the state of play, as it relates to that. *[Interruption]* Should I behave like you? No, I will not.

**Mr. Imbert:** Will the hon. Member give way, please? I will help you. Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I saw a question directed to the ministry just a couple of days ago asking for the very information on OJT; the question will be answered. You will get all the information.

**Mr. Singh:** What about NEDCO?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Well, out of all bad cometh good, so we look forward to receiving the names of the OJT recipients. Someone was kind enough to present me with the Trinidad and Tobago National Human Development Report 2000, Youth at Risk, and I got the colour version. This is the report that the Member for Diego Martin East kept in his possession and thought that, like 40 years ago, we would not find it; we would have to write London to get it. Someone was kind enough to give me the report, but it would confirm what I said before. The report was undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Youth at Risk. It was done by consultants dealing with Trinidad and Tobago. The report is finally here.

To come back to the substantive issue, that is, discrimination in the labour market has long-term detrimental effects to an economy. I want to invite Members on the other side to move their minds, their perspective, to shift gears away from ethnic groups and who looks like this or that, and move to economy.

**Mr. Valley:** Our mind was never there.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** You will discover that when you practise any form of indirect discrimination, you hamper economic growth as well. [*Desk thumping*] This Government is very proud that we have oil and gas, and the energy sector registered over 9 per cent growth. [*Interruption*] Repeat that; I want you to stand and say that, please. So you will not stand and put it on the record?

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro made an interesting revelation a couple of seconds ago, indicating that if the economy is growing there is no discrimination. Now that is fascinating, coming from someone who is also the Chairman of the governing party. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Valley:** But Mr. Speaker—[*Member stands*]

**Mr. R. Moonilal:** [*Words expunged*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I am sure you did not mean that remark.

**Mr. Valley:** I am sure you want to take it back.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes; I do not think that he is giving way, but, please, you need to withdraw that remark. Have it expunged, please.

**Mr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw and apologize to my friend from Diego Martin Central. I thought I knew him well enough to insult him like that. [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to the issue raised by the Chairman of the governing party. When you declare that the country is growing in an economic sense, your gross domestic product increases, and that the amount of wealth the country earns means there is no discrimination, that defies all science, not just economics, but logic as well. Discrimination has nothing to do with how much wealth a country produces that way. It has to do with the distribution of that wealth; it has to do with whether you distribute it fairly or unfairly, whether groups in the society suffer. So, hypothetically, if I follow the logic that if you are growing, the country is growing economically, there should be no poverty; but there is poverty.

**Mr. Valley:** They call that a Roy Austin.

**Mr. R. Moonilal:** The issue here is whether you treat all citizens fairly. I am really shocked that the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro would say something like that. I see you smiling; it must be a joke.

Another central issue I want to raise is the issue of poverty; the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro really triggered me there. This Government has proclaimed its commitment to reduce poverty. They have outlined a series of several social programmes to address poverty. It is important to note as well that poverty is connected to employment.

There is a statement I want to put in the record: Poverty elimination is impossible unless you generate jobs and, secondly, the principal route out of poverty is work. The UNC believes that, by the way, and this is why we had a paranoia with education and training, to lift persons out of poverty, because there is a correlation between poverty and educational levels. This is why the UNC government promoted such an aggressive education and training policy. Poverty is connected to work; you come out of poverty by work. If you set barriers and obstacles to people getting employment then you perpetuate poverty as well.

The Government also has a fixation with what it describes, at times, as urban poverty; it is very concerned with the urban poor. But I ask the Government to consider as well the issue of rural poverty, because when we think of poverty we

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

think of these families in cities and towns, they are poor, they do not have enough to buy food and so on, but there are people in the countryside, in rural Trinidad and Tobago, who are poor; who do not have education, training and jobs. I call on this Government; it is high time that we undertake a comprehensive national study on poverty in Trinidad and Tobago.

We have been depending for a long time on the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). Some people come down here, spend two weekends at the Hilton and then write a book on poverty in Trinidad, and we accept that. We say that the findings are this, because these people are bright; they sit in Washington. We must also invest our resources into studying these problems. The last data I know of, in terms of a poverty study, were sometime in 1992 when a study was undertaken. We need to revisit this issue of poverty to understand where is the poverty and what is the type of poverty that we are dealing with, so we can formulate appropriate policies to address the problem. This has gotten progressively worse.

Mr. Speaker, with the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, we now have, what I believe to be, an acute level of rural poverty of people who live in outside cities and are poor, searching for food. The approach of the Government, which has some merit, is to run more hampers. So we increase the number of hampers by 600 per cent, which reach people and help, but that is not sustainable.

**Mr. Valley:** That is not the only approach, and you know that.

**Mr. R. Moonilal:** That is not the only approach. That cannot be your dominant approach, because the rural poor is increasing with the closure of the sugar industry. There are people who own equipment that they rented to Caroni (1975) Limited, to the sugar industry, now they have no means of making an income. They do not live where you see them, in the cities when you drive by, but they are there. So there are stacks of poverty in rural Trinidad and Tobago that we need to address. Unlike my friend on the other side, let us undertake some type of scientific study, driven by our national interest, to understand the problem.

**Mr. Valley:** Why do you not bring a motion?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** That is a suggestion I want to make to my friend on the other side. I advise the Member for Diego Martin East to stop this war with his Prime Minister. He used this debate to continue a dialogue with his Prime Minister. They are still in conflict with the Prime Minister who declared that there is no policy of affirmative action and discriminatory treatment. They came



here and spent 75 minutes promoting that, saying why that was the right policy. He had about 20 pieces of research documents. [*Interruption*] He brought one, but he had 19 more. What he came to do had nothing to do with the Member for St. Joseph's Motion; it had to do with taking on his Prime Minister. Stop using these motions and the opportunity here to promote your own little sectarian party interests; do that at Balisier House. Do not waste time in the Parliament; deal with the Motion before you.

I am hoping that the Leader of the Government, the Prime Minister, would, in due course, get an appreciation of what his new Minister in charge of university education has to say.

Poverty is linked to work. If you prevent people, one way or another, from getting work, you perpetuate poverty, and that would create a contradiction between what you say you want to do and what you actually do. That is one point.

The second point is that I believe that there may be members in this Government who honestly feel that what they are doing is correct. There are some who know that what they are doing is wrong, but there may be Members there who honestly feel that by spending what could be \$1 billion in the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP), Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA) and all these things, would help. Mr. Speaker, I put it to you, that would perpetuate another generation of illiterates, criminals, and persons without the skill and education to get jobs.

Something else is happening in this country: they are creating jobs by way of the public service make-work system. Jobs are not being created in the private sector; wealth is being generated from the energy sector, but jobs are not being created. I have asked the Member for San Fernando East if he could give me a list of about five parlours, outside of the energy sector, that opened since he became Prime Minister. The point is they are not creating jobs in the non-energy private sector. [*Desk thumping*] Manufacturers are not investing; businessmen and women are leaving.

What they are doing is presiding over growth in the energy sector, but they are not creating jobs there. The job you get there is to clean grass around a pipeline. They would then create a system where persons at the lower rung, without skill and education, would depend on—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Williams:** I thank the Member for giving way. I made this statement in the budget debate. We have recognized that countries like ours, which are resource rich, run the risk of falling into something known as “the resource curse”, where they tend to attract only investments in that area of the resource to the detriment of other areas. One of the imperatives that we, as a Government, have taken on board in all the ministries and, of course, clearly also in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, is to foster linkages between the energy and non-energy sectors.

Having recognized the potential for this to happen in countries such as ours, we have to take steps to mitigate against it. We are in the process of finding ways to cause those linkages to happen. As recently as this morning, we spoke to a group of business leaders from one of the larger conglomerates, trying to work with them to find ways to bridge these gaps. It is something that we, indeed, recognize. It does have a name; it is called “the resource curse” and we have to find ways, as a country, to avoid it.

Thank you.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you, Member for Port of Spain South for that information. Is it the resource curse or the PNM curse? There is also something called “the Dutch Disease” that deals with the under-investment in sectors when you have a dominant sector.

We welcome that type of initiative; we must welcome that. But Member for Port of Spain South, while we welcome that initiative and we compliment it, we want to indicate to you and others when you put forward that type of initiative you must also commit yourself by way of institutions and laws to treating citizens fairly. So when you set up the mechanism to create jobs in the non-energy sector, milking off the energy sector as you described it, you have to ensure that the infrastructure is there so that persons who deserve those jobs can access them.

I think the Member for Port of Spain South, who is an engineer, I believe—*[Interruption]* geophysicist, I beg your pardon—would agree that this proliferation of CEPEP and URP will not help us in the long-term. The very courageous Member for Laventille East/Morvant, who made his contribution this morning in the *Guardian* newspaper, agrees with that point, that that will not help in the long-term.

They are also doing something else that is dangerous. The PNM Government realizes that it has a problem with youth: violence in the schools, criminal

elements and so on; so the approach—and I challenge you to debate this approach—is to quickly get activities for young people.

Children nowadays have what is called an activity bag; when you leave them somewhere they have an activity bag; everything is activities and so on. I am now learning about this, Mr. Speaker. The PNM is simply taking all these young people out there, “You are high risk, violent at school, criminal, get a national activity play park,” and you expand your Best Village programme. You have Junior Best Village and all types of cultural programmes, and you expand culture. I commend that. The expansion of culture is commendable. I have no problem with that, but the downside is that you now have children in school sleeping away in the day, because they are tired from last night’s dancing. They are tired from rehearsing, so they are not concentrating in the classroom on math, English and geography, because their energy and focus are on extra-curricular activity, because that is dominant; that is to trap them in hours when they may be prone to delinquency.

**Mr. Valley:** If you were doing some of that, you would be smaller.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And look who is talking too. [*Laughter*] There is a movie about that, *Look Who’s Talking 2*. The point I am making to the Government side, and I wish they would listen, is that you have to be careful that as you create all these extra-curricular activities and invest enormous amounts of money in them, you do not then undermine the formal education system, where the very children you want to get an education to get into the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology, are now preoccupied, their minds are not on school work. They do not do homework, because they have no time, they are rehearsing, dancing and travelling all over the country; and this is Government-sponsored.

While we were in school, not too long ago, when we participated in government-sponsored activity, it was not government-sponsored in that way; the private sector organized drama, debating competitions and so on. So this is another warning for this Government, thinking that it will end poverty and help some group of people by spending a \$1 billion on make-work programmes.

I suggest that this Government come to the Parliament with a National Skills Strategy Bill. [*Interruption*] You should come with some programme of skill development, a national programme so that we can target the groups that are at risk, who need help for skills. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro would know that when you are a player in the global village and jobs are available, people do not want on the application that you played moko jumbie, or that you could beat a

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[DR. MOONILAL]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

hand of tassa. You need certain qualifications to attract certain types of jobs. Your responsibility is to so ensure that those persons get that. They can get the pan, tassa and Indian dance, that is important, but they must get the skill for the world of work. One billion dollars is much too much to spend on these make-work programmes.

NEDCO speaks for itself. To this day, the Government has refused, not delayed, it refuses to give the Opposition the list of those people who received loans. In 63 days I think they spent \$17.5 million giving loans that cannot be more than \$30,000—small loans. Imagine how many loans given away in 63 working days, \$17.5 million. I wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) on the matter, and in his wisdom he referred the matter to the Auditor General to conduct a review. I assumed they would get the list and go through the process with the Auditor General, but that is where the money is going.

If you ask to see the list of NEDCO loan recipients, which is prepared and housed at the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, it will not reach Parliament, for obvious reasons. If they look at that list, they will understand that it is not just an issue of giving away money, it is not to count heads. I said it before, small business development and micro entrepreneurial development are critical. You have a way of taking good ideas and spoiling them. Those are critical policy initiatives, but you create NEDCO; you give away the money.

These are some of the issues that should find themselves on the table when you are discussing discrimination in employment and opportunity. The Member for St. Joseph identified NEDCO in his Motion. We are, again, calling upon this Government to ensure that the Parliament receives the list of all the recipients of NEDCO loans.

**Mr. Singh:** Where is the transparency now?

**Mr. R. Moonilal:** That programme is expected to lose \$100 million in the next year; so \$100 million gone, and we do not know where. We are calling upon the Government again, for the umpteenth time.

I am happy the Minister of Education is present. It was only a couple of weeks ago that a foreign-based person, who professes to be a teacher of some sort, made an attack on citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, on teachers, who, incidentally chose to remain in Trinidad to teach. It is very interesting. The teachers who chose to remain here to teach Trinidadians and Tobagonians were attacked by a foreign-based teacher, who said that teachers of one particular ethnic group were

putting children of another ethnic group at the back of the class. That is tomfoolery of the highest order; I will not even repeat it.

When the teachers of this country waited for the Minister of Education to condemn that statement, no condemnation was forthcoming. So that teachers of all ethnic groups in this country felt insulted. It is not too late, at all, for the Minister of Education to indicate that those views expressed were the views of a lunatic, foreign-based person, who has come back to attend Central Bank functions, and that those were his views and not the views of the Government and Ministry of Education. That is important, otherwise teachers would believe that their Government, the Minister believes this, and that could hurt their morale and spirit, and we are expecting teachers to work, to give their best. I ask the Minister to consider such a statement; it is not too late, and I think it would go a long way.

Again, I want to commend the Member for St. Joseph for having the courage to bring this Motion to the Parliament for debate. I am hoping that the Government will take note and lift the discussion. I just want you to bear in mind that I did not go into detail by pulling a list of people to see who has this name or the other; I am not into that; that is not my style. I was dealing with the issue from the perspective of values and long-term development; that is how I chose to deal with the issue, not to pull a list and look at who is this or that, and they were there before and they are here now. We do have examples. You have to be living on Mars not to know that the population has been reading about all the different people that are all over the government services and ministries.

My final recommendation to the Government is that if they want to ensure that persons have adequate opportunity to access their social programmes, their part-time jobs and what have you—and there are persons who are deserving of that—we are a Parliament, all of us are Members here, it is time that all the offices of Members of Parliament are supplied with application forms and regulations governing the application to all social programmes run by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is not acceptable that constituents must leave all parts of the country to go to offices in San Fernando, Port of Spain, and the cities, or corporation offices, to get application forms. If you supply to the offices of Members of Parliament, there is nothing we can do. We will give somebody to fill out, and tell that person take it to the government agency so it can screen you appropriately. An Opposition cannot help anybody directly or discriminate or anything, all we would do is, “This is the form for OJT, CEPEP, URP, fill it out and ensure the information is correct.” You could still have your system with its checks and balances.

**Mr. Narine:** Why did you not do that?

**Mr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, we always reach this point: “Why did you not do that?” Okay, we did not do that, full stop. Why are you not doing it? Oh, you are going to wait for the next five years.

**Mr. Narine:** You have all the bright ideas now.

**Mr. R. Moonilal:** Well, punish me for having bright ideas. Mr. Speaker, again, I am hoping that the response on the Government side will move above the level of the Member for Diego Martin East and focus on issues, and come to the Parliament prepared to discuss this issue in a serious way, to discuss the underpinning issues and not come here to make this kind of race discussion in such a crude and raw way.

Thank you.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, December 05, at 1.30 p.m. I inform my colleagues that on that day we would be, first of all, doing the Motion with respect to the Integrity in Public Life (Prescribed Forms) Regulations as well as the Integrity in Public Life (Furnishing of Information) Regulations.

Secondly, we will debate the Occupational Safety and Health (No. 2) Bill. Thirdly, we will debate the National Housing Authority Vesting Bill.

Mr. Speaker, time permitting, we would also want to do the Sentencing Commissioning Bill, 2003.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, before I put the question on the adjournment, there is one matter which the House has agreed to do, and that is a motion in the name of the Member for Nariva.

#### **Biche High School (Delay in Opening)**

**Mr. Harry Partap (Nariva):** Mr. Speaker, the matter I wish to raise in this honourable House this evening relates to the Government delay in opening the Biche High School, which is causing serious inconvenience to the children of secondary school age in Biche and its environs. Apart from the inconvenience, the delay in opening the school is a financial burden on parents, not to mention

*Biche High School (Delay in Opening)*

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

the psychological and physical exhaustion of the children who must now travel outside their community for secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, the secondary school was constructed in Biche by the UNC government headed by the distinguished Member for Couva North, against the background of children having to leave their homes around half past four on mornings to await transportation to secondary schools outside Biche. These children return home well after 7 o'clock on evenings. They travel to Sangre Grande, which is 17 miles to the north; Rio Claro, which is 17 miles to the south; Mayaro, which is 30 miles to the southeast and, in some cases, Toco, Princes Town and Arima. That was the legacy of the PNM during their 34 years in government prior to being handed government again in December 2001, as a gift from President Robinson.

In their third incarnation, the PNM wants to turn back the clock on the children of Biche by putting them through the trauma of seeing a state-of-the-art secondary school right in their village, which they cannot attend because of political spite and victimization. There are cases now in Biche where children of secondary school age are unable to access secondary school education, because their parents cannot find the money to pay for transportation and other costs. The school bus system offered by the Government is both inadequate and unreliable.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side, side with the parents of the children of Biche, and are convinced that the PNM Government is playing politics with the future of the children of Biche.

You will recall that both the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and the hon. Member for Diego Martin East used a bogus report by one Kenrick Burgess, to vilify and crucify the UNC government over its construction of the Biche High School.

**Mr. Singh:** \$90,000 a month Burgess!

**Mr. H. Partap:** Mr. Burgess made it appear that this bogus report had the concurrence of his principals at the Inter-American Development Bank. That was an insidious untruth. In fact, Mr. William Robinson, the IADB representative, was quoted in the *Trinidad Guardian* of March 08, 2002 as saying:

“The bank is satisfied with measures the Government...”

Meaning the UNC government.

“put in place to address those issues.”

*Biche High School (Delay in Opening)*  
[MR. PARTAP]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

And there were issues of cost and quality control.

“The IADB will continue its commitment to the programme.”

That was Mr. Robinson.

Mr. Speaker, both the Member for Diego Martin East and the Member for Diego Martin West went throughout the length and breadth of this country and vilified the UNC. Incidentally, God does not sleep; that is a truism. You see what happened to both hon. Members; they were put under heavy manners in the Cabinet reshuffle; a tribute to their incompetence. That translates into big in mouth and noise, but short in performance and vision. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

As it turned out, the Burgess report was a self-serving document, designed to discredit the UNC government secondary school building programme in rural communities. Mr. Burgess, as is now common knowledge—it is known throughout the country—was rewarded for his sleaze report with a \$90,000 a month job at the Ministry of Education, when the PNM was handed office by President Robinson.

**Mr. Imbert:** “He give we, yes.”

**Mr. H. Partap:** It is unfortunate that there are people in our society who are prepared to sell out the poor, innocent children of Biche for a political office [*Desk thumping*] or a \$90,000 a month job. The PNM Government should hang its head in shame. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, if the Member would give way. I want to know whether the Member is, in fact, reading or if he is making copious references to his notes.

**Mr. H. Partap:** Mr. Speaker, I hope you will give me injury time.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here now assuming that there was any collusion by anyone in this honourable House to deprive children of Biche of their constitutional right to a school in their community; that is left to conscience. I simply wish to draw from the writings of St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 24, verse 6. This is what St. Paul said:

“And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.”

Some 16 months after the vicious campaign against the school, the Biche High School has not collapsed. The Biche High School has not been blown to



*Biche High School (Delay in Opening)*

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

bits by gas emissions, as predicted by the few voices of doom and gloom, including both the Members of Parliament for Diego Martin East and Diego Martin West. Nobody died from poisonous toxic gases.

**Mr. Imbert:** Because nobody is there.

**Mr. H. Partap:** Indeed, there is a whole village on the periphery of the school, and it has been there for over 100 years. Added to that, there is a primary school on the periphery of the high school, and it has been there for over 80 years. There are no cracks on the seven-building complex, no poisonous gases, no explosion. The Biche High School is as solid as a rock. [*Desk thumping*]

In fact, the only explosion is that the Commission of Enquiry set up by the President, on the advice of the Prime Minister, has exploded in the Prime Minister's face. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] We on this side are convinced that the Commission of Enquiry into the construction of the Biche High School had nothing to do with gas emissions; it had nothing to do with landslips; it had nothing to do with the collapse of the seven-building complex; it had nothing to do with any explosion. We believe that it had everything to do with finding evidence to nail one or more members of the UNC Cabinet for negligence.

Mr. Speaker, this is what the Terms of Reference of the Commission of Enquiry had been, and I am quoting from the *Guardian* of April 25:

- “To advise and report (which were made available to the Government and/or the relevant Ministers of the Government) concerning the suitability or unsuitability of the site for the construction of the said school;
- The consideration, if any, given by the Government and/or the relevant Ministers of Government of the said advice and report and the action, if any, taken by the Government or the relevant Ministers of Government of the said advice and report.”

Clearly, the Commission of Enquiry was designed to nail and jail UNC Cabinet ministers.

The PNM had placed some urgency on appointing the Commission of Enquiry, so that within three months of being handed office by the President they appointed the commission. It is now 16 months since the commission has reported and handed in its report, and the report is a mystery: sometimes lost; sometimes found.

**Mr. Singh:** Scandalous!

**Mr. H. Partap:** We need answers. The people of Biche deserve answers, because they are the ones hurting. [*Desk thumping*] Why was the urgency in appointing the Commission of Enquiry not extended to making the report public? Did the lone commissioner find something that has backfired in the face of the PNM? Has the Commission of Enquiry found the project consultants, Trintoplan, culpable? Which member of the PNM has an interest in Trintoplan? Is the PNM Government protecting persons or firms fingered by the lone commissioner? We do not know, so we need answers, because the continued closure of the Biche High School is causing serious inconvenience to the children of Biche. In the absence of the report, we are left to speculate.

One thing we on this side know, if the lady commissioner had pointed fingers at any minister in the former UNC Cabinet as being culpable, the PNM would have made a song and dance about it. The PNM would have crucified the UNC. There would have been no end to the insults, vilification and condemnation of the Member for Couva North and the UNC. We know that, therefore, we are sure that the commissioner has not found anyone on this side culpable.

The UNC government was very thorough; I want to repeat that. We on this side were very thorough in dealing with the situation that developed at the school site. The Ministry of Education, when advised of the situation, assembled a team comprising Trintoplan consultants, Petrotrin, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, the Environmental Management Agency and the Maintenance Training and Security (MTS), and several tests were conducted by Cariri, PAHO, Kaizen Environmental Services of Canada and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

Mr. Speaker, in August 2001, a final report from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries was submitted to the UNC Cabinet. That report viewed all the data to date, at the time, the geology and environmental considerations, and concluded that the site was suitable, that the school was structurally sound, and, from an environmental standpoint, that the school was safe.

What the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries had recommended was remediation work to be done, and the work did commence. We know that the work did commence. I must point out that the UNC government had agreed to contract a firm to monitor the site and rehabilitate the slopes, when it was eased out of office by the then President. The actions we were prepared to take to rehabilitate that site were indirectly supported by Miss Andrea Abel, a civil

*Biche High School (Delay in Opening)*

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

engineer, in her testimony before the Commission of Enquiry. She had said that there were well-known engineering solutions to the problems on the site. Unfortunately, 23 months later, and an expenditure of \$1.2 million on the Commission of Enquiry, the PNM is now resorting to the same recommendations by the UNC Cabinet to rehabilitate the site.

Suddenly, the Biche High School is no longer an urgent matter for the PNM. Perhaps, Madam Minister, who is here today, will tell us that the tenders are out and they will go for international tendering and so on. This was in June, it is now six months and we have heard nothing. On behalf of the people of Biche, I am appealing to the Minister to please open the school.

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Mr. Speaker, the matter before the House of Representatives reads as follows:

“Government’s delay in opening the Biche High School thereby causing serious inconvenience to the children of secondary school age in Biche and its environs.”

In September 2002, Cabinet noted the observations of the Commission of Enquiry into the circumstances surrounding the construction of the Biche High School on the present site. Cabinet also accepted the recommendations of the above mentioned Commission of Enquiry set out hereunder, that:

1. Environmental impact assessments be done on all sites where schools are to be located so as to ensure that those whose responsibility it is to construct schools, be as fully informed as possible of any potential or inherent hazards, and to make adequate provision for minimizing or mitigating any such hazards;
2. Cabinet agreed to the recommendation that there be proper staff provided for the Secondary Education Modernization Programme Coordinating Unit, (SEMPCU) or any other organization whose job it is to oversee the construction of schools; and
3. Cabinet agreed to the recommendation that there be greater consultation between the project management and construction management agencies and the Secondary Education Modernization Programme Coordinating Unit.

*Biche High School (Delay in Opening)*  
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

The Commission of Enquiry also recommended that the following activities must be completed before the Biche High School can be safely occupied:

- (a) All the reports must be studied in their entirety, especially those reports which recommend that the school not be opened for health and environmental reasons;
- (b) There be continuous air monitoring under the supervision and direction of the Environment Management Authority (EMA) and/ or the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO);
- (c) There must be proper assessment of the soil conditions to address the issue of water in the soil, which is thought to be contributing to the undermining of the support of the foundations; and
- (d) An investigation must be conducted by structural engineers in respect of—
  - (i) the integrity of the present structures;
  - (ii) whether any measures which have been suggested in the past have any value; and
  - (iii) that the cause of the cracks on the building must be looked at.
- (e) Any effort at mitigation must be taken into consideration primarily in the interest of the children for whom this school was built and the cost thereof.

So based on the recommendations of the Commission of Enquiry, the Ministry of Education has undertaken the following measures, to date, with respect to the Biche High School:

Environmental Impact Assessment:

- (1) Draft Terms of Reference were completed and a meeting held with representatives from the Environmental Management Agency to obtain their input as required by the Cabinet. A site visit with the EMA was conducted on December 19, 2002 and the EMA reviewed the draft document and submitted their comments on December 24, 2002.
- (2) Final Terms of Reference were prepared and submitted to Cabinet for approval on January 23, 2003, and February 2003. Cabinet accepted the Terms of Reference and recommended that offers be invited for conducting an environmental impact assessment study at the Biche High School.

- (3) Tenders were invited locally for conducting an assessment study of the school. Tenders closed on July 03, 2003; two tenders were received.

Following queries as to limiting the tendering process to local firms to be considered by us, the Ministry of Education decided that these tenders be cancelled and tenders be invited internationally. [Laughter] That was communicated to the Central Tenders Board via memorandum dated October 29, 2003. The Ministry is in the process of revising the tender bid package for submission shortly to the Central Tenders Board. Given the tendering procedures and the complex nature of investigations, the ministry has been advised that the entire process could be completed by the end of the year 2004.

Staffing of the Secondary Education and Modernization Programme Coordinating Unit: The staff establishment of the SEMPCU comprises 29 positions; 18 professional and 11 administrative and clerical positions. During the last year, eight new employees have been hired for the SEMPCU including a monitoring and evaluation specialist and a procurement specialist. In addition, the Education Facilities Management Unit of the Ministry has been restructured to include positions requiring a mix of skills in project management, engineering and strategic planning.

To date, four senior officers have been engaged. In addition, a technical director, a project manager and a facilities manager will soon be joining the division on consultation. [Laughter] With respect to the matter on consultation, a programme board consisting of senior officials of key divisions of the Ministry of Education has been established to oversee the construction programme of the ministry. This programme board will liaise on a continuous basis with the agencies providing project management services to the ministry, for example, the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC) and MTS.

Replacement of students—the Minister of Education is concerned that the determination of whether the Biche High School could be safely occupied by students and teachers should be scientifically and properly undertaken, and that the matter of the occupation of the Biche High School be brought to closure as quickly as possible. The Ministry of Education has reviewed all the reports which were presented, and agreed with the strong recommendations that the school not be opened for health and environmental reasons.

In the interim, in fulfilment of its obligation to provide school places for all students writing the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA), the Ministry of Education has placed all the students who might have been assigned to the Biche

*Biche High School (Delay in Opening)*  
[SEN. THE HON. H. MANNING]

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

High School in the following schools, according to their residential address: Manzanilla High School, Rio Claro High School, which is a new school that has just been opened; the Sangre Grande Junior Secondary School and the Cumuto High School.

In addition, transportation facilities have been provided for these students. The Government has increased the support for transportation to \$30 million annually, ensuring that more children are transported by school transportation methods.

Thank you.

#### CONDOLENCES

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, as I had indicated earlier, we observed the passing of Sen. Arnim Smith; I will now call on the hon. Member for Caroni East to say a few words.

**Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East):** Mr. Speaker, I see that as a break in the protocol; normally the Leader of Government Business leads off, but that is beside the point.

The passing of any parliamentarian is, in itself, a sad occasion. For someone in his late 50s to have died under the circumstances in which there was no forewarning, really, there is a great tragedy in those circumstances.

Former Sen. Arnim Smith served this country in several capacities, including that of the President of Pan Trinbago, in which his achievements were highlighted by Terry Joseph in a serial article entitled “What a Life”, pointing to the impact that Sen. Smith had upon Pan Trinbago locally, regionally and internationally. He was a cultural icon within the pan fraternity.

#### 6.05 p.m.

When one reads about Arnim Smith and his life coming from, as he indicated, fighting with the corbeaux in the “La Basse” to occupying a senatorial position in the Senate of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, becoming a successful businessman, a director of Warnerville Grain Mills Limited and to listen to Arnim and the sincerity with which he spoke about his trouble and his feelings for poor people, and the fact that he did not seek any kind of particular concession in order to lift himself; he lifted himself by virtue of, dint of his personal effort.

Mr. Speaker, Arnim Smith celebrated his life and there is no better phrase—as I sat here I thought about William Blake’s *Allegories of Innocence* where he said:

*Condolences*

*Friday, November 28, 2003*

“To see the world in a grain of sand, heaven in a wild flower, to hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour.” Clearly, Arnim Smith will be eternally remembered in Trinidad and Tobago.

Arnim attended caucus with us on a Wednesday, which I chair on a weekly basis, and his contribution at the political caucus always had a perspective for the very poor amongst us. Up to his untimely passing, Arnim was engaged in the removal, or attempt to remove discrimination in the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, Members on the other side, in particular the Member for Diego Martin East, cannot contemplate his own mortality. The fact of the matter is, we all must contemplate our own mortality, or in a sense, immortality, and the legacy of Arnim Smith would be one that will live on and he would be eternally remembered in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to—as we have done on this side—extend condolences to his family and children. Thank you.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I join my colleague on the other side in offering condolence to the family and friends of the late Sen. Arnim Smith on behalf of all the Members on this side.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I, too, would like to join in expressing condolences on behalf of the Office of the Speaker to the family of the late Sen. Arnim Smith. Much has been said about him, may he rest in peace. I now ask Members to rise for a minute’s silence.

*The House stood.*

I would also direct the Clerk, on behalf of the House of Representatives, to write to the wife and relatives of the late Sen. Arnim Smith expressing our deep condolences.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.11 p.m.*