

Paper Laid

Friday, December 12, 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 12, 2003

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PAPER LAID

Connecting to the Future—Trinidad and Tobago's National ICT Strategy. [*The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Jamaat al Muslimeen
(Money Owed to State)**

11. Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*) asked the hon. Attorney General:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) The exact amount of money owed to the State by Abu Bakr and the members of the Jamaat al Muslimeen (as a result of the destruction of State property during the attempted coup in July 1990) pursuant to the judgement (including interests and costs) of the Honourable Mr. Justice Joseph Tam dated January 15, 2001;
- (b) What steps, if any, has the State acting through the Attorney General, taken to enforce this judgement since the conclusion of this matter on May 10, 2002 when the Court of Appeal dismissed the Jamaat's appeal?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie): Mr. Speaker, the question has two parts. Justice Tam by his Order in favour of the State, arising out of HCA 2292 of 1994, that is the Attorney General—

Mr. Speaker: One minute please. Hon. Member, this question is in the name of the Member for Siparia so perhaps you could ask your question and if she comes in later on I will permit her to proceed.

Mr. Singh: Very well, Mr. Speaker.

**Water and Sewerage Authority
(Details of Foreign Travel)**

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

- (a) Could the Minister provide the House with the details of cost to the State and/or the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) of the foreign travel of Members of the board and employees of WASA for the period June 2002 to October 2003?
- (b) Would he provide a detailed list of the persons who travelled and the dates of their foreign trips and indicate the purpose of each foreign trip and the benefit to WASA?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Mr. Speaker, this question also has a part (a) and (b).

WATER AND SEWERAGE AUTHORITY

INFORMATION WITH RESPECT TO DETAILS OF COST TO THE STATE AND/OR
THE WATER AND SEWERAGE AUTHORITY (WASA) OF PERSONS WHO TRAVELLED,
THE DATES OF THEIR FOREIGN TRIPS, THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIPS AND BENEFIT
TO WASA

JUNE, 2002 TO OCTOBER 31, 2003 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|---|------------------------|--|---------------------|---|---|-------------|------------------|
| To attend AWWA (American Water Works Association) Annual Conference and Exhibition | New Orleans, USA | 16 th – 20 th June, 2002 | Sharon Taylor | Regional Manager, Water Supply | Exposure to most recent techno- logies and R&D in the water and waste- water sector | \$22,551.06 | N/A |
| | | | Leslie Figaro | Asst. Director, Water Delivery (Ag) | | \$22,551.06 | N/A |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|-------------|------------------|
| To attend 54 th Human Resource Conference of the (SHRM) Society of Human Resource Managers | Philadel phia, USA | 20 th -27 th June, 2002 | Jennifer Cudjoe- Brathwaite | Manager, Human Resource Planning & Develop- ment | Opportunity to network and receive HR tool, tips and techniques that will help to change the effectiveness of HRM in the workplace | \$14,206.17 | N/A |
| 20 th Annual Conference of Caribbean Accountants | Nassau, Bahamas | 27 th -29 th June, 2002 | Shirley Jack | Manager, Finance | Details on the expected challenges of the profession in the region and global perspective | \$7,097.34 | N/A |
| | | | Wilbert Harris | Ag. Head Internal Audit | | \$7,116.58 | N/A |
| ESRI- International User Conference | San Diego, Califor nia | 5 th -12 th July, 2002 | Annamay Mc Milan Haynes | Regional Manager North | Enables the increased competency of users and exposure to the state of the art. | \$30,724.00 | N/A |
| Visit to ACIPCO facilities | Alabama, Georgia | 15 th – 18 th July, 2002 | Julia Warner- Etienne | Manager, Construction Services | To visit pipe manufactur- ing facilities to examine and evaluate prospects for doing business | \$2,823.10 | ACIPCO |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|---|----------------------|--|----------------------|--|--|-------------|--|
| Workshop on Climate Change and Integrated Resource Manage- ment | Dominica | 22 nd – 24 th July, 2002 | Errol Grimes | Chief Executive Officer | ” | \$3,194.56 | ” |
| | | | Ricardo Ramdin | Manager, Water Resources Agency | To address the impact of climate changes on integrated manage- ment of water, agriculture, forestry and land- use in the Caribbean | N/A | World Meteoro- logical Organi- sation (WMO) |
| To attend 4 th Annual Caribbean Commercial Law Workshop | Bahamas | 25 th –27 th August, 2002 | Dion Abdool | Manager, Legal Services | Update in terms of recent events and developments and the implications for practice/ application of commercial law in the region | \$12,248.49 | N/A |
| 75 th Annual Water Environ- ment Federation Exhibition and Conference | Chicago, Illinois | 27 th Sept. – 02 nd Oct., 2002 | Claudette Goddard | Quality Assurance Manager | Exposure to new products, technology and a great opportunity for networking | \$21,867.30 | N/A |
| | | | Sandra Sammy | Ag. Manager | Exposure to new | \$7,401.33 | |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship | |
|---|------------------------|---|---------------------|---|--|-------------|---|---|
| CWWA (Caribbean Water & Wastewater Association) Annual Conference | Castries, St. Lucia | 07 th – 11 th October, 2002 | Andy St. Clair | Environment and Regulations Asst. Manager, Delivery Corporate Planning | techniques and networking with professionals in the water and wastewater sector ” | \$7,401.33 | N/A | |
| | | | Carol Doyle | Asst. Manager, Delivery | ” | \$7,076.25 | | |
| | | | Errol Grimes | Chief Executive Officer | ” | \$11,117.58 | | ” |
| | | | Peter Hackett | Asst. Manager, Water Supply | ” | \$ 7,390.33 | | ” |
| “Agua para las Americas en el siglo XXI” – International Conference – Water for the Americas in the 21 st Century | Mexico City | 08 th – 11 th October, 2002 | Godfrey Ventour | General Manager, Business Services | Exposure to new techniques and updates in the water industry | \$ 5,238.95 | JOINT Global Water Partners/ World Water Council/ IWRN | |

Oral Answers to Questions
[HON. P. BECKLES]

Friday, December 12, 2003

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|----------|--|---------------------|--|--|-------------|--|
| Regional Coordinator's Meeting | Geneva | 28 th October –01 st Nov. 2002 | Wayne P. Joseph | General Manager, Operations | To participate in discussions pertaining to governance and manage- ment together with developing Country and Regional Plans for its membership. | \$6,842.00 | Water Supply And Sanita- tion Collabora- tive Council |
| To attend Water Portal Workshop | Florida | 20 th –25 th October, 2002 | Wayne Clement | Hydro- logical Systems Analyst (WRA) | To construct a water portal for T&T National IHP Committee as part of the international Unesco Programme | \$ 6,998.00 | N/A |
| | | | Jonathan Adams | Commis- sioner | Be in a better position to plan for future operations and maintenance of wastewater facilities, both from a Human Resource and Technical standpoint | \$ 5,454.83 | Earth Tech |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|---|----------|---|--------------------------------|---|---|-------------|--|
| Tour of Wastewater Treatment Plants in the United States of America | USA | 24 th — 29 th Nov., 2002 | Errol Grimes | Chief Executive Officer | ” | \$ 5,454.83 | ” |
| | | | Paul Taylor | Deputy General Manager, Business Services | ” | \$ 3,817.00 | ” |
| | | | Denise Lee Sing- Pereira | Strategies Develop- ment Manager (Project Manager) | ” | \$ 4,888.02 | ” |
| | | | Burton Samuel | Senior Engineer, Maintenance | ” | \$ 4,888.02 | ” |
| “Strategies for Effective Training Manage- ment” | Dominica | 09 th – 11 th Dec., 2002 | Kimlin Austin | Training Officer | Benefit from knowledge, pertaining to Training and Develop- ment | N/A | Caribbean Basin Water Manage- ment Project (CBW MP) |
| | | | Ricardo La Caille | Senior Engineer, GIS | To gain first- hand information – re: inspection of screens for use in Beetham Wastewater Treatment Plant | \$ 2,645.58 | Biwater Inter- national |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|---|---|---------------------|---|--|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Visit to Biwater International (GreenBay Wastewater Treatment Plant) | Green Bay Wisconsin, USA | 13 th – 15 th January, 2003 | Oswin Morris | Asst. Director Operations | ” | \$2,645.58 | ” |
| IADB (Inter American Develop- ment Bank) Seminar on the Applications of Economic Instruments in Water Manage- ment, hosted by the Environ- mental Division of The Sustainable Develop- ment Dept. | IADB Head- quarters, Washing- ton D.C. | 25 th February – 1 st March, 2003 | Errol Grimes | Chief Executive Officer | Training in the applications of Economic Instruments in Water Manage- ment | \$11,755.80 | Airfare Sponsored by IADB |
| Flood Early Warning Systems | Columb ia | 17 th – 18 th February, 2003 | Wayne Clement | Hydro- logical Systems Analyst | Internal benchmark- ing into system/ Best Practice | \$ 1,793.00 | Vivendi |
| Visit to Grenada National Water Authority | Grenada | 06 th – 07 th March, 2003 | Oswyn Edmund | General Manager, Tobago Services | To identify methods of metering most applicable to Trinidad & Tobago, | \$ 3,099.22 | N/A |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|---|-----------------|--|---------------------|---|--|-------------|---|
| To tour water and wastewater facilities at Vivendi – a leading French International Water Utility | Columbia | 25 th – 28 th March, 2003 | Godfrey Ventour | General Manager, Business Services | drawing from the excellent Metering programme of the Grenada National Water Authority. Exposure to technology/ manpower systems used by Vivendi, for developing internal benchmarking systems. To determine best practice methods being employed in the region. | \$ 1,716.00 | Vivendi |
| | | | Leslie Figaro | General Manager, Corporate Service | „ | \$ 1,716.00 | „ |
| To attend the First meeting of the Steering Committee SIDS, IWCAM (Integrated Watershed | Havana, Cuba | 04 th – 07 th March 2003 | Steve Fletcher | Ag. Director, WRA | Development/ demonstra- tion project for environmental manage- ment of the region. The Water | \$ 1,064.53 | UNEP (United Nations Enviro- ment pro- gramme) and CEHI |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|--|--|---------------------|--|--|-------------|---|
| To attend 6 th International Symposium on Water Supply Technology and 3 rd World Water Forum | Kobe, Shiga Koyoto & Osaka, Japan | 16 th – 23 rd March, 2003 | Micheal Mohammed | Commissioner | Facilitate better planning for the future operations and maintenance of water supply systems/ facilities | \$21,786.50 | Japan inter- national Corpor- ate Agency (JICA) |
| | | | Wayne Joseph | General Manager, Operations | ” | \$21,786.50 | ” |
| To attend National Focal Point Meeting | Peru | 05 th – 09 th June, 2003 | Keith Meade | Manager, Water Resources Agency | To strengthen IWRM (Inter American Water Resources Network) by leveging the experience and knowledge acquired through the execution of the global | \$ 1,574.00 | N/A |

Oral Answers to Questions
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Friday, December 12, 2003

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|------------------------|--|----------------------|---|--|-------------|--|
| To attend Technical exchange of Information Programme | Martin- ique | 23 rd – 27 th , June 2003 | Wayne Joseph | General Manager, Operations | environment facility GEF projects under its operational programme of international waters. To determine the best practice methods being deployed in these territories and the ability to replicate these successes in a WASA context. | \$ 2,706.61 | Chamber of Com- merce Martin- ique |
| | | | Leslie Figaro | General Manager, Corporate Service | ” | \$ 2,706.61 | ” |
| | | | Claudette Goddard | General Manager, Operations | ” | \$ 2,706.61 | ” |
| To attend American Water Works Assoc. (AWWA) Annual Confer. and Exhibition | Anaheim, California | 15 th –18 th June, 2003 | Errol Grimes | Chief Executive Officer | To determine the best practice methods being deployed in these territories | \$ 8,421.31 | Montgo- mery Watson Harza (MWH) |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|-------------------|--|----------------------|--|--|-------------|---|
| | | | Leandra Ramcharan | Commissioner | and the ability to replicate these successes in a WASA context. | \$ 8,421.31 | Montgo- mery Watson Harza (MWH) |
| | | | Brian Williams | Deputy General Manager, Tobago Services | | \$ 8,421.31 | |
| | | | Sandra Sammy | Deputy General Manager, Corporate Services | | \$ 8,421.31 | N/A |
| Tour of Bewater Wastewater Facilities | United Kingdom | 29 th June – 06 July, 2003 | Sandra Pramesar | Commis- sioner | To examine alternative staffing methods in water and wastewater plant operations. Intensive hi-tech and with low staffing levels. (component of Beetham Wastewater treatment contract). | \$ 5,174.00 | Bewater Inter- national (compo- nent of Beetham Waste- water treat- ment contract). |
| | | | Errol Grimes | Chief Executive Officer | ” | \$ 5,174.00 | ” |
| To attend Bewater Wastewater | United Kingdom | 29 th June – 06July, 2003 | David Boyce | Deputy General Manager, | Exposure to principles | \$30,466.00 | N/A |

Oral Answers to Questions
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Friday, December 12, 2003

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|---|------------------|--|---------------------|---|--|-------------|--|
| Facilities and the FIDIC Seminar (an inter- national training course) | | | Paul Taylor | Business Services Deputy General Manager, Business Services | and practices re: Inter- national Contract Manage- ment Exposure to practices re: Inter- national Contract Manage- ment | \$30,466.00 | N/A |
| To attend 8 th Session of the Regional Association IV, Working Group Hydrology | Santa Domingo | 14 th – 18 th July, 2003 | Ricardo Ramdin | Manager, Water Resources Agency | Interaction with professional in the field of hydrology allowing exchange of information and ideas. Understand- ing the working group functions and linkages with WMO. Identifica- tion of activities which would have an important repercussion in water projects. | \$ 1,888.95 | World Meteoro- logical Organ- isation (WMO) |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|-------------------|---|---------------------|--|---|-------------|---|
| To attend 3 rd Caribbean Regional Disaster Manage- ment Conference | Barbados | 27 th – 28 th August, 2003 | Carl Santana | Ag. Communi- cations Engineer | Examination of the impact of new develop- ments in information systems, response tools and technologies as they relate to prepared- ness and response planning for disasters in the Caribbean | \$ 1,725.00 | Carib- bean Regional Disaster Manage- ment |
| To attend 5 th Annual Caribbean Commercial Law Workshop | Miami, Florida | August, 2003 | Dion Abdool | Deputy General Manager, Legal Services | Update in terms of recent events and develop- ments and the implications for practice/ application of commercial law in the Region | \$12,889.50 | N/A |
| | | | Wayne P. Joeph | General Manger, Operations | Invaluable knowledge from witnessing the installation of CT2 sludge collector and underdrain system | \$ 2,141.86 | F.B. Leopold |

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| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------|--|--|-------------|------------------|
| Visit to Installations of F.B. Leopold Company | Philadel phia, Pennsyl vania | 02 nd – 06 th Sept., 2003 | Eric Jones | Area Supply Manager, Caroni | ” | \$ 2,141.86 | ” |
| | | | Raymond Gittens | Regional Manager, Quality Assurance | ” | \$ 2,141.86 | ” |
| | | | Errol Grimes | Chief Executive Officer | To gain solutions that are appropriate and sustainable to the challenges facing the water and wastewater sectors, regionally and globally. To get first- hand information on new technologies and products in the field of desalin- ation. (Presenting Paper). | \$ 8,478.45 | N/A |
| | | | Andy St. Clair | Manger, programme Monitoring and Regulations | (Presentation of Paper). | \$ 8,478.45 | ” |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|---|--|---|---------------------|--|---|--------------|------------------|
| CWWA (Caribbean Water & Wastewater Association) 12 th Annual Conference & Exhibition and Joint Session with IDA (Inter- national Desalination Association) re: World Congress on Desalination and Water Reuse | Atlantis Resort Paradise Island, Bahamas | 28 th Sept. – 3 rd October, 2003 | Oswyn Edmund | General Manager, Tobago Services | To gain solutions that are appropriate and sustainable to the challenges facing the water and wastewater sectors, regionally and globally. To get first- hand information on new technologies and products in the field of desalination. | \$ 5,517.92 | „ |
| | | | Roland Baptiste | Chairman | „ | \$ 5,328.95 | „ |
| | | | Thomas De Noon | Commissioner | „ | \$ 7,145.39 | „ |
| | | | Sharon Taylor | Deputy General Manager, Operations | „ | \$13, 054.23 | „ |
| AWWA (American Water Works Association) Annual Conference and Exhibition | Georgia, USA | 18 th - 19 th Sept., 2003 | Ronnie Spencer | Assistant Manager, HR Information Systems/ Compensa- tion Administra- tion | Assist in the formulation of an appropriate compensation strategy and the development of an effective Performance Appraisal System | \$12,541.31 | N/A |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------|---|
| | | | Wayne P. Joseph | General Manager, Operations | Exposure to the most recent techno- logical advances in the wastewater industry. To exchange ideas and gain access to the most up-to-date information related to water quality and pollution control issues, and to learn from the challenges faced by other colleagues within the water and wastewater industry. | \$ 3,313.27 | The Montgo- mery Group (Montgo- mery Watson Harza) (MWH) Spon- sored three (3) persons |
| 76 th Annual Water Environment Federation Exhibition and Conference | Los Angeles, California | 11 th –15 th October, 2003 | Christopher Chin Kong | Commissioner | To be informed to make valuable contributions on deliberations on matters pertaining to the Authority's business, given the nature and magnitude of | \$ 4,710.40 | ” |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|--|---|-------------|------------------|
| | | | Rawlinson Agard | Commissioner | the projects contemplated under WASA's Vision Plan to address the short- term and long-term water & wastewater system rehabilitation needs of the country" | \$ 3,880.90 | " |
| | | | David Nero | Manager Field Mainten- ance, South | " | \$12,212.82 | N/A |
| Integrated Watershed and Coastal Area Management (IWCAM) on the Caribbean SIDS Partnership Conference | United Nations Develop- ment Program me (UNDP), Christ Church, Barbados | 14 th –15 th October, 2003 | Kerry Mulchan- singh | Manager, Water Resources Agency | The WRA plays a vital role as the executing arm of the IWCAM partnership in T&T. To benefit from the pooling of ideas of participants, regionally and internationally. To work together with IWCAM to highlight the benefits accrued from better management of watersheds and coastal areas. | \$ 2,418.82 | IWCAM |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|-------------------------|--|----------------------|---|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| | | | Richard Etienne | General Manager, Finance | Exposure for those involved in the Metering programme to get first- hand information on appropriate technologies, which will assist the Authority with the achievement of its objectives with regard to its metering programme. | \$ 2,777.86 | Badger Metering Inc. |
| Visit to Badger Metering Inc. | Milwaukee, Wisconsin | 21 st –25 th October, 2003 | Oswin Edmund | General Manager, Tobago Services | „ | \$ 2,777.86 | „ |
| | | | Geraldine Houlder | Manager, New Services/ Water | „ | \$ 2,462.91 | „ |
| Water and Wastewater Training- Stone and Webster | London, England | 20 th –25 th October, 2003 | Wilbert Harris | Head Internal Audit | Hands on training by professionals of the Water and Wastewater Regulatory Industries Commissioners | \$13,984.00 | N/A |
| | | | Leon Elliot | Manager, Programme Development | „ | \$13,984.00 | N/A |

| Programme/ Purpose | Location | Period Travelled | Name of Attendee | Designation | Expected Benefits | Cost | Sponsor- ship |
|--|-----------------------|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|---|
| Theoretical/ Practical Course on Basic Principles for the Design of Flood Preparedness Plans | Antigua, Guatemala | 28 th –30 th October, 2003 | Wayne Clement | Ag. Senior Hydro- logist | Effective Manage- ment and control of the country's water recourses | N/A | Govern- ment of Spain through Agency for Inter- national Coopera- tion |
| The Resolution of Disputes under the Inter- national Construction Contracts co-hosted by ICC and FIDIC | Paris | 30 th –31 st October, 2003 | Dion Abdool | Ag. Corporate Secretary | Knowledge gained with regard to contract negotiation, preparation and settlement. Exposure to claims and litigation. | \$19,230.00 | N/A |
| TOTAL | | | | | | \$614,245.28 | |

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Singh: Hon. Member, have you computed the loss of managerial time as a result of the travelling of so many senior executive managers of the Water and Sewerage and Authority?

Hon. P. Beckles: Mr. Speaker, based on the expected benefits and based on the time that they travelled, I am of the view that if these visits and the experiences gained are properly utilized, I think it would more work to the benefit and it ought not to be a loss to WASA.

Mr. Singh: Does the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment have a policy with respect to statutory authorities falling under its jurisdiction about sponsorship from the private sector doing business with that statutory authority of sponsorship of foreign trips to senior executives of the company they are doing business with? For example, in the hon. Minister's answer she said Montgomery Watson sponsored several trips to Anaheim, California and other areas. Biwater sponsored trips to all over the world. Vivendi sponsored trips to Columbia, Paris

and to elsewhere. Badger sponsored. What is the policy of the Ministry of Public Utilities with respect to what appears to be a blatant conflict of interest?

Hon. P. Beckles: Mr. Speaker, I prefer if, subject to your ruling, that my learned friend gives me the opportunity to answer that question.

Mr. Singh: In the face of the sponsorships, has the hon. Minister computed the monetary cost to WASA for this period June 2002 to October 2003?

Hon. P. Beckles: I do not quite understand that question. Do you mean the total of all of this? No. I have not.

**Solid Waste Management Company Limited
Details of Foreign Travel**

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

- (b) Could the Minister provide the House with the details of cost to the State and/or the Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL) of the foreign travel of members of the board and employees of SWMCOL for the period January 2002 to October 2003;
- (b) Would he provide a detailed list of the persons who travelled and the dates of their foreign trips and indicate the purpose of each foreign trip and the benefit to SWMCOL?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Mr. Speaker, in relation to question 38, during the period July 04—07, 2002, Mr. Ray Brathwaite, Executive Chairman, visited Martinique, West Indies, at a cost of \$5,480.20 to attend the inauguration of Household Waste Incineration Plant at the invitation of Environment West Indies. The benefit was to obtain a better understanding of alternative methods of waste treatment.

For the period August 22—24 2002, Mr. Ray Brathwaite, Executive Chairman visited Guadeloupe. His visit was to view the operation of incineration prototype at the invitation of Advantage SARL at a cost of \$2,242. This was to obtain a better understanding of the alternative methods of waste treatment.

Mr. Ray Brathwaite visited St. Lucia from October 07—11, 2002 to participate in the 11th Annual CWWA conference and First Caribbean Environmental Forum and Exhibition, at a cost of \$13,803.07. SWMCOL is a member of the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association. This annual conference addresses key issues relevant to regional stakeholders and environmentalists.

Richard Warren, Manager Operations visited Dominica during the period November 11—12, 2002 at a cost of \$4,398.50 to attend to a field visit required of tenderers for Solid Waste Disposal Project. Its objective was to obtain information to support development and submission of tender for Solid Waste Disposal Projects.

Richard Warren, during the period November 17—21, 2002 visited El Salvador at a cost of \$2,935. to receive an update on the environmentally sound management of used lead acid batteries. The purpose of the visit was to represent the Government of Trinidad and Tobago at the regional workshop on the environmentally sound management of used lead acid batteries facilitated by the Basel Convention Regional Centre for Central America and Mexico and the Secretariat of the Basel Convention.

Mr. Ray Brathwaite and Mr. Heathcliff Miller, Director, during November 16—24, 2002, visited the United Kingdom to meet with heavy equipment suppliers with a view to sourcing replacement parts and vehicles for aging service fleet at a cost of \$63,607.62. The benefits were to gain a firsthand look at types of equipment available and lay groundwork for tendering of quotations for supply and delivery.

From February 28 to March 07 2003, Mr. Brathwaite received an International Arch of Europe Gold Award on behalf of SWMCOL at a ceremony in Germany and visited the United Kingdom at a follow-up visit in relation to equipment suppliers at a cost of \$53,122.96. The benefit of this was in terms of the recognition of the meritorious service in the field of waste management and environmental conservation awarded to SWMCOL.

During the period March 13—15, 2003, Director Waldorf Yearwood attended at Ocho Rios, Jamaica, the Third Regional Coordinators Meeting of the Caribbean Blue Flag Campaign at a cost of \$11,760.57. The Blue Caribbean Flag Campaign is an initiative that certifies beaches and marinas as safe, hygienic and environmentally friendly once stringent criteria have been met. This certification is internationally recognized and helps to promote tourism. SWMCOL is the designated national coordinator for Trinidad and Tobago.

Richard Warren, Projects Executive, during the period March 13—14, 2003, attended a forum on EuroColumbus Project at the invitation of Environment, West Indies in Martinique at a cost of \$1,675. The Environment, West Indies developed an initiative called EuroColumbus that aims at coordinating the waste management and recycling needs of the regional community.

Mr. Trevor Chang, Manager Marketing, during the period June 02—05, 2003, visited New Orleans, Louisiana, to attend the WasteExpo 2003. This is an exhibition of new products and technologies for practitioners in the waste management industry and this was at a cost of \$22,408.05. The expected benefits were to obtain information on new products and technologies for practitioners in the waste management industry.

During the period June 14—22, 2003, Ray Brathwaite, Executive chairman and Andre Garraway, Landfill Site Supervisor, visited Atlantic City, United States to attend the 8th Annual Landfill Symposium and Solid Waste Managers Conference at a cost of \$46,724.79. The Solid Waste Association of North America provides opportunities for industry personnel to stay abreast with the latest developments in technology products and practices through training expositions and symposia.

Waldorf Yearwood, Director, visited Denmark during the period July 12—18, 2003 at a cost of \$16,985.90 and participated in a Blue Flag Study facilitated by the Foundation for Environmental Education. The Blue Flag Study is a training programme for certification applicants from countries in Europe and the Caribbean that focuses on the methods used to test beaches and marinas to determine their eligibility status.

Ray Brathwaite visited Nassau, Bahamas during the period September 28 to October 03, 2003 to participate in the 12th Annual Conference and Exhibition of the Caribbean Water Wastewater Association. This was at a cost of \$25,378.76. This Annual Conference addressed key issues relevant to the regional stakeholders and environmentalists.

During the period October 14—16 2003, Mr. Rees Jack, Tobago's Operations Manager and Mr. Andre Garraway, Landfill Site Supervisor visited Missouri, United States, to attend the Annual International Solid Waste Association Exposition of North America. This was at a cost of \$36,946.78. The expected benefit of this trip was to provide opportunities for industry personnel to stay abreast of the latest developments in technology, products and practices through training, expositions and symposia.

Mr. Ray Brathwaite during the period October 25 to November 01, 2003 visited Havana, Cuba at a cost of \$22,338.50 to represent the Government of Trinidad and Tobago at Waste Management of Small Island Developing States. Its expected benefits were that this meeting provided the forum for SIDS-based

experts and others to discuss present strategies, trends, processes and impact of waste management systems and practices in Small Island Developing States.

Thank, you Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Singh: The members of the Solid Waste Management team on board, having attended all these wastewater conferences at significant cost to Solid Waste, are they dealing with the matter of the wastewater entering the Caroni River and, therefore, causing the shut down of the Caroni Water Treatment Plant?

Hon. P. Beckles: Having spoken with the board as early as yesterday, I know that is a matter that is engaging the attention of the board.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, the Government can answer all the questions for Oral Answers today. They are Nos. 11, 20, 21, and 39 and the answers will be circulated.

Mr. Speaker: Is it that you are agreeing to the circulation of the rest of the Oral Answers? You have at least two minutes.

Mr. Singh: Having regard to the nature of the question, it is more appropriate that these answers be circulated.

Assent indicated.

Mr. Speaker: Then, by agreement, the remaining questions for oral answers will be circulated in writing to all hon. Members.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Jamaat Al Muslimeen (Money owed to State)

11. Could the Attorney General state:

- (a) The exact amount of money owed to the State by Abu Bakr and the members of the Jamaat Al Muslimeen (as a result of the destruction of State property during the attempted coup in July 1990) pursuant to the judgment (including interests and costs) of the honourable Mr. Justice Joseph Tam dated January 15, 2001;
- (b) What steps, if any, has the State acting through the Attorney General taken to enforce this judgment since the conclusion of this matter on May 10, 2002 when the Court of Appeal dismissed the Jamaat's appeal? [*Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

Dollar for Dollar Programme

- 20.** Could the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education state:
- (a) What is the implementation status of the Dollar for Dollar Programme to date;
 - (b) The number of persons who have benefited from the Dollar for Dollar Programme;
 - (c) The amount of money expended on the Dollar for Dollar Programme from January 1, 2002 to date;
 - (d) The amount of money placed into the Dollar for Dollar Fund January 1, 2002 to date;
 - (e) The projected amount to be expended for same? [*Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

Construction of Housing Units (Compulsory Acquisition of)

- 21.** Could the Minister of Housing state:
- (a) Does the Government have a policy with respect to the compulsory acquisition of lands for housing;
 - (b) If so, could he give a brief outline of this policy and advise this House how compensation to occupiers of such lands is computed? [*Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

National Lotteries Control Board (Details of Foreign Travel)

- 39. Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Caroni East*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:
- (a) Could the Minister provide the House with the details of cost to the State and/or the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) of the foreign travel of members of the board and employees of NLCB for the period January 2002 to October 2003;
 - (b) Would he provide a detailed list of the persons who travelled and the dates of their foreign trips and indicate the purpose of each foreign trip and the benefits to NLCB?

Question time having expired, the above questions were answered in writing.

Vide end of sitting for replies.

INSURANCE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Insurance Act and for matters incidental thereto [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY (VESTING) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Housing (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to provide for the vesting of certain state lands in the National Housing Authority for a period of 999 years, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, this matter is relatively straightforward and, as you would be aware, public sector housing construction has been a feature of the national landscape for many decades in Trinidad and Tobago resulting in a number of persons occupying premises on lands, which today fall under the jurisdiction of the National Housing Authority. Initially, those properties were transferred by way of state lands and state leases.

In 1988, there was a Cabinet decision that determined that these lands would be vested in the National Housing Authority and the Authority would then provide the deeds to the persons occupying these premises across the country. The information that I have is that most of these lands were to come either from the State or its agencies: Caroni (1975) Limited, Port of Spain Corporation, the San Fernando City Corporation, the Property Industrial Development Corporation under the old IDC arrangement, Trintoc or Trintopec premises.

The persons involved in this vesting exercise indicate that the procedure for vesting is a drawn out one, and it takes about 62 weeks in respect of state lands and 106 weeks in respect of private lands to have this procedure completed. The information is that for the last 15 years, 15 out of 33 sites were vested that were on the original schedule at the time when the Cabinet took that decision in 1988, which means that there are a number of sites which are required to be vested. Some of those sites have been occupied for well in excess of 30 years.

Persons occupying these homes are having difficulty in upgrading them because if they were to raise finances, because the title has not been transferred to them, they cannot market their properties and they cannot seek additional funding to upgrade their premises. Over and above in 2002, by State Lands Act No. 74, it was determined that these properties should be dealt with under the Real Property Ordinance, another very cumbersome procedure which did not help the situation.

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In fact, it exacerbated the difficulty in transferring these lands to the owners. In fact, it did bring a virtual halt to the exercise. When this was recognized, this directive was repealed and only then could the exercise recommence and approximately 7,500 housing units are now being processed in anticipation of this National Housing Authority (Vesting) Bill, clearing the way for the exercise to be completed.

There are 43 sites which have been invested, and in keeping with Government's commitment to further increase the national housing stock, there are another 38 sites which would also need to be brought under the National Housing Authority (Vesting) Bill. They are not all on this schedule today. If one looks at the document before the honourable House, there are a number of locations which would be affected by today's vesting, and these locations are: Mon Repos in San Fernando; Malick, Morvant; Real Spring, Valsayn South; Edinburgh South, Chaguanas; Sobion Street, Siparia; Crown Street, Arouca; Guayaguayare Mayaro; Maracas Valley; Old Boys Lane, D'Abadie; Tumpuna Road, Arima; Picton Hill, Laventille; Curepe, Hubertstown, La Brea and Valencia. These form the schedule that would now be immediately affected. However, this National Housing Authority (Vesting) Bill provides for the Minister of Housing to add additional sites as and when required by the relevant resolution of the Parliament when the time comes. So as we bring new sites under the housing construction programme the provision exists here for us to add those sites under this matter.

Mr. Speaker, there is not much to say except that as we conclude this matter today, the Ministry of Housing would move expeditiously to grant the transfers to all those persons who have been anxiously waiting to have these titles transferred to them so that they could proceed with their business.

Currently we are engaged in a major housing programme and this arrangement in the face of a restructured NHA, should see a situation where there are no longer persons occupying NHA premises and waiting for years and decades to have the transfer of the property to them so that they could continue to upgrade their premises

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Mr. Speaker, I must say that the Yuletide season has some great influence on the hon. Member fore Diego Martin West. I expected that we would have heard a lot more from him, and I do accept

his apology on behalf of all of those persons who have been waiting for a very long time to have the titles transferred to these people. When one looks at this Bill it says in the preamble that:

“And whereas the absence of such documentary title to the said lands has prevented the Authority from providing evidence of title to the occupiers of the houses and apartments erected by the Authority on the said lands...”

One of the first questions I am asking the hon. Minister is: Whether apartments referred to in this Bill, are those apartments rented by the tenants of the National Housing Authority in the various housing estates across the country? Because immediately the question arises: How would this be done? I understand that there is no Condominium Act in Trinidad. In fact, a very long time ago there were proposals to introduce such an Act, but the issue here is with respect to apartments.

One has to be extremely careful in the event that the Government is unable to satisfy the expectations of people who now occupy apartments when the occupants are accustomed to the NHA providing the maintenance for such buildings across the country. One also has to be concerned about who would be responsible for the stairways, elevators and roofs of these buildings that are now owned by the NHA. I think that if the proposal in the Bill to vest these lands in the National Housing Authority and then subsequently to have titles transferred to occupants, one would need a thorough explanation from the Government as to how these tenants are going to be treated.

This afternoon I want to let the hon. Minister know that but for a few remarks he made earlier with respect to Government's accelerated housing programme, no one would object to the vesting of state lands in the National Housing Authority for onward transfer to the occupants. But it is amazing that some of these properties particularly in Mon Repos, are as old as the 1950s. In the case of Malick—1970 to pre-1986 all under the PNM regime. To say today that they have waited a long time in Malabar, Maloney, La Horquetta, Couva as the case might be, is really to demonstrate a lack of concern for the people who have been presumably paying mortgages and rents for over 20 years without having any title to their property.

I did not see Couva on the list and I do not recall whether during my sabbatical from politics that this might have been done, but certainly there are many persons in the Couva NHA Programme who would be affected or perhaps, who would not benefit from this exercise, and I would like the hon. Minister to say whether this has already been vested or not, and when it would be.

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I want to particularly draw the attention of the honourable House to that section of the Couva Housing Development in which serviced lots were provided to citizens upon which construction of homes took place. I totally agree with the hon. Minister that these persons were denied the opportunity to do what others who have titles can do, and that is, to use the title for the purpose of accessing mortgages and other forms of funding for the expansion and maintenance of their properties. In fact, a large section of the area in Couva that was allotted to building of homes has remained abandoned even though Government continues to talk about the growing need for housing lots. These people were allocated these lots in the 1980s. They could not go to the banks to obtain a loan and at that time many of them were unable to access other forms of funding from Government agencies, so most of them had to find money on their own to build their homes and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, it appears that the Government has abandoned an earlier policy of the previous administration to provide serviced lots to people, to citizens who can then access funding from various agencies in the country including the private sector, including the banks, and could build a house that they are able to afford.

2.30 p.m.

The accelerated programme as enunciated by the Minister at some other function indicated that the Government intends to construct 100,000 houses, according to newspaper reports. Such a statement was attributed to the Member for Diego Martin West. I am quite sure that he is not the kind of Minister who would simply read something that is handed to him. When asked by a reporter whether certain politicians would not express concern about house padding, he gave his characteristic remark that that was nonsense and he was not concerned about those things.

This particular Bill raises some very important questions and, as is typical of the Government, they have adopted the policy that having won the election they would rule as they see fit. So that without any form of public consultation, without any consultation in the Parliament, in a very typical PNM way, they embark on projects, which are clearly designed to improve their political fortunes. Without regard for transparency, without regard for proper planning, without regard for the proper use of state funds, they proceed as if they have a mandate to rule and that mandate allows them to do whatever they wish. So, in the ensuing months and years we are likely to see other vesting bills or additional sites being added to the ones stated in this Bill, in such areas as Circular Road in San

Fernando—an area with which you yourself, Mr. Speaker, are quite familiar—along Lady Hailes Avenue in San Fernando, in Couva and in Endeavour, Chaguanas, as stated by ministers.

So, we are likely to see those sites added to the present list and, as far as the Minister and his Government are concerned, the Parliament will know about these things after they have been done. That is very typical. If you want to get more than 250 votes in the election in the future than you got last election, you completely disregard all the planning regulations; you disregard the Environmental Management Authority and the regulations made under the Act; you disregard the community; there is no public consultation as required under the Environmental Management Act when it comes to the construction of major projects or major modifications; and you proceed post haste to start construction.

Most democracies of the world are moving away from state constructed housing units to the role of facilitating the ownership and that is regardless of the economic bracket in which the potential homeowner finds himself. But this Government unashamedly goes across the country and announces that it would become involved in an accelerated programme of construction by the National Housing Authority.

That is understandable as far as their perspective is concerned. Their perspective has nothing to do with sustainable development, so they move in their bulldozers in Couva and, without any discussion with the people, construct 1,007 housing units and then fraudulently compose a list of applicants, denying the general public the opportunity, hiding the forms, not making application forms available for the general public, and then selecting people whom they perceive to be their supporters. I do not know how they know that. Perhaps it is how they look, speak, what religion they practise—nobody knows it is not on the form.

Mr. Speaker, if you go to the NHA office in Couva, you are not likely to get any forms. If they think you are a UNC supporter, there are no forms available. When this matter was raised in this Parliament some time ago, a minister indicated that the forms would be available, except that they would be placed at the bottom of the list.

I ask all right-thinking people to enquire from the Government whether, in this modern age, we are resorting to this backward and antiquated system, which does nothing for the preservation of a democracy. Perhaps the Minister of Housing would like to do some kind of empirical study to find out why, in all of his settlements, apartments and housing developments, a certain section of the

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population is completely absent. Are they not worried and concerned that one group of citizens in this country is selected to occupy state houses? Is it that members of the other group do not want to live in government houses or government-constructed houses? We cannot be talking about building a democracy and transparency in this period of our existence if discrimination—political or otherwise—is what determines who gets to buy a house or rent a property in an NHA development.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, is how do you determine where you build these housing estates? What are the criteria for selecting a parcel of land on which the Government is going to construct these housing estates? If you do a survey along Circular Road—and I do not see the Member for San Fernando West, but if I were her, I would be very concerned about what is going on and what the citizens of San Fernando are saying with respect to this monstrosity that is being constructed there for no reason other than voter padding. And the Minister says he is not worried about that. The *Guardian* loves to print what he says, so on two days the same article was printed.

The Minister disregards a very important concern. People along Circular Road in San Fernando—the Member for San Fernando West will tell you—are selling their properties. I do not think that those who live in Glencoe or Westmoorings or Maraval—[*Interruption*] Oh, you have moved from Maraval to Fyzabad. [*Interruption*] Oh, you have bought a house there. [*Interruption*] Rented out. I admire you—grassroots man like me. I want to know how you would feel. [*Interruption*] I do not want to be distracted, that is why I have a habit of speaking to you, Sir.

How would you feel if a government were to start constructing high-rise apartments—low-income housing with the attendant consequences that will flow from those settlements—in the middle of Westmoorings and Maraval? The Minister knows very well. He was one of the persons who was championing—and still champions—the construction of secondary schools in that area and he was met with lots of opposition—I followed the matter—so much so that the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro came up with an overpass; an entire plan so that there would be no congestion.

Now I understand why certain persons would leave San Fernando and go to Westmoorings to live. I am sure it does not have to do with the traffic at Grand Bazaar. If I were living in San Fernando and you constructed another Embacadere on Circular Road and a third one on Lady Hailes Avenue, I would also want to move. The Minister has to understand that these types of housing

construction and properties, which would be added to the Vesting Bill Order, create a lot of problems.

In the first place, there is no need, in San Fernando, to put up any high-rise building. On the outskirts of San Fernando are large parcels of land that the Member for Port of Spain North—before he went to Mount Hope; you know the curse follows him wherever he goes—made available. If you mean to house the people of San Fernando, there are huge parcels of Caroni lands, which you have seized from the people who have cultivated them for 150 years. Having seized them, you could have provided serviced lots for these people who are interested in a home and you could have done all the other things like making mortgages—95 to 97 per cent as stated in your plan—available to them; or you could have found a way for the NHA to provide them with an opportunity to own a home. But no, you want them, not in the Oropouche constituency, not in the Naparima constituency, but the middle of San Fernando West, Barataria and elsewhere, so that these houses and apartments could serve a particular political purpose. I want the Minister to understand.

At this point I also wish to speak a little about those lands situated on Lady Hailes Avenue, opposite Skinner Park, which will also be vested. It must be very difficult when you are a member of the PNM and you cannot utter a word against an atrocity that is committed against your own constituents. Their lust and greed for power makes them so impotent that they are now unable to speak.

There is the San Fernando Government Secondary School, the ASJA Boys' College and the ASJA Girls' College; there is the ASJA Primary School and immediately next to these schools they are going to construct multi-storey high-rise apartments for working-class people, without considering the impact that such a community would have on the rest of the area.

Mr. Singh: Who gave planning permission for that?

Mr. K. Ramnath: That is another point I will come to in a little while. They continue to disregard all the well-known principles of planning associated with housing in any country. What is going to happen in San Fernando? Children, who are already the victims of molestation, rape and kidnapping will be so insecure—and parents as well—that they are likely to find they may not want to send their own children to school in certain areas of San Fernando. The Government must come to terms with the reality and with what is emanating from these housing developments. This is not peculiar to Trinidad and Tobago—not at all.

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They should examine what is happening in the city of Detroit and in the city of New York and in all those areas where housing authorities thought they would find a solution to the problem by building high-rise buildings. You ask, even in Canada at the corner of Jean and Finch, what is the experience of the communities that have occupied those apartment buildings. [*Interruption*] Extremely rough.

So, it is clear to me that the intention of the Government is to ensure that they add to their stock of votes rather than provide a solution to the housing problem. What is interesting also—and the Member for San Fernando West will admit that one of these days—is that the people who will occupy those houses will not come from San Fernando, most of them. In her own party the discrimination will take place because the intention is not simply to fill those apartments with those who have already voted PNM, but to transport potential PNM supporters to live in San Fernando. It will make no political sense to them if they take PNM supporters who have already voted in San Fernando and put them in those buildings.

More importantly, the NHA is nothing but a corrupt arm of the PNM. The NHA has historically been a tool of the PNM and the NHA will continue to do the political bidding of the PNM because the politicians who are in power stifle it. I would have thought that in this modern day if any one of us here—we are low-income earners most of us—wants to apply for a parcel of land to build a house, we could go on the Internet on to the NHA website, if there is one, and locate in one of NHA proposed housing estates, a parcel of land. We could then download a form and send it to the NHA and say we are interested in purchasing a lot of land. I thought that was the way the First World was going and we ought to be going: that people all over the country could enjoy the benefits of a government-supported housing programme; that I could choose where I wanted to live; that I would not be bundled into an apartment building; that I would be able, if I wanted to live in an apartment building, to apply to live in one, but that if I wanted a serviced lot I could apply for one and go to the Home Mortgage Bank or any bank with which the Government has an arrangement to subsidize mortgage interest and people would be free, those who require housing lots, to go to the NHA and they would not be a tool of the political party in power but an agent of Government that is providing a service to the nation.

But we are not to see that. We are talking 2020 vision and developed-country status and we are practising backward politics; we are practising—

Dr. Khan: Socialist politics.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Not at all! Do not insult socialism! We are not practising socialism.

Mr. B. Panday: Fascism.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Fascism. The public has to start making their voices heard. I understand that most recently in a church in the west end of Port of Spain, where the Minister quietly slipped in and slipped out, the people were concerned and expressed in a very civilized manner their disgust with the Government's inability to deal with the issue of crime. When you look at these housing developments that they boast about, you will see that many of the criminals in the society emanate from these housing developments.

I can tell you of two streets in the Couva housing area—June Street and Gilda Street—where the kidnappers operate. The only people who do not know who the kidnappers and thieves in Couva happen to be are the police. Everybody knows who kidnap and who “thief” in Couva and who the criminal elements are. Couva is a town that has been under siege by the criminals in the housing development. Mr. Speaker, do you know what causes that? It is not because criminals went to live there; it is because the PNM made criminals out of decent citizens.

When Mr. Wendell Mottley was Minister of Housing I warned him about the potential for the creation of criminal elements in the society because even though Point Lisas was in an advanced stage of construction, there were no opportunities for employment for people who were not skilled. I know one of the Members of this House does not like me to speak of Maloney and La Horquetta. They created a whole seat called Arouca South out of Malabar, Maloney and La Horquetta. They manufactured a constituency. Do you have any doubt that the problems in those areas, all the difficulties that have arisen—does it not surprise you that that is related to a government-planned housing programme simply for the sake of creating political support? Everywhere you go you will see, in these NHA dens of iniquity, crime and uncontrollable criminal elements.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to come back to this Parliament to say we are going to vest more lands in the NHA so that they can give out. When I see what has happened to Chaguanas, a beautiful, quiet town of industrious people—they built Edinburgh 500, a ghetto and slum; a breeding ground for all of the kidnapping and crime in the central district. They have to admit the truth. *[Interruption]* Go to the police and get your information and find out who are the ones who are being arrested on an on-going basis. You cannot go to Chaguanas. There is a place called Busy Corner and if the people in Edinburgh 500 are not involved in the criminal activity, they are agents for their friends of the north who come to “put down a work” as they say nowadays in PNM language.

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Mr. Speaker, every business place in Chaguanas has been robbed. Every business place in Couva has been robbed. Kidnapping has now gone to Couva. One of my constituents; we are still waiting to hear of them after one week. That is something we never heard of. This is not a phenomenon of 2003, Mr. Speaker. The murder rate of 222 is no accident; cannot be correlated with the year 2003 as if something dramatic happened in 2003. It has to do with the PNM's desire to hold on to power at any cost, including destroying this country.

There were two sessions held at the Learning Resource Centre in Couva by a Canadian group with respect to those wishing to migrate to Canada. I know it is something that is sarcastically mentioned from time to time on that side. There was no room during the two sessions. People were on the outside because people wanted to leave. I do not blame them for wanting to leave. If they have to separate and send their wives and children abroad, because of PNM kidnappers, why would they not do that?

Instead of coming with a plan that deals with the root of the problem, let us get our people to build their own homes. We did it in the sugar industry. As a young boy I remember that the loan you got was \$1,750 and you could have built a house on your own land and subsequently on lands which were made available by the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee. It was more important for the Member for St. Ann's West to make the lands available to other people. Just as they plan to build 10,000 houses a year, why can we not, make housing lots available for people and take advice from the Member for Laventille East/Morvant during his address to the Rotary Club in Port of Spain, when he condemned them for being insensitive to those very people who live in Laventille and on the East-West Corridor who need housing and let them own a piece of land?

3.00 p.m.

You want to continue to enslave them; you are the slave masters in the modern century; that is what you are doing. You put them in high-rises. You took the party boys, put them in the National Housing Authority (NHA) and then boasted that you provided housing for your people. This matter is so serious that people in this country are now living in a state of fear that they have never experienced in their entire existence in Trinidad and Tobago. We get no support. We hear nothing from those who have a mandate to rule; they are also living in fear.

Mr. Speaker, when you come to the Parliament to vest these state lands in the NHA, to be given out, you ask yourself whether the NHA can do it. We recently

witnessed the gang warfare that existed in the NHA. I do not know if it has stopped or whether they have acquiesced to the gangsters. Can we really believe that the NHA can be structured in such a way to eliminate this kind of criminal activity? We have not heard anything; all I have read in the newspaper is that they are negotiating for a voluntary separation of employment plan (VSEP) with the public service union. Our fears are not going to be allayed by any plan to vest anything in these people. This is only an academic exercise. What is more important is: What are you going to do about the consequences of your accelerated housing programme?

I never knew that there was a big cry for housing in Mafeking; a beautiful little town from where the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro emanates. I used to hold meetings right in the junction there; it had some Disney World name, I think. Suddenly we are hearing about housing development in Mafeking. Clearly, the people of Mafeking are not accustomed to these kinds of controlled environments; they may also have to “leave and run”. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro has already ran, so he will not face what is likely to face the people of Mafeking when they introduce that housing plan. Everybody knows that they were involved in a lot of illegal and untoward activity in the Ortoire/Mayaro seat; that they used the services of gangsters and Muslimeen to win that seat; that they used the services of people who have now gotten contracts with the National Gas Company to pump money into the campaign. [*Crosstalk*] Then they realized that the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation, who was in charge of that constituency, had said, “In spite of all that, we will not be able to win again, so let us put down houses.”

Mafeking people will not get those houses, Mr. Minister from Ortoire/Mayaro. I will file a question at the appropriate time to embarrass you. The new voters will get the houses, so you can transport those votes, hopefully, to add to what you have already gained in the last election. [*Crosstalk*] I do not want to get involved in that, but when one magistrate cannot travel to San Fernando she gets a big job.

Hon. Member: She got promoted.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I understand that the promotion is to make sure that when Addison Khan leaves the Presidency, she will fit there; that is the plan. I want to warn them, that these things have a way of backfiring. You have to get involved. Let me just quote Tony Fraser, a well-known journalist who attends the post-

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Cabinet briefing sessions. He said in the *Guardian* newspaper of November 06, 2003:

“Two months ago, the Minister of Housing unveiled a programme for NHA and other kinds of government-assisted home-building projects. This columnist noted to the Minister that the projects were biased in favour of traditional PNM constituencies.

In a similar vein Government focused on its electoral future, the home construction schemes in St. Joseph and the San Fernando West constituencies constitute a strategy of the Government to turn the demographics in the constituencies permanently in the electoral favour of the PNM.”

And that is a brilliant move, to quote the Member for Point Fortin.

Mr. Speaker, an editorial in the *Express* newspaper of September 08, 2003, warns:

“Already the rumour mill has begun to grind, with talk that the ‘PNM bigwigs’ are lining up to get their hands on prime property.

Even without such rumours, the Government would be obliged to not favour PNM supporters in the disbursement of Caroni lands. The argument that persons should not be excluded from State largesse because they happen to be supporters of the party in power cannot, in this case be wisely followed.”

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Thank you, hon. Members.

When I see what is happening in this country, and I look at CNN and the BBC news, I begin to understand why the Palestinians are rebelling and revolting in the way they are. It reminds me of a deliberate plot to set up the Jewish settlements in Palestine, the West Bank. It is so tragic today that the issue of Palestinian statehood has to be negotiated in an atmosphere of mayhem and murder, because some people will never listen.

If the Member for St. Ann's West believes that what he has done is achieve some great victory—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Khan: “Bust the Indian throat”, that is what he said.

Mr. K. Ramnath: —and that the policy of the PNM that might is right will continue to be respected by decent, law-abiding citizens. Let me warn Members on the other side that what is happening in Sri Lanka, Ireland and Palestine today, and what happened in Guyana, Mauritius and Fiji, is very likely to take place in this country. You cannot turn a blind eye to the cries of the people; you cannot do what you want to the people, because you are in power, and feel that they have no choice. Let us pray that we do not have in Trinidad and Tobago anyone who wishes to deal with this imbalance and discrimination in the way that other societies have dealt with it.

I want to warn them, that there is a prevailing view in this society that the Government has a policy of ethnic cleansing, of open discrimination, as manifested in its housing and employment programmes, and that very soon there will be people who cannot go to Canada and the United States to live, but who will settle the scores right here. That is no idle threat; that is the reality. People are not going to live as prisoners in their homes, whether it is an NHA home or a private home, they are going to say, “Enough is enough.” Their answer to the philosophy that might is right, is enough is enough.

I was in Chaguanas when my hon. friends were arrested by about 100 policemen. Do you know that there are no police in Couva? Thieves broke into my office on four occasions. Do you know what the police told me? They will send the fingerprint expert tomorrow. There are no police available to protect decent citizens from the gangsters that have come out of these housing developments. But when decent, law-abiding businessmen were walking the streets of Chaguanas, the Prime Minister was saying in this Parliament that he intended to strengthen the Riot Squad. That is his answer: strengthen the Riot Squad, go out and arrest people.

I ask the Government to sit and rethink its position on this accelerated housing programme; it is very important. They have hired some “fella” Uthara Rao. I do not know who he is, but it sounds as though he did not originate from Trinidad. I understand that he worked with Ispat, and left under some kind of cloud. I do not want to use my parliamentary privilege to say anything about him. But Mr. Rao is a rude fellow. He walks around the place with a power of either Sen. Dr. Saith or the Prime Minister. I am sure he did not get that power from any of the present Ministers in the House.

Mr. B. Panday: They have none to give.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Rao told the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation what he is going to do with Caroni lands, and what they must do. They are the regulatory body, the Local Health Authority; they are the ones who must give final approval, and this Mr. Rao gets up in a meeting and was abusive. I do not know why they did not invite me. I am a little upset with my own party colleagues; they did not invite me. They probably knew how I would behave.

Mr. Rao told the Couva Chamber of Commerce that housing developments would be established at Caroni Savannah Road, Beaucarro, Waterloo, Couva, Balmain and Endeavour—not Dr. Rowley; not Mr. Martin Joseph; not Mr. Garcia, but Mr. Rao.

Mr. B. Panday: “Yuh sure is not “Raoley”? *[Laughter]*

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Rao told the corporation that he has no obligation to continue to maintain the major out fall drains west of all the towns along the coast, and he behaves as if somebody left the Caroni lands in their will for him. I am trying to find out who has really delegated this authority. He struts around the place allocating lands. He has already agreed how much land will go towards manufacturing; how much will go towards Point Lisas; how much will go towards housing, where the housing estates will be and so on. Up to today, no minister of Government has come to Parliament and said a word.

The failed Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources promised that he would put a plan, with respect to Caroni, in this House, because Caroni lands are going to be used for housing. Caroni lands will have to be vested in the NHA, and we will have to approve such vesting. But the failed Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources who promised the union and the former workers of Caroni that they would get first preference—*[Interruption]* You did not say that? But his Prime Minister said after him that there would be no preferential treatment to workers of Caroni. You do not talk to the Prime Minister. Start talking to your Prime Minister. Mr. Rao has already decided who is going to get the lands, while they keep promising that Caroni workers are going to get first preference.

The Member for Diego Martin Central stood in this House, when I raised the matter in a debate, and said, “We have a plan”. Up to today, there is no plan. So are these housing developments, which will be established at Caroni Savannah Road, Beaucarro, Waterloo, Couva, Balmain and Endeavour, Mr. Rao’s plan, Dr. Rowley’s plan, Sen. Joseph’s plan, the failed Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources’ plan, or Sen. Dr. Saith’s plan? That is important, because we as representatives need to know. We need to inform our constituents, that is our

duty, where there are opportunities for them to participate in programmes funded by the taxpayers. Otherwise, I assure you, that what we will have is another La Horquetta, another Maloney, another Couva, or another Embacadere, built right in the middle of these towns in Central Trinidad, without the necessary support mechanisms to make sure that the people who come to live there can properly adapt.

This is a multi-cultural country. Some people believe that if you are a true citizen of Trinidad and Tobago you must play pan and you must be in a carnival band. They have no regard for other aspects of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. They regard it as peripheral. They do not understand the different lifestyles and cultural and religious values that exist in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I live at the entrance to the ghetto. I bought that house when the ghetto was not there. I was very happy, until recently; now I have to call for somebody to open my gates, when I had my gates opened for 25 years.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Who opens it for you?

Mr. K. Ramnath: Somebody I pay. You cannot walk the streets of Couva; you cannot walk the streets of Chaguanas. There are now 24-hour night bars operating since the advent of the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and the NHA, as sponsored criminal gangs. You cannot walk the streets; you have to stay in your homes. If you call the police, they would come after you are dead. They come to take fingerprints when you die; that is the role of the police now.

When you are considering your accelerated housing programme, have public consultation. I would be delighted to host you, Mr. Minister, at my complex in Couva that I inherited from the former Member for Couva South. You can come and talk to the people about the issues of housing and the expansion of Caroni. Do not do like the failed Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources who hid all over the place in the sugar belt, and then claimed he had held consultations. Do not hide behind the walls of Swaha in Preysal and then claim that you had consultations; do not do that.

Bring your programme to the public. Show people what you plan to do and give them an opportunity to participate in your housing programme. Otherwise you will be like the former Minister of Housing, he went to Couva—this “fella”—I do not know what he was doing there. He went to Point Lisas to campaign in the last election, and he said that he was not going to allow people from the

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Opposition with their own sectoral interests and own special agenda to interfere in his attempt to ensure the provision of affordable housing.

Do you know what affordable housing is? Take the lands that have been scorched by the failed Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, put up these high-rise apartments, give them to people from whom you expect their electoral support, and you call that “affordable housing”. That is the most contemptuous way that you could treat citizens of this country.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Eric Williams, the father of the PNM and former Prime Minister, said in *A New Society*, 1970:

“The PNM Government has sometimes gone too far in being paternalistic in providing housing and employment relief.”

They have not benefited from the experience of their father. They have no basis for moving into the future. They continue to practise the politics of 1956 and 1961. In 1961, when this country could hardly read and write, they brought electronic voting machines. I remember in the sugar belt in Basta Hall; there was no electricity, and in addition to having to punch some electronic knobs, you had to pull a lever. At the end of the election, more votes were cast in the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency than were on the electoral list; more votes were cast for ANR Robinson in Tobago than were on the electoral list.

When they faced the reality of a Democratic Labour Party merger, and when they lost the 1958 and 1959 elections, they brought in people from the Caribbean through their open door policy, “Come and live in Trinidad; come down all the boats and settle in Trinidad”. Do you think Laventille was like that? Laventille was not like that; 10 per cent of the lands in that area were not occupied. So in 2003, the policy has not changed, that is: We are going to win at all costs; if we have to build one million homes, we are going to do it.

Do you know what they want, Mr. Speaker? Twenty-four seats; there is this great occupation and obsession with 24/12, 20/10, to get major constitutional changes while they are in government. The housing programme is not intended to alleviate poverty; it is not intended to make our citizens owners of their homes; it is not intended to create a society of peace and stability. It is intended for one reason only, and that is so they can stay in power. The result of that is chaos. The result of that is a society that is splintering; the result of that is many of your entrepreneurs are leaving.

I notice, nowadays, that it is not the people from south/central Trinidad who are talking. Suddenly, something happens in town and the whole church is filled

up. In that church in Port of Spain, the people did not come from Balmain, Penal, Debe and Endeavour; they came from Port of Spain. So now the people of Port of Spain are beginning to feel the impact of a failed Government policy. We are feeling the impact of a failed Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. I do not know if they have put him somewhere else so that institution will now collapse, but I am sure that once he is around the entire health institution will collapse. I understand that his biggest boast is that he will treat the Indian doctors in the way he treated the Caroni workers. Let me warn him that he has a major battle on his hands.

You could dismiss who you want; you could find excuses for the murder of the children in Mount Hope, for which you are responsible. You are incompetent; you do not have any education in the area of agriculture or health, and you go there like a bully in the standard PNM operating procedure—they probably have a standard operating procedure for ministers of Government—and you start blaming other people. One of these days things will catch up with you.

I end by asking the hon. Minister to take a look at his action plan. I do not think that he had any input in this action plan. I do not think that he knew he was going to be demoted from the Minister of Planning and Development to the Minister of Housing. I know that he works for the head of the National Housing Authority who works for the Prime Minister, so I understand his predicament, but the action plan needs to be reviewed. There are some good elements in the plan, but as long as the NHA is responsible for implementing Government's housing programme, we will never solve the problems in Trinidad and Tobago and the attendant problems of crime and other social ills that are taking place.

Look at the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) report, the issue paper, and you will see it clearly identifies that this country is a plural society. It says that the country was ruled, largely, by an Indian government, recognizing the plural nature of the society. It talks about the need to expand the social net in the society, the problems associated with housing and unemployment, yet the Government of this country takes no notice of the concerns expressed by people who are far removed, but who understand the serious problems of Trinidad and Tobago.

I have no problem with vesting this 183 acres of lands in Edinburgh, but I hope that we never have to vest any further lands of Caroni into any one of those housing developments in which you import people and create a lot of social chaos and disorder.

Thank you.

The Minister of Housing (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Mr. Speaker, under normal circumstances, I would engage my colleague from Couva South in much of his argument, but I think the spirit of the Yuletide is already here, and I do not want to spoil it for him or anybody else, or even for myself; so I would postpone my response to a number of the issues he raised.

He raised some very potent issues, travelling from the Industrial Court, to Palestine, to Basta Hall to Balmain and Tobago. He enquired as to whether the vesting would relate to the rentals and whether the people who are renting apartments would be affected. The Bill is vesting lands in the National Housing Authority and allowing it to treat with those lands to third parties. Therefore, this Bill is not talking about what is going to happen with apartments under the Condominium Act conditions. Clause 3 specifically states:

“The demised lands are hereby declared to be held by and vested in the Authority...”

But he does make the very important point that when it comes to treating with apartments—because the NHA is, in fact, building some multi-storey, not high-rise—the ones affected here, if they are multi-storey, would, probably, fall under the Condominium Act. I am not, at this moment, sufficiently au courant with where that legislation is. I do know that, not only in NHA, but elsewhere in the national housing stock, there are conditions and concerns about this condominium-type living, and insofar as those problems apply to NHA units, the points are very valid and well taken.

Specifically, we are talking here about lands and persons who will be accessing title to lands and properties on parcels of land. Clause 5 also talks about the stamp duty that would be applied to the transfer and vesting of lands. I give the Member the assurance that as we move towards treating with the high-rises on Circular Road that he mentioned, the consideration he raised about the need to be cognizant of condominium concerns and high density living, would be taken into account.

Mr. Speaker, I did say that when the instruction was given to vest these lands there were 33 sites to have been vested, and 15 of these sites have been vested. I am not sure, at this moment, whether the Couva sites he mentioned fall under those that have been already vested or whether they are to be. If they have already been, then no problem. If they are to be vested, then he just said that he does not want me to come back here and ask for any lands to be vested. I do not know if that would apply to the Couva ones. The intention is, if the Couva

properties have not been vested, that I will most certainly come back, in the not-too-distant future, to ask the House to allow that vesting to take place under the provisions of this Bill.

Let me clarify something here about the Government's plan and programme: We have two points of view in this country as to how to treat with housing the national population. In fact, if I may say so, one Member of Parliament who was most vocal in bringing this issue very much to the fore, was one of their former colleagues, the former Member for St. Augustine, Mr. John Humphrey, who had a crusade on this issue and brought this matter about the need to have 100,000 housing units built in this country, because the studies had shown that the country should acquire these units if the population is to be properly housed.

I do not think there has been much debate on that; whether the figure is 100,000, 80,000 or 110,000 is not important. What is important is that there are large numbers of people who have determined that they need to be housed. If you do not believe that, check with the NHA, and you will find that there are 40,000 applications from persons who have determined that they would like to access housing in this country. If you do not believe the NHA records, come down to the Ministry of Housing at NHA on any given workday, and you will see the tens or hundreds of people who stream in and out of those agencies, making requests to be assisted with housing.

I have only gone to the ministry a few weeks, and I can tell you that a significant portion of the incoming correspondence to the Minister comes from people who are putting pen to paper to outline their strained circumstances, in some instances, their horrific circumstances, under which they are existing; asking, in some cases begging, to be housed in the national housing programme. I have no doubt that there is a tremendous need for a significant number of housing units in Trinidad and Tobago.

Of the 40,000 applications before the National Housing Authority, 60 per cent are from people who currently reside in the East-West Corridor. The others are roughly split evenly between south/central and deep south Trinidad. So the vast majority of persons who are seeking housing units are from urban or semi-urban East-West Corridor of Trinidad and Tobago, which is not surprising, and should be understandable to anybody.

My friend from Couva South seems to have a problem with everybody in this country on the basis of their race, class, and geography. He does not seem to like anybody, because everybody is a problem for him. He argues, apparently very

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logically, but when you look at the argument, he is speaking from both sides of his mouth.

He was talking down at the Rienzi Complex or in front of members of the East Indian community in Central Trinidad, and he told them what the PNM intended to do. Without providing a shred of evidence, he frightens them, hoping that they would behave like the Palestinians and begin to burn down the country, and he is threatening us that we have people here who would do that. He has been telling them that the PNM intends to bring people from outside to change their community. He said to me today, "Give Laventille people plots of Couva land and allow them to have an ownership in the country," and I agree with that, but rest assured, if I had said that I would be doing that, he would accuse me of racism. [*Desk thumping*] I am very grateful for the invitation. We will do that.

Mr. Ramnath: You will give Couva people Couva lands too?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Of course. Even before we allocated one house, he comes to the place and frightens everybody that we are going to be importing. [*Crosstalk*] I cannot deal with that.

This country is not unknown to us. The difference between the PNM and those on the other side is, if you take a tour around this country from Charlotteville to Bon Accord, to Buccoo, to Carenage, to Diamond Vale, to Mount Hope, to Mount D'Or, to Valencia, to La Horquetta, to Couva, to Chaguanas, to Point Fortin, all over this country these communities have been built with public sector involvement under the PNM.

We make no apologies for having a different policy to those on the other side. As he attempted to outline, when they won the election based on their policies, they went into government and put those policies to work. Those policies resulted in the creation of 6,000 building lots. For the last six years no construction has taken place on those lots, under their policy. [*Desk thumping*] He did say that countries are moving away from public sector construction of houses to lot and latrine. The PNM knows that; we are not following any building lot and latrine policy. That was your policy, which failed. We in the PNM understand the difference to Trinidad and Tobago and those other countries.

In this country, the State is a trustee handling and managing significant inflows of funds on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Instead of spending \$1 billion on an airport shed for your friends to "tief" money, we are going to spend \$1 billion on a housing programme to house people who need to be housed. [*Desk thumping*] We make no apologies for that!

If you had spent the \$1 billion you stole at the airport on a housing programme, many families would today be having a happy Christmas in a decent house. [*Desk thumping*] But no, your policy is different to ours, and that is why you are there and we are here. [*Desk thumping*] We put it in our manifesto. As we went to the people, we said what we would do about the housing problem, and, I dare say, the housing crisis. There is a big difference between the PNM's housing policy and the policy of those on the other side.

In 1994, the PNM engaged in the construction of some housing units in this country, restarting public sector housing construction for the first time after a period of years when they were in government. We had a parcel of NHA land in Glencoe on which NHA built a number of apartments for those persons seeking affordable housing. The minute they came into office, their minister converted the NHA housing in Glencoe to a gated community and gave it to their family from Ellerslie Park. [*Desk thumping*] And today he has the gall to come here and tell me about what PNM policy is and what PNM intends to do?

Mr. Ramnath: I do not have family in Goodwood Park.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I told you that you were not here; stay out of their business. You do not know what they did; do not be an apologist for them. When I came to the Parliament and asked who was living there and why were they giving their family from Ellerslie Park public sector housing in Glencoe, they said that it was not true. When I filed the question and he had to answer, wife sister, wife mother, wife uncle, wife aunt, he said, "That is her family, not mine." [*Crosstalk*] You understand? That was their housing policy.

My friend from Couva South sounds so good; I like to listen to him; he is such a good orator, if you stick with the sound, but the minute you examine the content, you have problems. He comes here and asks me, "What consultation have we had for the housing policy?" We went to build houses in Central Trinidad with no consultation. I want to ask you: When the UNC gave out 600 acres of land to one contractor for a housing programme in Couva, where was the consultation? Who did you consult? [*Desk thumping*] The single largest programme is in Couva, on the way right now. I went there last Wednesday as part of my visit to the units. We are encouraging them to build houses because we want houses built, but where was the transparency you are asking for now? Where was the consultation? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnath: All the persons who are currently living in that housing development in Couva applied in the most transparent manner approved by the

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NHA, were provided with financing by the Home Mortgage Bank and belong to Couva and Central Trinidad.

Hon. Members: Sit down!

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: So, in other words, your accusation that all the units we are building will be for importation of people does not apply to that unit?

Mr. Ramnath: There was no importation.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, as I told you, it is the Yuletide. I will not engage him now, but I guarantee you, I will engage him later.

He said that the National Housing Authority (NHA) is hiding housing forms. I give the Member the assurance that NHA forms will be available at all its offices. So far I have seen forms coming in from Members of his own side, I do not know how they got them if they are being hidden. My understanding is that NHA forms are available to all applicants, and in the event that forms are not available, we will make more forms available. There is no need to hide any forms, because we want to know where the demand is.

In one breath he is saying that we are hiding forms. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is based on the requests from across the country that the NHA is able to determine where the demand is and where to locate. The Member did ask how we determined where we would locate. The demand comes through clearly from the applicants who say where they are from and where they would like to live. He gave the impression that there was some ulterior motive. I can tell you, the vast majority of the housing construction taking place now in the national housing programme is on lands that had already been under the control of the National Housing Authority long before he got involved in talking about padding, hiding and moving votes. These were lands that were earmarked for housing.

Mr. Speaker, when they talk about the country's problems, it is PNM time, but when you look at the fact that for the last 16 years the PNM has been in office for six years. Therefore, if there was a policy of housing construction under those who were in office for the 10-year period that they were in office, those lands earmarked for housing would have been covered with houses. It took the PNM to get back into office and use NHA lands to put NHA houses on, and I have to come here and listen to foolishness. [*Desk thumping*] It is their intention to make assumptions. If those assumptions are wrong then the conclusion would also have to be wrong.

The assumption is that the national housing policy has nothing to do with housing, as he has said. He said so, that the national housing policy has nothing to do with housing, but with votes. What nonsense! Tell that to the 40,000 families who have applied to the NHA. The reason I am ignoring them is because I am not here to serve their nonsensical arguments. I am here to serve the people who have housing needs. [*Desk thumping*] I see them every week; I hear them every day; they write me every week. I know that there are thousands of people here who need housing, so when he says that the national housing policy has nothing to do with housing, but with votes, then he is to be ignored. That is a statement that cannot stand scrutiny in the face of the tremendous demands from those persons who want to be housed.

The Member talked about Caroni lands being seized from those who worked it for the last 150 years. What about those who worked it before? If the land is to be owned by those who worked it for the last 150 years, when Columbus came here it was forest. There were those who cleared the forest and tilled the fields. Do they have any claim? [*Desk thumping*] I am not going there; I am going to start by saying that Caroni lands were owned by the private sector. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago used the resources of the people of Trinidad and Tobago to buy those lands from the private sector and, like any other land: Caroni land, Petrotrin land, it belongs to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ramnath: It belongs to all the people.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: He said that the National Housing Authority is a corrupt arm of the PNM. The NHA has a number of citizens of all political persuasions from all over the country working there. I do not know most of them personally, but I think it is wrong for a Member of Parliament to come here and make a statement about a group of public servants that they are a corrupt arm of the ruling party. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnath: May I correct you? Do not try to score cheap political points. The National Housing Authority is not about those civil servants who work there. It is about those whom you appointed, as a Government, to manage the affairs of that authority. Are you scoring cheap political points?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I will tell you one thing: If it is by government appointment, there is a very good chance that if anybody in NHA is corrupt, you appointed them there. If there is anybody in NHA who is corrupt, it is very likely that person was appointed by you and would have learned it from you, because

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corruption in government and party was the UNC. For a Member of Parliament to come here and say that the NHA is a corrupt arm of the PNM is casting aspersions on public officers that they do not deserve. To tell me about scoring cheap political points, what were you trying to score when you said that? [*Crosstalk*]

The National Housing Authority has engineers, accountants and technicians. You said that the NHA is a corrupt arm of the PNM. That is your view; you keep it. My view of the NHA, with all its difficulties and its moribund experience, under them in particular, is that it will surprise this country by delivering thousands of houses to those who need it. [*Desk thumping*]

He had a lot to say about Lady Hailes Avenue. He did not say it with any measure of reason. He raised the point about the juxtaposition of high-rise houses in an area with a high density of schools and children. I give him the assurance that this is not likely to come to pass for the specific reason that he gave. Of course, the lands were looked at, and the same consideration arose. We are not now proceeding to do any construction of high-rise/low income housing in that area to create the kinds of problems that he spoke about. Of course, he could not wait to find that out. He jumps the gun and accuses us of creating rapists and putting the kidnapping empire at the doorsteps of the school, as if we do not know that these are considerations one takes into account when one chooses the location of housing developments.

Mr. Speaker, he advanced that we should be modern and use the Internet for NHA forms; and I agreed. But he is always talking from both sides of his mouth. When he finished his lovely argument on the use of the Internet, completely ignoring the fact that notwithstanding the efforts of the UNC to ensure that this country's Internet usage is, probably, the lowest in the world, because when they had the opportunity to open up the telecommunications system, so as to increase Internet usage, they interfered with the process resulting in my friend from Couva North being dragged to the court house and found guilty of all kinds of misconduct; the programme of activity which should have seen TSTT demonopolized and competition in the system, and all that resulting in increased Internet usage, today, Internet usage in this country is very poor.

Not many persons in this country are using the Internet, so as much as we would like to be modern, if we put the National Housing Authority application forms on the Internet, how many people in this country would have the ability to use it? And he knows that, but when he cast aspersions on the PNM he raised the issue of the voting machines. He said that we brought voting machines and asked people to vote when they did not have the equipment or the exposure to use

voting machines. So in one breath it was bad to bring voting machines, where you press a knob and pull an arm, but in the next breath we must put NHA forms on the Internet, because if we do not do that we are going backwards.

Mr. Ramnath: That is donkey logic!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: As soon as that makes sense, when the Internet usage reaches a certain level in this country, one can move towards having online applications. We are not there at the moment, therefore, to do that is not to get any applications, because most of the people who apply for an NHA house do not have access to the Internet or computers, and they can thank the UNC for that. When we should have embarked on a system to open up the country's telecommunication system, like everything else, they saw it as a means to feather their own nest, and capsized the whole programme.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we are embarking on changing that. In the very near future, the demonopolization of TSTT will take place, resulting in an opening up of the telecommunication system, which will automatically result in an expansion of Internet usage in this country. We will get that done.

I ask my friend from Couva South: When he talked about PNM bringing "their kind" of people to criminalize the areas, what was he talking about?

Mr. Ramnath: Why do you not quote me properly?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You spoke about PNM bringing "their kind" of people to criminalize Couva South. You said that the reason you cannot walk in Couva was because the PNM brought people from elsewhere and put them in Couva; and you cannot walk in Chaguanas because the PNM brought people from elsewhere and put them in Chaguanas. You went further and told me that the housing developing you were talking about in Couva only have people from Couva. Are you telling me that there is some policy in the UNC that if you were born in one area of the country, you are zoned to live there until you die, because the UNC says you cannot move from point A to point B?

Mr. Ramnath: You do not create the environment for criminals.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: If that is what you are saying then we are rejecting your policy on philosophy. There is freedom of movement in this country, and people are free to live wherever they want to in Trinidad and Tobago, whether you like it or not.

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The people of this country are free to live where they want to live because if you have to build housing units in the east, central and in south, you should be able to move from where you live to where the housing units are available.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Ramnath: And Couva people should be able to live there too.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Of course.

Mr. Ramnath: But they were not allowed.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Who stopped them?

Mr. Ramnath: You. You were not there; you just came.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, the Member mentioned Mr. Rao making some statements. My understanding is that Mr. Rao is the chairman of the company that has been formed to oversee the management of the lands that come back to the State which were under Caroni (1975) Limited. My understanding as a member of the Cabinet is that the Cabinet has instructed that a survey be done of all these Caroni lands to determine their best suitability; committing the best agricultural lands to agriculture; finding out where the best lands are for housing and for industrial development, and so on, and after that is done, depending on what that survey turns up, we would then determine which lands would be reserved for agriculture, which lands for housing, which lands for industrial estates, and so on. That is the position of the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. The National Housing Authority policy is not being run through the Business Development Company.

Mr. Singh: Would the Member give way? I thank the hon. Member for giving way. At the end of the process that the Member is engaged in internally, would he be laying that land development plan? First, would there be public consultation on the land development plan? Secondly, would the Member be laying that plan in the Parliament?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I am sure the relevant Minister would be in a position to answer that, because I am not the Minister for the Business Development Company; there is a Minister responsible for that, so direct that question to the relevant Minister. However, what I did say is that the Cabinet has asked for that survey to be done and that survey would determine utilization and allocation of lands which you will loosely call, Caroni lands.

Mr. Ramnath: Is the Minister saying that the Cabinet has not yet decided and that Mr. Rao's statement to the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation is not with Cabinet authority?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I have no idea what Mr. Rao said and I am not concerned with what he said, I am saying as a member of the Cabinet, that is the position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Rao might have been speaking in some context which is being misrepresented, I do not know. I am trying to assist you with your problem by saying to you that Caroni lands will not be distributed willy-nilly or without a plan or a programme and that the Cabinet understands that and that the Cabinet has asked that these studies be done to determine what the lands can be used for, and it is at that stage that allocations would be made for the various purposes. There is no Rao plan.

I said further, the National Housing Programme is not being run through that Business Management Development Company; it is being run through the NHA, and as Minister responsible for the NHA I know nothing about what you are talking about this evening, about housing to go on "X" road, "Y" road and "Z" road on Caroni lands.

I want to give my colleagues on the other side the assurance that it is not the Government's intention to build houses for the Government supporters or for one kind of people in one part of the country. The National Housing Programme that we have embarked upon is to meet the needs of all persons across Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is why you can come here today and talk about seeing houses being built in the Mafeking area.

I went out visiting the Wednesday before; I went to housing projects in Barataria, Mount D'Or, Valsayn, Arima and Tunapuna. The following visit I went to Caroni, Carlsen Field, Couva and San Fernando. I propose in the not-too-distant future to visit the housing projects in Rio Claro, Point Fortin, Buen Intento, Mayaro and Tobago. What they are saying to us is, do not build any houses anywhere because if you build houses anywhere, you have some ulterior motive. [*Crosstalk*] I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, they have every reason to be fearful of a National Housing Programme because it is quite likely that people who have the opportunity to get state housing would view more favourable those persons who spent Government money on their interest than those persons who are bleating, having spent Government money on other matters. But that is not my problem. My problem and the responsibility of my Ministry's portfolio is to provide housing.

NHA (Vesting) Bill
[HON. DR. K. ROWLEY]

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According to them, if there is land in Barataria, do not build there, because you would affect the Barataria seat; if there is land in Mount Hope, do not build there. They do not want us to build in Barataria because, according to them, we are padding a marginal constituency; they do not want us to build in Tunapuna because we are padding a marginal constituency; they do not want us to build in Caroni because we are bringing in our supporters to win the Caroni seat; they do not want us to build in Couva because we are bringing in people to affect their seat; they do not want us to build in Mafeking. Now where in God's name do you want us to build?

Mr. Ramnath: Build in Tobago.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And then I would ignore you again.

Mr. Speaker, I know their problem. Their problem is that they are fearful that this housing programme would be successful and tens of thousands of persons would be satisfied with Government action in their interest. [*Desk thumping*] So you hear all this nonsense about corruption, lack of transparency, moving criminals into their neighbourhoods, house-padding, hiding forms, and all these wrongdoings you hear them talking about, hoping to discourage and slow down the housing programme.

I want to give my friends on the other side the assurance this evening that I have heard their complaints about the housing programme. Insofar as those complaints have merit, we would try as far as possible to eliminate those complaints. But insofar as the complaints relate to nervousness about the political outcome from satisfied citizens, it is our intention to accelerate the housing programme because tens of thousands of persons need houses in Trinidad and Tobago and it is our manifesto commitment to provide people with housing.

I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

First Schedule.

Question proposed, That the First Schedule stand part of the Bill.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, on page 11 of the First Schedule, I would like to delete “Pleasantville” where it appears twice because those particular areas had been dealt with by state grants. And there are two lines which came in inadvertently at the bottom, reading: “Perimeter plan in existence...” and the other one reads: “Needed urgently sanguine that Director of Surveys...” These should be deleted.

Question put and agreed to.

First Schedule, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Second Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed and I wish to inform hon. Members opposite that it is not the Government's intention to return to this House before January 09, 2004 unless unforeseen circumstances arise. In the spirit of the Yuletide, may I wish all my hon. friends opposite a happy and holy Christmas and a bright and prosperous 2004, and to you as well, Mr. Speaker, the same sentiments.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: And your own colleagues.

Hon. C. Imbert: And, of course, my own colleagues. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): Mr. Speaker, I too wish to join with the acting Leader of Government Business in wishing you and your family, the Clerk of the House and members of the staff of Parliament, and all my colleagues join in extending very warm Christmas greetings. It is our hope that you enjoy a very safe Christmas period and I hope for the New Year that there is health, prosperity and safety.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the question for the adjournment, there are two matters on the Adjournment, both by the Member for Caroni Central. By agreement we would do one, the one on health.

**Mount Hope Maternity Hospital
(High Incidence of Neonatal Deaths)**

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (*Caroni Central*): Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of Christmas I would have postponed this issue but it is really of urgent concern to the national community, and since it was postponed from last week I have to deal with it today.

In the last two or three weeks we have been bombarded in the media by headlines such as: “Crisis looms in the health sector”; “Surgeries cancelled because of no electricity”; “Torn vagina stitched with no anaesthetic”; “Radiology Department closed because of blue flies”; “South doctors cry cover up”; “Shortage of drugs at health centres”; “Save the Babies”, et cetera.

Within the past two weeks as well, there have been no fewer than four editorials on the state of the health sector at present, yet this present Minister who was appointed recently has learnt nothing from his predecessor, in that he intends to preside over the health sector believing that public relations would ingratiate him to the public and cover up his deficiencies.

For the past three or four weeks or so, there have been several reports of deaths of infants at the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital related to enterobacter and the response from the authorities has been nothing short of amazing. That is not surprising because on September 12 this year you would recall that I did raise the issue of deaths at the hospital in this Parliament on that occasion. We had 13 deaths at the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital.

On that occasion the response by the then Minister of Health was: First of all, he denied that these deaths occurred; secondly, he said that the issue was hilarious. He said that he had to deal with a mystery virus every week; then he went on to the second phase of his response where he blamed the administration; he blamed the doctors and nurses; he blamed the UNC and then finally, when he accepted that there were, in fact, deaths related to the enterobacter, he said that he would set up an investigation and heads would roll. The only head that rolled was his. But again, that was not surprising because they have been engaged in heavy cover-ups in the Ministry on major issues affecting the citizens of our country. You would recall that there was a dengue epidemic sometime ago and even though the evidence showed clearly that there was, in fact, a dengue epidemic, the then Minister, his first response as always, denied, and then he blamed the doctors and so on.

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This is a report that we have, dated August 22, 2003 from the Director of CAREC. It is addressed to the Chief Medical Officer at the Ministry, and after detailing the cases of dengue in Trinidad and Tobago which they had confirmed at CAREC, the Director of CAREC, Dr. James Hospedales said, and I quote:

“We can therefore conclude that there is an evidence of dengue fever outbreak which started since June and it is concentrated in South Trinidad and the causative agent appears to be dengue Type 3.”

Yet the Minister denied that there was an outbreak and his response in an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* of August 21, was:

“Politics behind new dengue scare.”

That is the reaction of the Government. Whenever there is a problem in the health sector their first reaction is to deny it. I have in my hand a report from three medical doctors which gives the details of the dengue outbreak—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I think your Motion has to do with the high incidence of neo-natal deaths at the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with that, but I am just saying that there is a pattern that has emerged from this Government that whenever there is a problem, their first reaction is to deny, first of all, that the problem exists and, secondly, to blame others, and I was just giving other instances where this has occurred. In this I am saying I do have the report by three doctors which was done which, in fact, shows that there was a dengue outbreak in Trinidad and Tobago.

As I said, three weeks ago there were reports of deaths at Mount Hope related to enterobacter. There was, in fact, four deaths in one day. Again, the immediate reaction of the authorities was to deny that there was an outbreak. Before any investigations were done; before any reports were received, the first reaction was to deny there was an outbreak. In any neonatal ward in the world, there would be neonatal deaths, but given the fact that there was a recent history of enterobacter infections at that institution; given the fact that there was an unusually high number of deaths at the institution; given the fact that there was a suspicion of the enterobacter bacteria at that point in time, the necessary precautions needed to be taken. As I said, instead of taking the necessary precautions, the authorities denied that there was an outbreak; business as usual and deaths continued.

I do not know what figures the Minister would give this evening but I will give the official figures here, of the deaths that occurred from June to November at the neonatal ward at Mount Hope: in June there were six deaths; in July there

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were five deaths; in August there were 14; in September there were eight; in October there were 13 and in November, the month that we are talking about, there were 24 deaths at the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital.

After denying that there were, in fact, deaths related to the enterobacter, they finally admitted that there were confirmed deaths. I would just like to read from an editorial from the *Trinidad Guardian* of December 04, 2003 in which it says:

“Time for Mt. Hope action...”

I am quoting from this editorial where it says:

“While officials there dither, babies may be dying unnecessarily.

Thirteen babies died in the neonatal unit in August from an infection caused by the enterobacter bacterium.

Officials have said enterobacter is endemic to hospital wards. In that case, scrupulous measures should be taken at all times, not just in the event of an outbreak, to protect patients, especially the most vulnerable who include premature babies.”

The editorial goes on to say:

“In addition, five days after NWRHA first denied an enterobacter outbreak, the medical chief of staff, Dr. Esau Joseph, was reported to have admitted on Tuesday that there was one.

Did the outbreak begin between Friday and Tuesday? Even that is not clear: Dr. Joseph said it had occurred between the last cleaning-up and now.

Did the hospital admit that was indeed another outbreak only because the cleaning crew had arrived to sanitise the ward again?”

The editorial ends by saying:

“This much is clear: the inefficient management in place at the hospital has led to a lack of openness and accountability in dealing with the heartbreaking and possibly avoidable deaths of tiny babies.”

This present Minister is an unknown quantity as far as health is concerned, but if we can judge from his recent past history where he traumatized and terrorized 9,000 sugar workers and their families, then we know what we can expect from him as Minister of Health. I would just like to quote from another article of the

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Sunday Newsday of December 07, 2003. It is an article written by Neidi Lee-Sing Rojas. It starts:

“‘How many more must die?’ This is the question the mothers, whose babies died as a result of an alleged outbreak of enterobacter bacteria at the Mount Hope Maternity’s Neonatal Ward in September, are asking.

They are calling on the relevant authorities to shut down the ward in order to save babies who could be warded at the hospital in the future.

One mother, who wished to remain anonymous, said no amount of compensation can replace her baby’s life.

‘I waited 18 years to have this baby and he only lived for four days and I don’t know if I could have another one,...’

She said while authorities...told her that the baby died due to prematurity, she believes it was because of the suspected enterobacter bacteria outbreak.

She questions reports that several babies died around the same time, with several different complications.

Other parents said, even so, this is a sign of negligence for so many babies to die within a short period of each other.

They are demanding an investigation...

They said if the Minister of Health, John Rahael is sincere in his apology, he will not be part of any cover-up and would ensure that justice prevails for the affected families.”

Another parent went on to say:

“‘All of the parents whose babies died at around the same time said their babies had the same symptoms as ours. All of them had red and blue-black marks all over their bodies and the doctors told us that was because of the bacteria infection...’

‘Right now, we cannot deal with this because we were preparing for this child. The entire family was looking forward to the birth of this child, so for us, this is a huge loss. She was so pretty...’

He said his wife is overcome with grief, so much so that she gets nightmares and they are both restless at night.

They said they can’t even look at baby items without wanting to break down in tears.”

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Mr. Speaker, this is what is happening at the nation's hospitals and we have had recently two Ministers of Health who have come from very privileged sections of the society. They do not understand the plight and the cries of poor people; they do not empathize; they cannot understand what it feels like for a woman who could not have become pregnant for 18 years and then finally when she got pregnant, her baby died because of circumstances that could have been prevented—because of negligence.

When the present Minister of Health dealt with the 9,000 workers at Caroni (1975) Limited, he said that was a good business decision, and I am sure that he would probably say that if 24 children died that is probably a good business decision because that would be 24 less people to feed in this country. I ask him today, do not be involved in any cover-up; to have a heart to do what is necessary to build back the confidence of people so that they could go back to Mount Hope. At present, there are many patients who have been scheduled to deliver babies at the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital who do not want to go there because of what has been happening. I ask him to do whatever is necessary to ensure that confidence is rebuilt among the population who seek services there, because there are 6,000 babies that are delivered there every year. I ask him, do not be engaged in any public relations, but make genuine efforts to make the hospital safe for the babies and the mothers.

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

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Minister of Health in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I wish to state, as I have said before, to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and to fellow Members of this honourable House, that quality health care is the goal of this Government.

The Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Authorities are mandated with this responsibility and together we would ensure that quality health care is delivered to the nation. Quality health care must be and will be delivered at all health institutions and continuous improvements in the health care delivery and quality care management will ensure a healthy nation.

I would now specifically deal with the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital and the neonatal intensive care unit in particular. The Ministry of Health, in its planning and development, ensured that a neonatal intensive care unit was established at the Mount Hope Women's Hospital. The Ministry recognized that care for premature babies was a necessary component of any health delivery

system. Neonates are babies who range in ages from one day to 28 days. They are our young citizens and are in need, not only of care, but quality care.

In October 2003, it was reported that an enterobacter outbreak occurred at the Mount Hope Women's Hospital in the neonatal intensive care unit.

What is enterobacter? Enterobacter is a hospital-acquired infection that manifests in patients who, most often, are immuno-compromised in varying degrees and who are receiving or may have received antibiotics.

4.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: It is now 4.30 p.m. Is it the wish of the honourable House to allow the Hon. Minister to continue?

Assent indicated.

Hon. J. Rahael: In other words, the microorganism enterobacter causes infection of patients during their hospitalization when the patients' immune systems are challenged in fighting the bacteria.

Mr. Speaker, as you would realize in the cases of neonates, it is particularly challenging because their immune systems are very immature. A major cause of transmission of the bacteria is from mother to the neonate, through the birthing process. Transmission can occur to both full gestation births and premature births. Premature babies are immuno-challenged, and thus mother to infant transmission increases the incidence of the enterobacter infections in the hospitals and in the Neonatal ICU.

In response to the alleged outbreak at the Mount Hope Women's Hospital in October 2003, a number of precautionary measures were taken. The Public Health Laboratory was consulted and an assessment was also done with the management and staff of the North West Regional Health Authority.

A professional industrial cleaning company was contracted to sanitize the unit. All walls and work surfaces were replaced and furniture reupholstered. Neonatal cots and incubators were repaired or replaced. Policies and procedures for medical staff attending to babies were strictly enforced. The Infection Control Committee was reactivated, put on high alert and its activities strengthened and reinforced. Scrub suits were issued to all medical staff and ongoing monitoring of the Neonatal ICU Health Care Delivery continued.

After the sanitization of the unit, the Public Health Laboratory analyzed swabs taken from various service areas in the unit and these were all found negative for enterobacter.

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Mr. Speaker, a breakdown in infection control activities resulted in the increase in infection and deaths of the neonates. The person responsible for the infection control and its activities was identified, and that person's contract of employment with the North West Regional Health Authority was terminated as a direct consequence.

The Medical Chief of Staff at the Mount Hope Hospital has identified a range of neonatal deaths in the NICU. These include the following:

1. Severe pre-maturity of organs and systems in the new born.
2. Foetal abnormality of major organs: heart and lungs.
3. Metabolic disease, e.g. electrolyte and glucose abnormalities which can result in organ shutdown.
4. Severe jaundice and its attendant complications in the newborn.
5. Intra-cranial haemorrhaging which sometimes occurs in extreme pre-maturity.
6. Respiratory Distress Syndrome.
7. Morbidity related to extreme pre-maturity.
8. Lack of education in primary health for pregnant mothers.

In any neonatal unit, the above-mentioned diagnoses conditions are not uncommon. Currently the following initiatives are being pursued:

- A. There are ongoing infection control committee meetings and infection control nurses, and quality staff monitoring the neonatal ICU and birthing areas daily, since the month of October 2003.
- B. A second sanitizing operation is currently in process at the neonatal ICU and at the Hospital. An independent assessment and testing of the area is already scheduled with the Government Public Health Laboratory.
- C. Maintenance and cleaning schedules are part of the continuous quality care improvement initiative and are now mandatory in the institution.
- D. Infection control policies are being reviewed and amendments are being made; all part of due diligence of the NWRHA and the Mount Hope Women's Hospital. Medical staff is proactive in the management of care,

and peer reviews are now all mandatory in the monitoring of the Neonatal ICU.

- E. There is also a proposed relocation of the Neonatal ICU to an area in the Eric Williams Sciences Centre. This is under review and the honourable House would be apprised in due course. This move is being contemplated as a result of the many years of wear and tear on the facility's infrastructure. The renovation of the present structure of the Mount Hope Women's Hospital would necessitate a relocation of the Neonatal ICU so that the babies' health would not be compromised.

Mr. Speaker, the incidence of enterobacter in hospitals is a reality and a challenge that all institutions face worldwide. In fact, a steady increase in the isolation of these species has been recorded in the United States since 1976. During the period 1990—1999, in the United States, the enterobacter was the third leading cause of pneumonia cases in all types of ICUs.

Cohorting or isolation is a major intervention to prevent the spread of the bacteria. The equipment and the technique of care is also part of this assessment and appropriate in-service maintenance would be instituted. The Ministry of Health has also played a major role in managing this neonatal unit. On December 11, 2003 CAREC and the Ministry of Health conducted a workshop in Infection Control at the Mount Hope Women's Hospital.

The North West Regional Health Authority and the Mount Hope Women's Hospital are currently assessing and investigating the situation. There is daily monitoring of the neonatal ICU and the risk areas of the hospital. For example, the birth room and the clinics. There is on-going assessment of the facility's maintenance system, equipment and supplies. The assessment and the upgrading is an on-going exercise. At the end of this phase a report would be made available. The Ministry of Health is committed to reducing the risk of this disease.

Mr. Speaker, I give hon. Members a commitment that I would do everything that is possible to ensure that the Neonatal Unit is free of any bacteria. Also, that there would be no cover-up on my part.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the adjournment, may I again thank hon. Members on both sides of the honourable House for expressing sentiments to my family and myself for the Yuletide season.

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And may I reciprocate by offering to hon. Members of this honourable House a happy and peaceful Yuletide season to members of the staff, to the media and to the general public.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.40 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following question was asked by Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (Siparia):

Jamaat Al Muslimeen (Money owed to State)

11. Could the Attorney General state:

- (a) The exact amount of money owed to the State by Abu Bakr and the members of the Jamaat Al Muslimeen (as a result of the destruction of State property during the attempted coup in July 1990) pursuant to the judgment (including interests and costs) of the honourable Mr. Justice Joseph Tam dated January 15, 2001;
- (b) What steps, if any, has the State acting through the Attorney General taken to enforce this judgment since the conclusion of this matter on May 10, 2002 when the Court of Appeal dismissed the Jamaat's appeal?

The Attorney General (Hon. John Jeremie): The following is the response to the above question:

- (a) Justice Tam, by his order in favour of the State arising out of High Court Action No. 2292 of 1994, *Attorney General v. Jamaat al Muslimeen and 114 others*, awarded the State \$15 million with three (3) per cent interest from July 27, 1990 to July 15, 2001 and thereafter statutory interest (now 12 per cent) from the date of the judgment to the day of payment. Thus the sum now due and owing as at the end of November 2003 is \$24,851,917.81
- (b) There are different methods of enforcing a judgment debt. Normally, the first stage in enforcing a judgment is to write a demand letter. If it becomes clear that the unsuccessful party (that is, the judgment debtor) does not intend to pay, then the successful party (that is, the judgment creditor) will register the judgment. Thereafter, the judgment creditor

can proceed to trace and investigate the means and assets of the judgment debtor. This helps in determining what further enforcement measures should be taken.

One such measure available to the judgment creditor is to levy execution against the goods and assets of the judgment debtor once ownership of same has been verified. The Jamaat's case is unique in that it involves a religious organization and one hundred and fourteen (114) of its members.

Since the dispatch of letter dated April 16, 2002, to the Jamaat's Attorney, Mr. Nathaniel King, requesting payment, the judgment has been registered. This was done on September 09, 2002. Since May 10, 2002, therefore, the Office of the Attorney General has registered the judgment.

Dollar for Dollar Programme

20. Could the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education state:

- (a) What is the implementation status of the Dollar for Dollar Programme to date;
- (b) The number of persons who have benefited from the Dollar for Dollar Programme;
- (c) The amount of money expended on the Dollar for Dollar Programme from January 1, 2002 to date;
- (d) The amount of money placed into the Dollar for Dollar Fund January 1, 2002 to date;
- (e) The projected amount to be expended for same?

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): The answer to the above question is as follows:

- (a) The Dollar for Dollar Programme is in operation as it was initially designed.
- (b) From January 2002 to August 31, 2002, three thousand, nine hundred and sixty-seven (3,967) students benefited from the plan. As at the academic period September 1, 2002 to August 31, 2003, seven thousand five hundred and thirty-two (7,532) students benefited from the Plan.
- (c) Forty-seven million, three hundred and twenty thousand, six hundred and forty-two dollars (\$47,320,642) has been expended since January 2002 detailed as follows:

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| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Students' Applications | \$ 47,217,474 |
| Administrative/Operations Costs | 103,168 |
| TOTAL | 47,320,642 |

- (d) The financial status of the Dollar for Dollar Fund as at August 2003 is as follows:

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Total Allocations | \$240,660,000 |
| Add: Interest received—Central Bank Account | |
| 2001 | \$70,219 |
| 2002 | 4,524,186 |
| | 4,594,405 |
| | 245,254,405 |

Less: Releases

| | | |
|------|------------|-------------|
| 2001 | | |
| 2002 | 23,907,796 | |
| 2003 | 35,745,477 | 59,601,132 |
| | | 185,601,132 |

Since there is a balance of \$185,601,132 in the fund no additional money has been placed in it. The expenditure expected on the programme for the fiscal year 2003/2004 is \$60,000,000

**Construction of Housing Units
(Compulsory Acquisition of)**

- 21.** Could the Minister of Housing state:
- (b) Does the Government have a policy with respect to the compulsory acquisition of lands for housing;
 - (c) If so, could he give a brief outline of this policy and advise this House how compensation to occupiers of such lands is computed?

The Minister of Housing (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): The National Housing Authority employs three methods in carrying out its land acquisition.

- (1) **Compulsory Acquisition:** To obtain lands, which do not belong to the State, the Government uses legislation called the Land Acquisition (Act No. 28 of 1994). This Act enables the State to take possession of the

land from the owner by way of a compulsory acquisition and pay for the property.

- (2) **Outright Purchase of Lands (Private Treaty):** To expedite the process, the Authority may decide to purchase a parcel of land directly from the landowner. The following is the procedure:

The comments of the Town and Country Planning Division are obtained with respect to the permitted land use for the said parcel of land.

If lands are earmarked for residential use at the desired residential density, a valuation is sought from a Valuation Surveyor registered with the Institute of Surveyors of Trinidad and Tobago.

Once valuation is received and is acceptable to the Authority, negotiations are held with the vendor to agree on a selling price based on the valuation.

The matter is then forwarded to the authority's board for approval.

- (3) **Purchase/assignment of the unexpired residue of a lease.** In the event that the Authority wishes to obtain a parcel of land which is the subject of a lease, the Authority can enter into an arrangement to purchase the unexpired residue of the lease. The following is the procedure:

- The comments of the Town and Country Planning Division are obtained with respect to the permitted land use for the said parcel of land.
- Valuation is obtained from a Valuation Surveyor registered with the Institute of Surveyors of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Selling price of the land is negotiated with the vendor based on the valuation.
- The matter is submitted to the Authority's Board for approval.
- Once approval is granted the Consent of State to assign the parcel of land is obtained.

Computation of compensation to be paid:

Compensation to occupiers of such lands is computed by the Commissioner of Valuations and/or a Valuation Surveyor registered with the Institute of Surveyors of Trinidad and Tobago. The approval of the Authority's board is obtained prior to the payment of any compensation.

**National Lotteries Control Board
Details of Cost of Foreign Travel**

39. Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): asked the Minister of Finance:

- (a) Could the hon. Minister provide the House with the details of cost to the State and/or the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) of the foreign travel of members of the Board and employees of NLCB for the period January 2002 to October 2003;
- (d) Would he provide a detailed list of the persons who travelled and the dates of their foreign trips and indicate the purpose of each foreign trip and the benefits to NLCB?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): For the period January 2002 to December 2002 members of the board and employees of the National Lotteries Control Board undertook two trips. The total cost of these trips amounted to \$159,591.99.

For the period January 2003 to October 2003, members of the Board and employees of the National Lotteries Control Board undertook five (5) trips. The total cost of these trips amounted to \$310,489.01

Details of the persons who travelled and the dates and purpose of their foreign trips are as follows:

| Name and Position | Date of Travel | Country | Purpose of Visit | Cost | Benefits |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------|--|--------------|---|
| Louis Lee Sing, Chairman | 25—29 June 2002 | Cuba | Ministerial Trade Delegation | \$17,815.65 | |
| Louis Lee Sing, Chairman | November 2002 | Australia | World Lotteries Association Conference | \$141,776.34 | Provided NLCB's decision makers with information on current trends, products, technology etc. within the every-changing |
| Carl Groome, Board | | | | | |

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| Name and Position | Date of Travel | Country | Purpose of Visit | Cost | Benefits |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|---|--------------|--|
| Member Gemma Joseph, Supervisor Instant Lottery | | | TOTAL | \$159,591.99 | Lottery arena |
| Devant Maharaj, Marketing and PRO Gemma Joseph, Supervisor Instant Lottery | 17—21 March 2003 | Texas USA | Seminar— Best Practices Instant Game | \$ 20,085.63 | Allowed NLCB to keep abreast of developments and to benchmark its performance to inter- national best- practices. |
| Louis Lee Sing, Chairman | 5—12 April, 2003 | Sweden | GTECH Sports and Betting Facility Sports Betting | \$ 52,085.63 | Facilitated the training and upgrade of N.L.C.B.'s personnel in marketing and customer relations |
| Norma Lewis- Phillip, Board Member | 27—30 April, 2003 | Mexico | International Lotteries Association Congress Forum | \$ 77,788.48 | Facilitated N.L.C.B.'s exposure to the future challenges including social responsibility, money laundering, global consumer and technology trends and |

| Name and Position | Date of Travel | Country | Purpose of Visit | Cost | Benefits |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|--|--------------|--|
| Patricia Pierre-Joseph, Deputy Director (Ag.) | | | | | security issues which have aided N.L.C.B in formulating effective responses |
| Louis Lee Sing, Chairman Curt Honore, Senior Agent Customer Relations Officer | 1—23 May, 2003 | Boston USA | GTECH's 10 th World Leaders | \$ 53,036.06 | Facilitated the training and upgrade of NLCB's personnel in marketing and customer relations |
| Louis Lee Sing, Chairman | 3-10 October 2003 | Spain | World Lotteries Association Forum | \$106,625.12 | NLCB as a member of various international Lottery organizations, satisfied its responsibility to be represented at international conferences which provided N.L.C.B. with the opportunity to share its success with other industry participants. |