

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PRAYERS****WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, questions for written responses are on the Order Paper. These responses should be passed through the Clerk for circulation. I wish to indicate to the Government that there are several questions for written answers that are past due.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, this is still an unsettled issue with respect to the time period for written questions.

**Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East):** Mr. Speaker, consistent with the Government's approach to accountability and transparency, one would have thought that after the long delay over the Christmas holidays that they would now have found the time—almost in the month of February—to answer these very simple questions.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that some of the questions are really quite onerous requiring all types of information and that is what the Standing Orders considered, the fact that written questions might be of such magnitude that they did not state a time period.

**Mr. Speaker:** All I am saying to the Government is that those that are less onerous should be answered first.

**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following questions were asked by Mr. Subhas Panday (Princes Town):*

**Princes Town Region  
(Street Lights Installation)**

35. (a) Could the hon. Minister of Local Government state how many street lights were installed in the Princes Town region between January 01, 2002 and July 14, 2003?
- (b) Could the hon. Minister state the date each street light was installed giving the name of the streets and light pole number?

**Princes Town Regional Corporation  
(Electricity Costs Increase)**

- 36.** Could the Minister of Local Government state what has been the increase in electricity costs to the Princes Town Regional Corporation as a result of the installation of the street lights in the Princes Town region?

*Vide end of sitting for written answers.*

*The following question was asked by Mr. Nizam Baksh (Naparima):*

**Caroni (1975) Limited  
(Equipment owned)**

- 41.** Would the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources provide this House with a detailed list including registration number, serial numbers and make of all transport, harvesting and ancillary equipment which were owned by Caroni (1975) Limited and which have now been distributed to the organizations/associations/individuals to harvest and transport canes owned by Caroni (1975) Limited?

*Vide end of sitting for written answer.*

**ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS**

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, not to prolong an issue here, but there are three answers today.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 48(2), I seek the leave of the House to deal with the second reading of Bill No. 2 on the Order Paper.

*Agreed to.*

**PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (AMDT. AND VALIDATION) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister and Social Services Delivery (Sen. The Hon. Christine Kangaloo):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Public Assistance (Amdt. and Validation) Act and to validate certain things thereunder, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this Bill to the honourable House this afternoon. One of the fiscal measures announced in the 2003/2004 Budget, was an increase in the disability grant from \$600 to \$650 with effect from December 01, 2003. Other reforms to the disability assistance regime were also approved by the

Government. In order to give effect to these measures the Public Assistance Act, Chap. 32:03, must now be amended. A list of amendments would have been circulated and, therefore, in my presentation I would refer to the clauses as amended.

**Mr. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, we have not yet received the amendments—the hon. Member said they were circulated.

**Sen. The Hon. C. Kangaloo:** Clause 2 of the Bill as renumbered, seeks to amend section 11A of the Public Assistance Act, Chap. 32:03, which provides for the disability assistance.

Clause 2a (i) seeks to amend section 11A(i)(b) of the Act. The existing provision requires an applicant for disability assistance to satisfy the conditions of section 4(1)(b) of Old Age Pensions Act, Chap. 32:02.

Sections 4(1)(b) of the Old Age Pensions Act provides that the person must have been ordinarily resident in Trinidad and Tobago for a period of 20 years immediately preceding the claim for pension or for a period of 60 years in the aggregate.

The applicant is required to be ordinarily resident in the country for at least 20 years. Section 4(2) of the Old Age Pensions Act qualifies section 4 (1)(b) in respect of the computation of residence. The section provides that any periods of temporary absence not exceeding five years in the aggregate would not be counted as periods of absence from Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, clause 2a (i) seeks to delete the existing subsection and substitute a new paragraph (b). The proposed residency requirements for applicants would be as follows: He must be a citizen or resident of Trinidad and Tobago as defined in the Immigration Act, Chap. 18:01, and he must have been continuously resident in Trinidad and Tobago for a period of three years preceding the application. However, he must not have been absent from this country for more than six months in the aggregate.

The following clause seeks to amend section 11A(1)(c) of the Public Assistance Act by deleting the word “forty” and substituting the word “eighteen”. Under the existing sections applicants must be between the ages of 40 and 65 years. The proposed amendment seeks to widen the scope to enable persons between the ages of 18 and 65 years to apply for disability assistance.

The next clause seeks to amend 11A(1)(d) of the Public Assistance Act. In the existing paragraph (d) the applicant must satisfy the local board that he is so disabled that he is unable to earn a livelihood. The amendment would require the applicant to also be certified by a medical officer as being so disabled.

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Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, one of the measures of the 2003/2004 Budget was an increase in the disability assistance grant from \$600 to \$650. Clause 2(b) would give effect to that measure by amending section 11A(3) of the Act.

Clause 2(c) seeks to amend section 11A by inserting a new subsection (5). This proposed amendment would grant the Minister a discretion to approve claims where the applicant has been continuously resident in Trinidad and Tobago for more than 12 months, but less than three years.

This discretion is necessary to treat with genuine cases of hardship. For example, an applicant may have satisfied all the other criteria for the grant but may have fallen one month short of the three-year residency requirement. This would be a case where the Minister would be able to exercise discretion. It must be noted that the Minister's discretion is only in respect of the residency requirement of the applicant and even so, the applicant must have been continuously resident in Trinidad and Tobago between 12 months and three years. The applicant must still satisfy the other requirements of section 11A before he could receive the grant.

Clause 3 of the Bill as renumbered would validate the payment of the increased amount of disability assistance on or after December 01, 2003. The validation is required because the legislation was not amended at that time of the increased payments. The amendments proposed in this Bill give rise to consequential amendments to the Public Assistance Regulations, 1997 and the Public Assistance/Disability Assistance (Prescribed Form) Regulations, 1997. These Regulations have already been drafted and will be made upon the enactment of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to present this Bill to this honourable House.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Manohar Ramsaran** (*Chaguanas*): Mr. Speaker, before I go into my contribution, I extend our deepest sympathies to young Cato who was recently shot. This is something that we on this side are very concerned with; how this incident happened, what took place and we are hoping that the law would take its course. Again, to the family we extend our deepest condolences.

Mr. Speaker, I feel very privileged to join this debate as we discuss and highlight the plight of the differently abled in Trinidad and Tobago. Listening to the hon. Minister, dealing with a serious Bill as we seek to amend the Public Assistance Act—as was mentioned by the hon. Minister, if one looks at the

various increases and other benefits, I believe this is a very important debate that one must attempt to discuss what is taking place with the disabled in this country.

The Government is very negligent in dealing with the very grave concerns that affect negatively the lives of this very vulnerable group. When this disability assistance grant was introduced in 1996, the UNC targeted needy persons with disabilities. They were paid the equivalent of the old age pension.

The Minister alluded to opening up the disability grant to include persons 18 to 40 years. These persons to whom she referred actually receive \$320 in public assistance, so to mislead the country that they are now going to receive \$650 is, in my opinion, an increase from the \$320 that they are receiving today from the public assistance.

During the last political campaigning we heard the Prime Minister promise that the disability grants would be increased to \$1,000 and the age reduced to 18 years. Of course, this did not happen.

**Mr. Manning:** Would the hon. Member be kind enough to give way? Mr. Speaker, it is just not correct to say that in campaigning we promised a disability grant of \$1,000. We did not. We said that the disability grant would be reviewed and increased, and we did not know what the quantity would have been, nor at the time were we aware that we were also going to expand the net.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, I heard quite clearly that the age was being reduced. However, we would have the evidence one of these days on many of the things that are being denied in this Parliament. This did not happen. Even persons with disabilities were conned during that campaign. The reality is that this Bill proposes an increase of \$50 to \$650 per month. As I make my contribution I will show where this increase is not at all sufficient to deal with the problems that face the disabled in this country.

Recently the National Insurance Act was amended. During that debate it was pointed out by my colleague from Naporima that even in that Act the disabled was discriminated against. For example, those persons would not be receiving much more than \$700 to Class 6 per month. Again, this shows the level of discrimination against the disabled in this country. The persons who fall within the 18 to 40 age group will receive, as wildly promised, I say guardedly, no \$1,000 but an increase from \$320 to \$650. May I say I welcome small mercies but I will point out as I continue the discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Disabled Persons International was punished by the People's National Movement. How long have they been on their wheelchairs outside the

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National Flour Mills? Lest someone shamelessly gets up to score cheap political points, let me put on record what was done by the UNC with respect to persons with disabilities.

The UNC laid in Parliament the policy to deal with the disabled population. Of course, two years have passed and nothing has been done by this administration to review, revisit, or amend this policy. Despite that every day the plight of the disabled worsens. No such thing was done. The UNC set up a disability affairs unit, a place where the issues affecting persons with disabilities or differently abled would be attended. This unit was manned by experienced officers in the area of disability. There was a board in place to oversee the changing face of the disabled. The manager of the National Centre for Displaced Persons in San Fernando, one of the premier NGOs dealing with the development of this category of socially challenged persons, was named as its first chairperson. This unit was given the responsibility to ensure the rights of the differently abled in Trinidad and Tobago.

In 1996, the United National Congress dealt extensively with problems facing the disabled and it introduced the disability grant. It was said in the debate that the UNC government decided, because of the studies conducted over time, that persons with disabilities, those on wheelchairs, and so on, their lifespan would not normally exceed 40 years, to reduce the pension age from 65 to 40 to deal with this vulnerable group and that is why it was paid the equivalent of the old age pension.

Let us look at what is taking place with this Bill. Let us look at clause 2 as amended. I want to read it into the record. Clause 2(a) would amend section 11A of the Public Assistance Act, Chap. 32:03, by deleting the existing provision and substituting a new provision which would stipulate that an applicant for a disability grant must be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, and must have been continuously resident in this country for a period of three years preceding his claim, provided that he has not been absent from Trinidad and Tobago for an aggregate period exceeding six months.

I ask the question: Why this reduction from 20 years to three years? Does this have something to do with importing the disabled to vote in Trinidad and Tobago? I am extremely worried. And when one turns the page to clause 2(c) it would amend section 11A by inserting a new subsection to grant the Minister a discretion to approve claims where the applicant has been continuously resident in Trinidad and Tobago for more than 12 months but less than three years. In my opinion, this smells of something that is not at all right. Because if you are giving

an allowance to persons 18 years and above, why three years? Where were these persons before age 15? And this is going to the lower end of the age. I want an explanation as to why this major manoeuvre from the present system? If one looks at the parent Act—and I want to read it so that the people would be reminded of what is taking place. One has to ensure that one cannot come to this Parliament and do what one wants. This is a main programme for the social welfare department. Persons must be resident in Trinidad and Tobago for twenty years preceding the date of claim, allowance of five years, an aggregate within the said 20 years, provided that sixty—this is for the pension and those who are applying for the disability. And I would like, I am sure all the persons who are concerned about what is taking place in this country about the rights of persons, would like to know also why this major shift from the present system. Is the hon. Minister saying that this is a thank you to the new residents recently imported? I would like an acceptable explanation for this.

Mr. Speaker, one would hear the groans on the other side but I remember when the government of the UNC, because of the problems in the country, and in keeping with the United Nations directive to deal with children in this country, UNICEF dictated to it that there were thousands of children in this country who were not registered at birth because of poverty and other areas and that very Minister for Diego Marin Central accused the then attorney general of doing something that was illegal. And today, wherever we go in this country, people are very grateful for that opportunity to register their births, 18, 20, 30 years after, although that has not yet been thoroughly done because there are still persons who have not yet registered.

Mr. Speaker, I ask with all sincerity, why this move and would someone tell us why this major shift?

They are looking at reducing the age. As I said before, I have no problem with that except persons under age 18, a disabled child—you open the net, it should be all-inclusive because persons with disabilities, parents who cannot afford to deal with children, they are receiving \$88 per month—I stand corrected on that but that is a far cry from the \$650—and we should look at that.

Disability is experienced by at least 15 per cent of our population in one way or the other. It is an experience that would touch most of us at some time during our lives. Fifteen per cent or 200,000 Trinidadians and Tobagonians have a disability and about half of these individuals have a severe disability affecting their ability to see, hear, walk, or perform other basic functions of life. The hon. Minister alluded to it but did not explain some other measures and I do not know

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if we would hear them later in the debate. Significant barriers still exist for individuals with disabilities who try to participate fully in our society.

Persons with disabilities want to be employed, educated and be active citizens in the community. Unfortunately, on the average persons with disabilities have a lower level of educational attainment and are poorer and more likely to be unemployed than those without disabilities. In today's economy we must be able to draw on the talents and creativities of all citizens.

Mr. Speaker, in today's environment there is still hostility towards the population of the disabled and I would like to put on the record of *Hansard* that there be more projects and programmes to understand the disabled or the differently abled as they prefer to be called.

Recently, the visually impaired or, as we commonly refer to them, the blind population, came to me and requested the use of my grounds in Munroe Road—I am the chairman of that club still. They wanted to use our grounds to practise, and I looked at them—what is happening here? When I spoke to Mr. Bhagwanie Persad and his group, they are willing to take part in the cricket world cup in Australia later this year. When I looked at those persons with varying degrees of blindness playing cricket it was amazing. The coaches had a difficult time. They put something to make noise in the ball and the ball is rolled towards the batsman, the batsman waits on the noise and then swings, hit or miss, and runs are scored accordingly.

Despite the fact that there is hostility towards this sector of the population, they are willing to take the leap forward. And I am asking this Government to look at the policies that deal with the disabled. Maybe they are not perfect. I am not saying that anything that is done is perfect because I like to use the quotation that yesterday's solution might not be today's solution. But the fact is one has to look to see how one could improve the quality of life of our disabled population or the differently abled. And there is a clarion call especially from this side to enforce the Equal Opportunity Act. And today, for those who remember, there is a special section that deals with the disabled and the equality and equity of treatment for the disabled community in Trinidad and Tobago. So I am calling on the Government once more, if it is only for the disabled in this country, let us ensure that the Equal Opportunity Act is implemented. I believe that these people's rights must be enshrined and respected by the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. To increase their lot to \$650 per month and one could even go into the cost of living today, as there are many publications about the cost of living.

If one looks at \$50 and \$600 that is about 12 per cent, but if one looks at the cost of living in this country today, one would see, for example, that chicken has

been increased by 19 per cent, gas prices have been increased by 16 per cent which would have a negative impact on almost all spheres of life in Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to just read into the record so that it would show that this \$50, especially for persons with disabilities who would need special transport—As a matter of fact, as I mentioned the word “transport”, the UNC government approved four specially fitted buses for persons with disabilities in this country in the year 2000 or 2001, and up to this day that has not been fulfilled by the caring Government on that side—they deliver because they care. Who do they care about? They care about themselves and their supporters.

The hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago goes around this country and talks about “my people”, “my supporters”. We are all tax paying citizens of this country and we must be treated equally. At least, spare a thought for the disabled in this country.

“With the increase in the price of rice on the local market, consumers are naturally concerned about having to pay more for a basic food item. And, even though persons in the public service have gotten increases in salary, we all know that rising prices is always of concern to us since approximately 30 per cent of the population is said to be living at or below the poverty line.”

I will make certain points as I go on to deal with the poor in this country in a manner that, if the Government listens, Trinidad and Tobago would be a happy place.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. When I, and hon. Members on this side use the term “my people”, we are, in fact, referring to all persons of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. M. Ramaran:** Mr. Speaker, somehow or the other, when “my people” is used and “my supporters” must be treated in a certain way, houses would be given to persons in a certain way—the hon. Member visited Enterprise, all three local seats, are PNM’s. He visited La Horquetta; he visited Carenage, and they are spending \$5 million of taxpayers’ money to do projects there. Are these the people of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Speaker, I want you to understand that when you use the words, “my people” as a politician and as Prime Minister, you are alluding to the fact that these are PNM supporters. That is my interpretation of what is taking place.

“With respect to individual food items, the Consumer Affairs Division noted a fall in prices on seven items when prices were compared...”

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So there was a drop in prices.

“Corned beef, (2.33 %);

Tinned tuna (2.63 %)

This is the Ministry of Consumers Affairs so it must have its political bias.

“Spaghetti (1.69 %).

Peanut butter (3.70 %).”

But listen to this. They put this in big bold writing; and in small writing.

“The largest percentage increases was “recorded on the price of frozen chicken (21.43 %)...”

From \$50 to over \$600. If you multiply it one would get about 13 or 14 per cent increase in basic commodity for the table and for the baskets of our less fortunate and disabled persons in this country.

Powdered milk, again a basic food, 16.22 per cent.

**2.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but—[*Interruption*] The increase is 8 per cent, 3 per cent is wrong. It is 8 per cent, but here you are paying a 16 per cent increase in the price of gas. You pay 16 per cent on flour. Somebody said eat cassava, but do you know the price of cassava in Trinidad and Tobago? Five dollars per pound. We have to understand what is taking place. These people have lost touch with the people of this country.

“...corn flour (12.86%).

Data from the ...(CSO) showed that the price of foodstuff to consumers went up higher than any other consumer item for the year 2002.”

They are giving a little here, and as I say we have no problem with that. But listen to this:

“Data from the Central Statistical Office (CSO) showed that the price of foodstuff to consumers went up higher than any other consumer item for the year 2002.”

Mr. Speaker, talk, talk, talk and not dealing with the problems of this country would send this country down the path that we would not want it to go. I am sure you read yesterday's and today's *Daily Express*, but that is another matter which I would go into: maybe, during another debate.

“The CSO gathers data which allows us to monitor the movement of prices. In the latest Index of Retail Prices, the data shows that prices went up by 6.9 per cent from January 2002 to January 2003.”

This continues to climb.

Mr. Speaker, do you know something? I want to announce to the country that prices fell in the following areas:

“Drink and tobacco, 0.1 %

Clothing and footwear, 1.3 %

Transportation, 1.0 %

Housing, 0.6 %”

Bravo to the Government, at least they have something that costs less.

When the Government introduces this \$50—I know that the Minister alluded that there are other advantages for the disabled that would be announced, I am sure that the disabled population of this country is waiting. My early call is why not pay these people \$1,000 per month? [*Desk thumping*] Why the discrimination? When this was introduced by the UNC it was to the equivalent of the old age pension in 1996. I remember the hon. Member for Arouca North got up in that debate and congratulated the government and chided the then Member for Oropouche for asking for a \$12,000 per annum ceiling. He congratulated the government then for introducing this. I want to know if he does not have a voice in the Cabinet today.

Mr. Speaker, I looked through this Bill and despite the fact that it is \$650, even the Bill does not make sense because the ceiling has remained at—

**Mr. Narine:** Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to ask the Member for Chaguanas, on what date that was said and if he has the *Hansard* to pass it on to me, please.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, some of the times these “fellas” ask questions and—He will get the answer; I have the *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker, \$650 per month, and the ceiling remains at \$3,600. This does not make sense to me. It should have been at least 12 by \$650 to allow people with disabilities—You reduced the period from 20 years to three years. What is the politics behind that? What is the explanation? Why not increase the ceiling? Thirty six hundred dollars means that people who receive the small token of \$300

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to \$400 per month from the National Insurance Board would be denied getting this disability allowance.

I am calling on the Government to increase the ceiling from \$3,600 to at least \$8,000 in the first instance so that we could give the people an opportunity to access this disability grant.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Twelve thousand dollars because the minimum NIS is \$1,000.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** No, no, the disability allowance is much less.

Mr. Speaker, as we go on I would like to just finish the rise and fall of prices. I did a little survey in my constituency. Listen to what has happened. I remember asking the hon. Minister of Finance, the Member for San Fernando East, to please withdraw the increase in gas prices because we do not need that. He boasted throughout the debate that we have surplus, moneys coming into the country and so on. I asked him to at least spare the poor people of this country the increase in the cost of gas, and, of course, in his own arrogant manner he did not do that.

Maxi-taxi fares: Chaguanas to Curepe, before that honourable increase by the hon. Member, was \$3.00, now \$4.00, an increase of 33.3 per cent; Chaguanas to Enterprise—the hot spot—\$1.50 before, now \$2.00—streetlights are not going to help to pay that; Port of Spain to Chaguanas, \$3.00 to \$4.00. Taxi fares: Chaguanas to Curepe, \$4.00, now \$5.00; Chaguanas to Port of Spain, \$5.00 now \$6.00; Chaguanas to Felicity, \$2.00, now \$3.00; Charlieville to Chaguanas, \$2.00, now \$3.00.

This is what is happening with this Government in this country. I want to say that we must understand the plight of the disabled, especially. Most times a disabled person in a wheelchair, especially the visually impaired, would have somebody accompanying him or her to go to get medical help or to collect their pittance of \$650. They would need two people to get into a taxi and when they pay this fare they end up with nothing; if they save something and go to the grocery, more problems.

Mr. Speaker, I read earlier that they decreased housing by 0.5 per cent, but before me I have a form from the National Commission for Self-Help Limited, “Minor Repairs/Reconstruction Grant (MRRG)” facility for destitute families and Senior Citizens. The form asks for the applicant’s age, whether you are widowed, address, occupation, monthly income and 9, “Illness or Disability” and medical certificates to support that and so on. This is where more problems would arise.

I remember going to Cabinet to have this Minor Repairs/Reconstruction Grant Facility approved. This was meant to address the issues of the disabled and the less fortunate in our society.

Mr. Speaker, the form—I could lay it in Parliament—is all-inclusive, as they say. We examined the individuals to ensure that they really qualified for this grant. In addition to that you must have:

- “(1) Three (3) Quotations from three (3) different hardwares for each project not exceeding Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00)
- (2) Evidence of Land tenure...”

Because governments are not expected to build houses for people without proper tenure. The people in charge of NHA would break down the houses or the owners of the land would move in with a bulldozer, as is being done today, and “mash up the house” so to speak. So, we put these stipulations in place to deal with that.

“(3) RENTAL:

- (a) Copy of rent receipt
- (b) Letter from landlord authorizing the repairs/construction
- (c) Copy of landlord’s deed or land tax receipt”

and, importantly,

“(4) Organizational assistance form to be signed...”

Mr. Speaker, I am going through this because the hon. Prime Minister got up this evening and tried to describe who is “my people”. I want to read a little more because, as I said before, we put all the information in this form so people will not be misled.

“THE PROGRAMME :                   A minor repairs/reconstruction grant facility...is to be administered by the National Commission for Self-Help Limited (NCSHL)...  
A maximum of \$10,000.00 per project on a first-come-first-served basis and up to a total of 15 %...”

As I said before, if asked I would lay this in Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, this was approved by Cabinet, I think it was, in 1999. I have in front of me here, “\$5 million for walk-about promises”. I want to read just part:

“Ramkumar said ‘quick action by his organization to bring relief to communities in dire need was in keeping with Self-Help’s Commission to support Government’s measures to alleviate poverty and achieve developed country status by 2020’.

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For instance, he said, an Enterprise woman suffering from epilepsy has received a \$23,000 grant from Self-Help to repair her home.

Ramkumar said this initiative was part of the Minor Repairs/Construction Grant Programme managed by his organization in conjunction with the Ministry of Community Development.”

Mr. Speaker, the form is for \$10,000. The Chairman of the Commission for Self-Help, aided and abetted by the Prime Minister of this country, is breaking the law of Trinidad and Tobago. Thirteen thousand dollars more than was approved. I read it into the record. Did this person qualify to receive the Minor Repairs/Reconstruction Grant? Did that person have three quotations, a copy of receipt and so on? I would give way for the hon. Prime Minister to get up and tell me why he instructed the chairman of the Commission for Self-Help to break the law of Trinidad and Tobago and to take the money that has been allocated to the disabled and poor people in Trinidad and Tobago who would benefit from this programme? This is breaking the law of the country.

Mr. Speaker, let me put it on the record that the Commission for Self-Help was started under the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) and the initiatives taken then were to deal with a system for poor people in this country.

**Mr. Ramnath:** I was fired in 1987.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** No, that was before you were fired. The concept, as the name implies, is self-help. You have to have one-third of the money, a group supporting you, organize yourselves into community groups and then you apply to the Commission for Self-Help. The board would then sit, send an officer to examine the project, the officer would make his report and then the board would approve and such project would start.

Here we have \$5 million for walk-about promises. This country is a banana republic. We know the Minister would one day come here and say, “We approve this and we approve that, we have the majority, a money bill is a simple majority”, we will say “aye” and “nay” and he would have his say.

Mr. Speaker, let me go into the budgetary allocations for last year. In the year 1998—1999 the Commission for Self-Help was given \$4.465 million; in 1999—2000, \$4 million; in 2000, \$4 million. That is under Self-Help. Then they aided the Commission for Self-Help under the Ministry of Planning and Development.

This fancy Government, led by a banana-type leader, the Minister of Finance, has given the Commission for Self-Help \$2 million, yet we have \$5 million for

three districts—\$5 million for walk-about promises. I call for the immediate resignation of the chairman of the Commission for Self-Help, but this was aided and abetted by the Member for San Fernando East. I have reliable information that he telephoned all the chairmen of corporations to walk with him or be fired. They had no choice but to walk.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put it on record, lest people misunderstand me. I have no problems with these areas receiving the assistance outlined here, but we have the Ministry of Local Government. Does he have no confidence in the Minister of Local Government to deal with these projects? What about the Minister of Works and Transport? Has the Minister of Works and Transport lost his authority in dealing with these problems?

The hon. Prime Minister was recently heard saying that he wants to give power to the local government authorities. Why this? Why the Commission for Self-Help? We can go further. The IADB, which funds the Commission for Self-Help, in part, told me, when I was minister, that the Commission for Self-Help and SHARE must never be seen to be political. What are we seeing today? All these laws are being broken. I am calling on the Member for Arouca, the Minister of Planning and Development, to investigate this immediately. If she has the guts, she would ask the chairman of the Commission for Self-Help to resign. If he resigns the Prime Minister must resign too because he, the Member for San Fernando East, is encouraging people to break the laws of the country.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that people would understand that the money for the poor and disabled people of this country must never be touched. There is no reason why the Minister could not come here and announce—I am sure she would have done that with pride—\$1,000 for all disabled people in this country, but the money is to be spent elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill before us—I want to examine a couple of other clauses because I know the Minister was advised to keep the debate tight and not open. The fact that it was announced that they have more gifts for people with disability we have to understand a few of these changes being made here.

The Member for Nariva and I had a conversation recently and there was this application form which originated from the Ministry of Social Development to deal with this disability grant. When I asked the question of why three years—In addition to that form—I understand the form asks for name, disability, what have you, and this form also asks for race.

**Mr. Ramnath:** What?

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Race. I want to say that when the Prime Minister talks about “my people”, we in this country are confused. I believe that Trinidad and Tobago should have now come of age to deal with Trinidadians as “my people” meaning people of different races and so on because some of us have problems to say what our race might be. I am asking the Minister to get in touch with her colleague from the Ministry of Social Development—it may be her ministry, I do not know, as it is split up so badly—to look at that form again. If I am wrong in making that accusation tell me so, but I would like that cleared up.

Mr. Speaker, there is another clause on which I would like some clarity. This has to do with people certified as being disabled.

“in paragraph (d) by deleting the full stop and inserting the words ‘and has been certified by a Medical Officer as being so disabled.’;”

I have with me here a ruling of the High Court and I would like to read it into the record and, maybe, if the Minister is not aware she should be aware. This is the case of Chandardaye Ramjitsingh v. The Central Public Assistance Board which is subtitled “A guide to Assessing a claim for disability assistance”. I would read a couple of paragraphs into the record:

“1. Grounds of Judicial Review

- There was no evidence upon which the disallowance of the application before the Central Public Assistance Board could have been founded (and as such)
- The Board exercised its power in so unreasonable a manner that no reasonable Board could have exercised.

Procedural impropriety: The Applicant contended that she should have been told of the opinion formed by the Secretary of the Board that she was able to cook clean and wash for him and as such was not disabled for the purposes of the grant and she should have been granted the opportunity to refute such allegations before the Board.”

Mr. Speaker, I find it reprehensible, that somebody could tell the applicant that she was able to cook, clean and wash for him. This ruling touched on the schedules, the “Statutory Test” and “Total disability is not a statutory test!” They went on, but I want to read the Summary so that the Minister will take note.

- “1. Apply the Statutory Test: whether the applicant is in the opinion of the Local Board so disabled that he is unable to earn a livelihood. This does not mean that the applicant must be totally disabled.

2. Assess the Evidence: The statute allows the Local Board to form an opinion on the issue. This discretion should not be arbitrarily exercised and should be guided by the following:
  - Medical reports of the doctors which should be keenly perused with a view to analyzing not only the extent of the disability but also the effect of the disability on the applicant's ability to earn a living.
  - Observations made at interviews, which should be subsequently documented.
  - The circular issued by the Central Board dated June 26, 1998.
3. Neither should the Board's discretion be fettered. The Board is not bound to blindly accept a report or other assessment from a medical or other practitioner. If necessary, the Board should exercise its power to summon before it any person who it believes might be instrumental in clarifying any ambiguities that might arise in assessing any applicant's claim.
4. In preparing a Notice of Disallowance, the Board should fulfill its duty to give reasons to an applicant whose claim has been disallowed by briefly outlining the principal factors that were taken into consideration in its decision to reject the applicant's claim."

Mr. Speaker, what is put into the Act is that—despite this amendment, from what I have been told—the board still has a discretion in allowing a disability. We should clear it up as to whether it is the medical officer who is the final arbiter or the board that should make that final decision. This is important as we assess people with disabilities.

I want to put that on the record and before I am accused of only trying to shoot down other things—

**Mr. Breaux:** Could the Member please give me the reference for that case?

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** I could give the Member a copy of this. [*Interruption*] It is not mentioned here. This is the circular from the ministry, it was not mentioned here.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister alluded to the fact that we should now look at the other areas that we should assist with disability. And lest I am accused of just criticizing, when you look at what is taking place in this country and the whole question of disabled persons—I mentioned earlier that the UNC put a clause to

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deal with equal opportunities for the disabled. I want to read some recommendations into the record. The Minister of Works and Transport can attest to this: there is a lack of coordination among agencies or of material progress in key enforcement areas identified over recent years as needing reform; failure to include persons with disabilities among those protected by hate and crime laws; failure to stem the discrimination by employers.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I said before, I was trying to make some recommendations that would be taken in tow by that administration. I do not know if dropping asleep as soon as you sit is a disability. We could call on my doctor friends on this side to have a look at that.

As I said before, there is a lack of coordination among agencies; there is a failure to stem discrimination by employers in this country against people with disabilities. Let us see how we can look at that very seriously because, as I alluded before, 15 per cent or thereabouts of the people in this country are disabled. The insurance companies have a prejudice against people with disabilities. When we talk about disabilities and the problems that disabled persons face—that is why I say from time to time, when Ministers come to this Parliament to deal with a problem and to plaster the sores, I have a problem with that.

I believe, yes, it is a simple increase of \$50, an increase that does not satisfy the needs of the people with disabilities, but at least come with a plan. I have numerous reports in the ministry—I have a few with me—about what to do with people with disabilities and so on. Come to this Parliament and tell the nation, “We are now addressing the problems faced by people with disabilities.”

Discrimination by employers and insurers: There is need for continued outreach to people with disabilities from diverse cultural groups who face cultural, racial and other barriers to full participation in society and who interact with the issues posed by societal reaction to their disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I said it before, if the Government does not lead the way in dealing with people with disabilities, then how can the society follow? For

example, these people who were outside the National Flour Mills, the way they were treated; nobody talked to them; nobody gave them that sense of hope.

Again, lest they attack me, when we were in government and there were certain strikes by the blind or visually challenged in this country, within 24 hours I visited them and solved the problems they faced. [*Desk thumping*] That did not happen with this Government and we must put it on the record.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time the successes of special education should not be overlooked. Just imagine for a moment—I said it before—that people who are physically and mentally challenged are normally slow learners who end up at the bottom of the economic ladder and are poorer. If a government, instead of sending back \$40 million to the Treasury from the Ministry of Social Development—the last appropriation budget—and saying that they cannot set up homes to deal with children at risk, the mothers' programme and others, and transferring some for a Minister to travel to Malaysia, I believe—[*Interruption*] I do not know which of the Ministers, but one Minister travelled to Malaysia with money that was passed.

I want to put this on the record and it can be investigated. When we were in government, I remember our prime minister telling us that money that has been allocated to deal with other problems should never be used for travelling. Here we have money that was allocated to people, poor people who are challenged in the society, being moved from that vote to send a Minister and his delegation to Malaysia. The Minister should get up and tell us the cost of that trip and what importance it was to the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

### **2.30 p.m.**

I would like the Government to look holistically at the education system that, in my opinion, should get an overhaul and to deal with the people with disabilities in this country. There should be more monitoring and more enforcement of the rules if they have any, to deal with this problem.

Mr. Speaker, in Trinidad and Tobago, health care of people with disabilities is a far cry—I mean the whole health care is in crisis, but especially the disabled. For example, we know that in certain hospitals in this country children with disabilities are allowed to sleep on the floor. There is no place for them, Mr. Speaker. I am calling on this Government to continue to improve the care—give them specialized care; do an overall. When these things are done and the Government comes to this Parliament and talks about that, then I feel that “my people” could be very happy.

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The cost of pharmaceuticals for these people with disabilities—I am sure my colleague from Caroni Central will let you know that the cost of medication and pharmaceuticals to the people with disabilities is astronomically high. We need to look at the overall care of people with disabilities.

We go on to the youth. The disabled youth—especially those 18 years and under—deserve to be treated better, so that when they become adults they would be given the chance to have a better lifestyle. They need better housing. I remember when Marvin Lee was injured and disabled for the rest of his life, as it turned out, the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation wrote the Ministry of Community Empowerment and Sports and we gave them a grant to build this house specially fitted with equipment to deal with Mr. Marvin Lee.

I think that we should not wait for someone to be a national hero for us to treat him as such. We can look at the whole question of housing, education, health care and employment for every one with each of these areas on some subject of particular concern and importance to our youth with disabilities. That is why I am so disappointed that in two years a policy to deal with disabled persons has not come to Parliament to be debated, so that we can make a meaningful intervention in the lives of the people. That is why I must congratulate the National Centre in San Fernando and one or two such areas where the youngsters are given the hope to deal with the problems they face.

I must commend two NGOs for what they have done in the central constituencies. There was this church group with 20 visiting doctors and medical personnel who, for one week, gave to the people of Felicity and surrounding areas free health care. They saw over 1,000 persons and they should be commended. There is the Rotary Club of Chaguanas, under the chairmanship of Mr. Guptar Seepersad. They had visiting Rotarians from Washington in the USA and I understand that \$1.3 million worth of wheelchairs was given to people with disabilities in this country. These people should be commended. What is that Government doing to deal with people's disabilities? When last have they bought a wheelchair for someone? We cannot understand what is taking place.

I also want to put on record that we in this country must not only talk, we must put our action in place. We all say service to humanity is service to God. You pray, but if you do something to help the less fortunate in society, then you can talk about that.

The other area I want to talk about is the long-term services and support. Of course, this has to do with the grants that are paid. I know the problems the

Minister faces from time to time—I have been talking to some people from the Ministry and I understand what is taking place—but at least she should try to go to Cabinet to see how she can examine the fundamental problems that face our disabled people and see how we can get them to live better lives.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on employment for a brief moment. When we were in office, I remember our URP offices used to have disabled people working there. I am sure that Members on this side would remember that. What is happening today is that these people have no chance to work with the Government of the day and they are becoming poorer and poorer.

As I said, the Ministry has enough evidence to support what I am talking about. For example, there was recent research done by the Ministry and I would ask the Minister to look at this report that I have in front of me. We have the needs and the possible solutions. I have alluded to a few of them; I would not go back to read all. Just to read one that I would like to put into the record:

A modern welfare system which does not cater for all the needy cannot be an effective one. Equal opportunity considerations alone suggest that the able-bodied as well as persons with disabilities alike must be eligible for welfare provisions so long as their current necessitous status is not engendered by self-imposed beliefs and lifestyle. The mere presence of need and willingness to overcome that need would be a basic empowering demand in state to provide for its resolution. The committee recognizes, however, that this must be tempered by the availability of resources.

Mr. Speaker, we have the boast from that side that resources is no problem.

This is bothering me. I have been discussing it with many persons over the last couple days. I am calling on, if not the Government, the national community to condemn what is taking place in the Self-Help Commission. It hurts that in the constituency of Chaguanas alone about 12 projects have been approved since 1999/2000, but to date they have not been started. Yet today the Prime Minister walks, waves a big stick at the chairman and suddenly \$5 million will be found to do these couple projects.

I want to put on record something that happened at the Self-Help Commission recently. Let me tell you the genesis of it. When I read this letter into the record you will understand what is taking place in that institution. Money that is supposed to be spent to assist people with disabilities in dealing with their problems and in building homes for them has now been used politically.

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Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chanka Ramtahal, who was the Project Officer, was faced with many problems and he decided in his mind that he would resign. You know, in today's world this would take some doing because you have to study the alternatives. Maybe on a day that he was fed up, he decided to resign. He wrote this resignation letter and left it in his drawer, unsigned. It was found by another employee who gave it to the chairman who accepted the resignation. When Mr. Ramtahal intervened, he was waved away and the matter has been brought before the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

I want to put on record, before I read the letter, that it was taken from the drawer of the employee and not handed officially to the power-that-be. To me, this is the most atrocious form of discrimination I have ever seen. I will read the entire letter because this is serious.

I want the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) to understand it. Money is given to this Government to deal with social problems; to eradicate poverty; to improve the quality of life of our people and what is taking place is that the hon. Prime Minister is instructing the Self-Help Commission chairman to do things willy nilly. I hope that the IADB is listening to me so that it could cause an investigation to be made into self-help.

“Mr. Krishna Ramkumar

Chairman, Board of Directors

...

Dear Sir,

Further to my letter to you dated February 4<sup>th</sup> 2003, outlining my difficulties to operate effectively as Project Manager at the National Commission for Self-Help...I hereby tender my resignation as of May 31<sup>st</sup> 2003 as was recently approved by the Board of Directors.

You will recall that I assumed duties as Project Manager at the National Commission for Self-Help...on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 upon being granted ‘no pay leave on ground of public policy’ from the then Ministry of Social and Community Development. Since then, my performance appraisal for the years 2001 and 2002 have shown that I have performed my duties extremely well.

In December 2001, Government changed and the National Commission for Self-Help...was placed under the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs. I continued to perform to the best of my ability and I am proud to say that, together with the Chief Executive Officer, we moved the

organization forward. Several new systems and measures were introduced to assist in the achievement of the Commission's mission. In other words, we "cleaned up" the National Commission for Self-Help Ltd and I am sure that many employees of the Commission can attest to this fact. However, since 2002, several factors have had a negative impact on my enthusiasm and motivation. I will highlight some of these:

1. You continually remarked that you 'keep batting' for both the CEO and myself as the new Government wanted to fire us and you had to defend us on several occasions.
2. I was deprived use of the company's vehicles, which, according to you was an instruction from Minister Joan Yuille Williams. The company's policy allowed field officers the use of their vehicles to visit projects in difficult terrain.
3. You were instructed by Minister Joan Yuille Williams, in a telephone conversation in my presence, to take me off the BATTs Project (#70/10650) as I had issued a purchase order for foundation materials only. She wanted the issuance of purchase orders for all materials, from start to finish. It is ironic to report that this building project had to be stopped as Town and Country approval was NOT obtained. This project was hurriedly approved for \$194,379.90 for the Baseball Association of Trinidad and Tobago, a new and relatively unknown organization. This turned out to be a waste of public funds. How unfortunate, especially since so many communities throughout the Country continue to cry out desperately for basic amenities like water and electricity.

I have no doubt that you will also recall that I was unceremoniously sent on eighteen (18) days 'proactive' leave..."

We are still trying to define what is "proactive leave". The chairman of the Self-Help Commission sent this officer on "proactive" leave.

"I have no doubt that you will also recall that I was unceremoniously sent on eighteen (18) days 'proactive' leave on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2002, exactly one (1) week after the General Election!"

I want to say something at this juncture. At that time, there was no Minister of Community Development. The Prime Minister had not yet appointed a Minister of Community Development. The now Minister of Community Development who

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knew her portfolio before, my good friend from Diego Martin Central, issued a directive to Mr. Krishna Ramcoomar to send Mr. Ramtahal on leave.

“The Chief Executive Officer was also sent on leave, and according to you, this was an instruction from Minister Joan Yuille Williams, who by then was not yet sworn in as a Minister of Government.

Since my resumption of duties I have been virtually stripped of all my responsibilities. Some of these include:”

[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I want him to listen to this letter because he denies everything people say.

- “1. Your approach to ‘micro manage’ the organization and act as a sort of ‘executive chairman’ has led to undermine the authority of not only the CEO and the Project Manager but as well as other managers within the organization. This situation has led to several problems within the Commission and although these issues are raised with you from time to time by several members of staff, no effort is made to address these concerns.
2. Both the CEO and I have been removed as signatories for the company’s cheques.”

Mr. Speaker, you know who is signing them? The chairman.

- “3. I was removed as Secretary of the Approvals Committee when the practice, over the years, was that the Project Manager performs as Secretary to that sub-committee.
4. I have been denied access to the minutes of Board Meetings as well as those of the Approval Committee Meetings.”

This is how they treat my people, Mr. Speaker?

- “5. Over the years, the Project Manager was the person in charge of visiting Tobago projects. I have since been replaced in that capacity, without consultation or notification.
6. You have usurped the project management function in the selection of contractors...”

That is why in no time there were \$5 million in projects. I want that to be laid in this Parliament. Who are the contractors hired to do that work in such a quick time? We want the names of the contractors.

“6. You have usurped the project management function in the selection of contractors for approved projects thereby reducing transparency and setting a dangerous precedent, one that can encourage corruption.

Recent developments at the National Commission for Self-Help...have continued to ‘sicken’ me. The organization has been transformed into a highly political entity. Certain employees with political connections are untouchable. Incompetence is now rewarded because of political affiliation.

Poverty is now defined in political terms. The Board deferred approval of projects pending the Minister’s perusal and endorsement. At a meeting on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003 the Approval Committee approved only seven (7) projects. Many of these were approved to enhance the resume of prospective candidates at the upcoming local government elections. How sad?

The Community Development Fund Secretariat (CDF) also seems to be playing a political game. The National Commission for Self-Help semi-annual report for the period July 2002—December, 2002 also alluded to the political nature of the CDF’s operations.”

**Mr. Speaker:** I am trying to get a grasp of what you are reading and the relevance. Could you show us the nexus?

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, I hope you do not take this as a challenge to your ruling. Before I quoted this document, I alluded to the fact that this is an association that deals with funds that would deal with people with disabilities. There is a direct link.

“I quote from page two (2) of that report:

‘Within recent times, the action of the CDF has left the NCSHL confused, in terms of the criteria for funding. We were previously informed that the NCSHL should not undertake projects in excess of Ninety Thousand Dollars (\$90,000).’

Do you hear that, Mr. Speaker. This is why I have to read this letter. Ninety Thousand Dollars is the maximum—the ceiling to deal with projects; yet we have \$5 million for three projects.

‘However, for the period under review, the CDF hurriedly approved and funded several projects way in excess of this sum.’

I am sure I will get the clipping back again to read. If I remember, it was \$1.3 million for Enterprise; \$2.6 million for Carenage.

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‘Also, the CDF now seems to define poverty in different terms. In August 2002, \$1.5 million was approved and released to the NCSHL for the immediate implementation of twenty-nine (29) projects, all of which except five (5), were along the East/West Corridor.

‘Further to this seemingly unequal distribution, where it was found that communities were not ready to start their projects, the CDF suggested by letter dated September 4<sup>th</sup> 2002 that funding be reallocated to implement infrastructure works in the Toco/Manzanilla Constituency.

‘Even the request for funding for the above-mentioned projects was not done on the agreed ‘Project Approval Form’. It should also be noted that several of these projects were not yet approved by the NCSHL..., yet funding was released by the CDF. This is quite strange since previous requests by the NCSHL were always meticulously perused by the CDF.’

Since then, CDF has made no further release of funding to the NCSHL. This squeeze of funding has had the effect of compromising the work and integrity of the NCSHL as approved projects cannot be undertaken and communities perceive that they are being given a ‘run-around’...

The highly political influence at the NCSHL is also manifested in the fact that many (MRRG) grants are approved where applications were not even investigated or where they were not properly investigated. In many instances, once the applications are endorsed by a Government Minister the application is automatically approved, and staff is pressured to facilitate the immediate implementation of these projects. In some other instances, grants are approved where investigations revealed that these projects do not qualify, based on the given criteria. In other words, grants are given to persons who do NOT qualify.

Obviously all is not well at the NCSHL. It should also be clear by now, that I have been the target, and in some instances, the victim to some measure of persecution. Thank God I am a strong person and I have been able to maintain my sanity.

It is against this background that I tender my resignation. Though victimized, I leave the organization with no bitterness or ill-feeling. This letter of resignation is not aimed at attacking anyone but it was an opportunity to highlight some of the ills that plague the organization. It is my fervent hope that every effort will be made to correct these shortcomings so that the NCSHL will be truly the noble agency that is was intended to be.

Thank you,

...

Chanka Ramtahal

Project Manager”

I end my contribution by asking the Government of the day to look at what is really taking place with the challenge in our society. We must not only pay lip service. It was mentioned before that there was an oil boom in the late 1970s/1980s and certain parts of the country moved forward and other parts remained behind. That is why when the NAR came into office in 1986, they attempted to put in place such programmes like the Self-Help Programme and others. ECHO was another one—Each One Helping One—which was subsequently changed to SHARE. These programmes were set up to empower the less fortunate—the disabled and so on.

Local government was also looked at in November 1990 and placed to give more autonomy to the local government body. What is happening is that all these institutions are being undermined by the present Government, especially the Prime Minister. If we want to move Trinidad and Tobago forward, things must not only be done for political purposes. The old age pension of \$1,000 sounded good during a political campaign. With due respect to the senior citizens of this country, other vulnerable groups need the same sort of attention, especially people with disabilities.

The cost of living is high for old people, but it is even higher for persons with disabilities and when the Government came to this Parliament today, four months after the budget is read, they should have come equipped to deal with the problems that face the disabled in the country.

I read in the weekend newspaper, the *Guardian*, about a boast made by the Minister of Social Development and Gender Affairs in this very Parliament about a Division of Ageing. There is a problem here again. A Division of Ageing would include disabled people. When they tried to contact the Ministry—now there are about four or five ministries dealing with social development—nobody could say where is this Division of Ageing. I am asking the Government please to come clean with the problems that face the country and I would be the first to applaud them.

I am about to end and I want to say that with the deficiencies in this Bill and the way it is being framed to give the citizens of this country a token handout, I cannot fully support the policy behind it.

**Mr. Nizam Baksh** (*Naparima*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity to look at this Bill and its content. While it appears to be brief in content, it has very far-reaching implications for the disabled community.

I have categorized this Bill into several areas and it seeks to do the following:

1. Backdate the commencement of the Act to December 01, 2003.
2. The applicants for disability assistance must be citizens or residents of Trinidad and Tobago, who resided continuously in Trinidad and Tobago for three years and should not have been absent from Trinidad and Tobago for an aggregate period in excess of six months.
3. To reduce the qualifying age for disability assistance from 40—65 to 18—65 years.
4. The applicants for disability assistance must be certified by a medical doctor.
5. Increase the disability assistance grant from \$600 to \$650 with effect from December 01, 2003.
6. Give to the Minister responsible, discretionary powers to grant disability assistance to those citizens and residents in Trinidad and Tobago for more than 12 months but less than three years.

Mr. Speaker, before I review each of the proposed amendments, I would like to examine Government's social sector programme for citizens who are disabled, handicapped, dispossessed, impoverished, disadvantaged and who exist in abject poverty. A cursory examination of Government's 2004 social sector programme revealed as follows:

- A range of poverty alleviation programmes, social integration and rehabilitation programmes have been documented.
- A number of Government ministries, semi-autonomous and non-government organizations are competing against one another to serve the same group of disabled persons.
- There is a great deal of overlapping functions and delivery of service. Most of the services offered are only remedial in nature. Cures in the form of handy state sector funding are offered as a panacea for all illnesses.
- Government has admitted that it does not have a policy plan to address the question of the disabled and disadvantaged in our country.

As a result of this, I can conclude that in 16 years' time the present trend will produce levels of dependency never imagined in the annals of our history. I want to use one of the programmes as an example. I look at the SHARE programme. There are several, but I pick this particular one. I have here a copy of the terms and conditions that are given to groups and the 18<sup>th</sup> item on this contract says that organizations must be able to undertake empowerment programmes within a three to six-month time frame once accepted into the programme. This empowerment must take on a meaningful dimension insofar as it relates to assisting recipients in becoming self-sufficient, for example, training, entrepreneurial, educational and skills development programmes.

**3.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I recommend that this six-month cycle that the Government has changed to is creating problems with those trying to access this programme. It means that in one year you would only accommodate two cycles. If this group is allocated 50, 75 or 100 hampers it means that they could only turn this number twice in a year. There are hundreds of people trying to access these programmes. Because of the six-month cycle now introduced, they are creating confusion.

When you go to the distribution centres it is now becoming like a fish market with the kind of frustration that people are experiencing. I want to recommend that the Government reconsider and revert to the three-month period that has obtained in the past. This would facilitate many more people to access the programme. We would have turnover much more than what we have in the present system.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the decision was taken to operate on a six-month cycle basis to allow time for the NGOs to run courses so that these people could benefit from them. I could tell you, from my observation and enquiries in the programmes, these people are not benefiting as they anticipated in these programmes. They come and depart from it, but at the end of the training they are not able to go out there and embark on self-employment or gain jobs. The extent of this training is just scratching the surface. This is the problem here.

In addition, the Government is asking an NGO which has to develop its own funding to run these courses. Very often they would not have the tools to operate these courses. The courses are not taking these people anywhere at all. There is also another problem there. This is supposed to be done once per month. I understand that groups are now getting cheques dated September and October, for distribution this month. During the month of January, I understand two distributions

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were made. Here we have a group of people who would benefit over a six-month period now being condensed because you would be getting two in a month and it was not meant to be that way. For one month you get excess, and the next month you are starved. This is a problem. I think the Minister should take note of this.

My other point is that while the Government is asking the NGOs and CBOs to run these courses, it is spending millions of dollars to operate other courses. There are social development programmes and a list of 47 programmes that would benefit communities in different ways. There are programmes such as HYPE, On-the-Job Training, Women in Harmony, Non-Traditional Skills Training for Women, YTEPP, YAPA, CARE and MELL. There are other programmes which are meant to assist and are directed towards the less fortunate persons and those who need this kind of assistance. On the one hand, the Government is asking the NGOs to do something that would benefit them. On the other hand, the Government is actually running those courses. This is a case of one hand doing something and the other hand is not aware. We need to give the power to this agency, the SHARE Programme, so that they could build a relationship with these agencies so that they can refer the various beneficiaries in the communities to access these programmes. They must be given preferential treatment in this regard so that it would be meaningful and the programmes would speak well for themselves. That is one of the examples which I looked at.

My information from the *WHO Report* states that 10 per cent of the world population is disabled. If we have 8,000 disabled persons in the country we need to cater for these persons. It is a substantial number. Government must, as a matter of priority, commission the formulation of a comprehensive policy framework or policy document which will address all the woes of the disabled and disadvantaged of our society. A comprehensive social development policy document, like a mission statement, must tell us where we are at present on social development for the disabled and disadvantaged, where we intend to take the disabled and disadvantaged and precisely what time. Without this social policy document, we are just running *vaille-que-vaille*, whereas, the sustainable programmes would enable them to be self-reliant and dependable. A clearly-defined road map would guide the operations in the delivery of service to the disabled and disadvantaged members of our society.

I want to read an article from page 7 of the *Saturday Express*, which shows that the Government is giving more lip service than actual concern for the disabled. The article is dated January 24, 2004. The *Express* awarded a disabled person as individual of the year.

“Express Individual of the Year:

I could not do it alone

Express Individual of the Year 2003 George Daniel heaped words of praise and thanks on others, who, he said, assisted and inspired him in bringing the plight of the differently-abled to the nation’s attention.

Without their help he said, all that he was able to achieve would not have been possible.

Daniel, chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of disabled Peoples International, along with other members of the association, took their protest action to the National Flour Mills (NFM) gate, where, for 116 days they braved sun, rain and taunts to highlight the importance of equal human rights.

He refused to abandon the protest outside NFM, despite his doctor’s recommendation that he undergo emergency surgery, for fear that the spirit of the protest might have faltered in his absence.”

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these people were there for 116 days in the sun and the inclement weather. All we could have seen, during that time, is the Minister appearing on a public relations stunt more than anything else. Today is a golden opportunity for the Minister to tell us some of the achievements she delivered to that group of people who were there during that period.

Let me now turn to some suggestions for the social development policy document. Usually one can get this advice at a high cost. I am doing it for free today. It is a service we can give to our countrymen.

- There is need for some form of legislation to protect the disabled from discrimination. Scholarships should be offered to the disabled for technical, vocational and academic education, depending on early recognition of abilities.

This is something we need to do.

- There should be tax incentives for employers who provide training and employment opportunities for the disabled.

We have been focusing on culture a lot. A lot of money is being given as tax breaks. We need to give these kinds of incentives for the disabled as well.

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- Compulsory examination and assessment of all newborn babies with signs of abnormalities to detect medical problems early so that corrective measures could be taken to prevent disabilities.
- Compensation for people who become disabled as a result of road accidents. Where drivers are found guilty of traffic offences, drivers and insurers should be required to pay compensation and pay promptly.

Very often, these are long, drawn-out court battles. We must take initiatives to assist these people because they need assistance.

- We must be able to construct, equip and subsidize special housing facilities for disabled citizens.
- State support of parents or guardians of disabled persons who require permanent care giving.
- Proper and permanent accommodation for the Blind Welfare Association especially the southern branch.

If you look at that building it is very dilapidated and dangerous. I am wondering if the people there are treated in this manner because they are blind and cannot see what is happening around them. We need to do something to assist these people as well.

- Government must guarantee that all public buildings must be fully accessible for the disabled.
- Government must develop a comprehensive education programme to deal with prevention of disability and to sensitize the national community of all the different types of disabilities and their unique characteristics and needs.
- Government must ensure that all state programmes are accessible by disabled persons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, transportation is critical for our citizens. Mobility is critical for disabled citizens to access and participate in programmes and activities, which are essential for their holistic training and rehabilitation. Many disabled persons are marooned in their own homes because of the lack of transportation.

- Establish recreational facilities with special activities for the differently abled.
- Construction of ramps and pavements for wheelchair users.

I am saddened when I travel in this country and see the kinds of construction of pavements we have. They remind me of the roller coaster route, up and down. When you look at some of the pavements even the able-bodied people could hardly use them, especially when you look at some of the entrances. We need to take these groups of people into consideration and do something to assist them. One could never push a wheelchair on these pavements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to turn to the amendments. When I look at the backdate of the commencement of the Act, December 01, 2003 I think this is dangerous precedent. This Parliament must not be used to stamp the approval of Government's unauthorized expenditure. Why is it necessary to commit the unsuspecting taxpaying public to an expenditure which does not have parliamentary approval? This is not the first time this Parliament has been asked to give its stamp of approval to Government's inability to do things on time. Only a few days ago we were asked to backdate an approval for Government's commitment to pay the pension increase in the National Insurance Scheme. The PNM Government has a history of slowness and tardiness in the manner in which it does things.

The Budget was presented in October 2003. Four months have passed and we are now asked to give our stamp of approval. These amendments could have been submitted one week after the 2004 budget was approved. Is it the intention of the PNM to convert this Parliament to a rubber stamp? I do not know what it would take for this Government to abandon its PR and turn to action mode. Recently, the banks had to publish a bold notice about the lack of legislation before interest on investment could have been discontinued. The Government is so inefficient!

We talk about a 2020 Vision. Only yesterday someone was explaining to me what this 2020 Vision is all about. If you are a gambler you would know that 20 is dog. This guy was explaining to me that 2020 is "dog eat dog". This is what the vision is all about. [*Desk thumping*] I was wondering what this is all about.

In respect of the application for disability assistance, the applicant must be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who resided continuously in Trinidad and Tobago for three years and should not have been absent from Trinidad and Tobago for an aggregate period in excess of six months. I want to make it clear that we do not support this amendment. We feel that the aggregate period of six months is inadequate and unreasonable. I would give you the rationale for this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are dealing with the disabled persons who may, from time to time, seek external medical services, which are not available locally. Very

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often with major surgery the patient needs to visit the doctor frequently during convalescence. On an aggregate basis, this period is certain to exceed the six-month period, which the amendments stipulate. I firmly believe that 12 months is a more realistic period, taking into consideration the need for prior tests and intermittent preliminary visits, which could easily go beyond the stipulated six months.

In respect of the next amendment we should reduce the qualifying age for disability assistance from 40—65 years to 18—65. While I welcome the amendment of reducing the age from 40—18 years, I feel it should be reduced from day one to 65 years. I am aware that disabled persons, from day one and 18 years, obtain a special child grant of \$300.

**Mr. Manning:** I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I wonder if the Member could be kind enough to give us the financial implications of the recommendation he has just made?

**Mr. N. Baksh:** I do not have the figures but I could certainly produce them later on. This is a small group of people that needs assistance more than any other group in society. When we look at it—I raised the point of from day one to 18 years. This is a critical period in the lives of these people who are physically challenged. They need extra care.

This Government has not recognized the need for additional financial assistance during the most critical period of development of a disabled child.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

During the early childhood period the following expenses are required:

1. regular tests from experts to determine if any disability could be addressed.
2. More frequent visits to professional medics would bring about added expenses.
3. Disabled persons within the age range would need to go to special schools for the disabled.
4. Constant supervision by a parent performing the duties of caregiver and therefore are unable to earn a livelihood.

This is why we need to spend more to assist this group within this period.

There is no doubt that the expenses from the upbringing during the early stages of growth of the disabled are greater than the period 18—65 years. I am

proposing, therefore, that the age be reduced so that all disabled persons would benefit from the meagre increase.

In respect of amendment No. 4, which reads as follows: "The applicant for disability assistance must be certified by a medical officer." I have no disagreement with the certificate of disability from a medical doctor. I would like to enquire to what length must the necessary certificate be pursued? Mr. Speaker, let us review the current arrangement of medical certificates which are requested of disabled persons. The medical doctor indicates on a prescribed form that the person is permanently disabled. The Public Assistance Board then decides that the disabled person be granted assistance for a maximum of 12 months. On one hand, the doctor is saying that the patient is permanently disabled, but the Public Assistance Board is only accepting this for a 12-month period. This means after the 12 months you have to find another certificate. Apart from the doctor's professional opinion, it is visibly noticed that the physical features are disabled or handicapped, yet the disabled person, most of whom may be immobile, is asked to go to the health office to obtain a medical report from the district medical doctor. This is the kind of frustration we are exposing those people to. Very frequently, the disabled person has to wait for hours before he or she is examined by a doctor when he or she goes to the health office. In some instances the doctor does not attend the health office, so the person has to go back the next week. If the report is not obtained in time, the grant is discontinued and financial strain is added. Is it necessary for the Public Assistance Department to continue to inflict hardship and punishment to disabled persons whose disabilities are visibly noted?

It is high time that we treat our disabled citizens with some dignity and respect. I recommend that the Public Assistance Board be given the authority to extend the grant to the disabled persons where it is obvious that handicap or impairment are visibly observed.

In respect of the fifth amendment, which reads as follows: "Increase the disability grant from \$600 to \$650 with effect from December 01, 2003."

I recommend the grant be increased further. The current increase of \$50 is grossly inadequate to enable disabled persons to live comfortably. This point was made by the Member for Chaguanas. The \$50 increase is inconsistent with the 15 per cent increase given to public servants and other increases to other sections of the employed. With the constant increase in the prices of basic foodstuff, I am advocating strongly that the sum be increased to more than what is recommended at this point in time.

In respect of the sixth amendment which reads as follows: “Discretionary powers of the minister responsible to grant disability assistance to those citizens and residents of Trinidad and Tobago for more than 12 months, but less than three years.” I do not think that such discretionary powers should be granted to the minister. This power could be abused, Mr. Speaker. This power could be used for political advantage. This discretionary power could be supplementary to house padding. What prevents the Minister from telling the disabled persons that the grant would be extended or tied to political support? Is this now a new policy of the Government? The similar discretionary power is given to the minister in Government Assistance for Tertiary Education (GATE). Is it sending a subliminal message for political support? This authority should be vested in an independent body.

I now look at the administration of the Social Welfare Department towards the disabled. Let us look briefly at the organization and delivery of service to our disabled citizens from the Ministry of Social Development. Disability may range in intensity. Some may be able to move about like normal citizens but unable to work for a living. Others, at times, may be able to move and sometimes may be bedridden. A group of disabled persons may not be able to move on their own and they would depend on others.

Is the Ministry of Social Development and the district offices equipped at present with persons who are professionally and physically equipped to deal with the various categories of disabled persons? In the first instance, the social welfare officers are required to be equipped with the necessary skills and expertise to empathize with disabled persons. In other words, at times, they need to place themselves in the plight of the disabled and to imagine their world and the type of treatment delivered to them.

Only recently, at one of the district offices, an officer demanded that a crippled, disabled person be lifted from a vehicle and taken into the office of the social welfare officer to review that particular case. The social welfare officer in question is a travelling officer. Instead of subjecting the disabled person, relatives and friends to hardship and inconveniences, to be brought to the office, the officer could have visited the disabled citizen at the home or interviewed the person in the vehicle. This type of inhumane hardship is administered toward disabled citizens and their relatives on a routine basis.

Only recently there was another case in point that was brought to my attention. A disabled person had to be taken to the office for his case to be reviewed. The particular officer in charge of the case told the disabled person that he was emitting an alcoholic odour and that he should not be awarded the disability

grant to consume more alcohol. This disabled person had to leave the office feeling dejected and disappointed. This is the type of behaviour which public officers deliver towards disabled citizens on a daily basis.

In the first instant, it is the duty of the officer to evaluate the case along prescribed lines recommended. The officer cannot use odour to reject an application for disability benefits. If the officer suspects that the benefit may be used to purchase alcohol there may be need for counselling or to refer that person for counselling services.

Mr. Speaker, the care we give our differently abled and less fortunate reflects the kind of nation we have now. We are recommending very strongly that social welfare officers are not the only ones who should visit the disabled at their homes. District medical officers should also make home visits. Undue punishment is inflicted on these citizens when they are required to be taken to the health offices and social welfare offices.

I want to make another point with regard to the composition of the central and local boards. I recommend that retired doctors and nurses should be included on these boards, especially at the central level, because many applicants are rejected without the full knowledge. They look at the appearance of these people and reject them.

I understand about 80 per cent of the applications are rejected, because the Government does not have qualified and competent persons on the board to assess these persons. I want to recommend that the composition of the board consist of retired doctors and nurses.

### **3.30 p.m.**

In respect of physical facilities to assist disabled persons, at present, I do not think that any existing social welfare office is equipped with ramps to enable disabled persons to enter these buildings with ease. As a matter of fact, some of these offices are located on floors with staircases. We also need to look at this matter, since it poses a difficulty for disabled persons. I do not think that any of the sub offices is equipped with elevators, ramps or wheelchairs to assist disabled persons. I think it is time that some offices provide physical facilities to assist disabled persons.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recommend a regulatory body to control the various groups of the less fortunate and disabled persons. There are a number of organizations mushrooming to assist disabled persons—especially old age pensioners. These organizations established these homes and collect \$1,000 per month from these pensioners. So, for example, if an organization has 20 pensioners,

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this organization would be receiving \$20,000 a month from these pensioners. These organizations are seeing this as a business, so the Government must investigate this matter. There should be a regulatory body to ensure that these homes are managed properly. We need to look at this matter and extend it to other areas.

Our suggestions on policy formulation for disabled persons and practical recommendations to improve the delivery of current services are real issues that must be addressed. Let us be mature enough to recognize positive and useful suggestions and recommendations, which are necessary to improve and change the delivery of service to disabled persons; let us not rule out or dismiss useful and purposeful recommendations because they originated from the Opposition; and let us make changes in the mind and thinking of the Government. Change is necessary; change is the only thing that is constant.

Mr. Speaker, I want to leave this House with a quotation from Eric Hoffer, a philosopher, which says: "In the time of change, learners inherit the earth while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

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

**The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister and Social Services Delivery (Sen. The Hon. Christine Kangaloo):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to the comments made by Members on the opposite side. Firstly, I want to correct something that was said, very early on, by the Member for Chaguanas. The Member for Chaguanas said, very proudly, that it was the United National Congress (UNC) who laid in Parliament the policy dealing extensively with persons with disabilities. I wish to correct that statement and to point out that the national policy on persons with disabilities was developed between 1992 and 1993. The draft policy was opened for public comment and on November 05, 1993 it was laid in Parliament as a Green Paper. [*Desk thumping*] I also want to point out that around July 07, 1994, Cabinet agreed to that policy, in principle. In 1994 it was decided that the ministry had to develop an operational plan for the other ministries, and there is where the policy met a dead end.

I just want to answer the Member for Chaguanas when he spoke about importing disabled persons. The Member does not seem to understand why the Government would be introducing a three-year residency requirement. What I am curious to understand is that here is a Bill before us, which is making persons who are 18 years old eligible to receive a disability grant, but the Member for Chaguanas

wants them to be residing in Trinidad and Tobago for 20 years before they could apply for the grant. Let us do the mathematics.

We are seeking to widen the net in this Bill for persons who would be entitled to the disability grant. At present, the legislation allows for persons between the ages of 40 and 65. This Bill is seeking to widen the net to allow persons from the age of 18 to qualify for the disability grant. So, the previous residency requirements will not apply, and that is the reason that we have introduced the 3-year residency requirement. This has nothing to do with the importation of disabled persons from anywhere.

The Member for Chaguanas also asked why the Government is not paying the equivalent of the old age pension and it is discriminating against disabled persons. I want to point out to the Member for Chaguanas that it was in 1999 that Members on the other side increased the old age pension, and left the disability grant, as it were. I do not understand how they could be accusing us of discriminating against disabled persons. They have introduced the policy, and they gave a different set of payments to old age pension and the disability grant. So, again, I must confess, I do not understand why the Member for Chaguanas would be raising that point.

The Member for Chaguanas also talked about 15 per cent of the population being disabled. Again, I am not too clear as to where the Member got those statistics. As I understand it, the World Health Organization (WHO) gave an estimate of 10 per cent of the population being disabled. The Member has added on 5 per cent, and we are hearing that it is 15 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, at present, the Office of the Prime Minister with the responsibility for Social Services Delivery is establishing a database of persons with disabilities so that we could get the exact figures as to how many persons have disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago.

I have heard over and over that we are only increasing the disability grant by \$50. I want to indicate two things: We are increasing the disability grant from \$600 to \$650, but the Bill is also widening the net for the number of persons who would now be receiving disability grants. This amount would be doubled, and it is estimated to cost some \$70 million. That is what we are seeking to do by widening the net.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to point out that very early on, this administration also increased certain grants under the Public Assistance Scheme. We have grants such as the medical equipment grant, which was increased from \$1,500 to \$5,000; the pharmaceutical grant, which was increased from \$300 to \$500; and the

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education grant which was increased from \$80 to \$140 a month. So, when they are talking about a mere \$50 increase in public assistance, they also have to look at the wider picture, and see that this administration has already sought to implement increases so that persons who are vulnerable in the society would be able to enjoy a better way of life.

The Member for Chaguanas made a lot of noise about the fact that persons under the age of 18 are not going to be receiving much. Again, I wish to point out that there is something called “a special child grant” and that special child grant is available for children with disabilities. The special child grant was increased by this administration from \$80 to \$300 per month. It is not fair to say that persons under the age of 18 are not receiving any attention from this Government.

Mr. Speaker, some questions were raised with respect to transportation, special housing and making pavements more accessible for disabled persons. I wish to point out several matters: The first matter deals with the policy—of which I spoke earlier—which was agreed to by Cabinet in July of 1994. This administration has now sought to update that policy. When that policy—which we are hoping to receive and to make public by June of this year—comes into place a lot of other activities would then take place. With respect to citizens with disabilities Act, we are waiting for the policy to inform us as to what type of legislation would be needed in respect of persons with disabilities. The database that we are seeking to establish will then inform the National Housing Authority of the number of disabled persons that would need special housing units.

I think someone raised the issue of transportation. I wish to point out that at present, through the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) has already ordered five accessible buses for persons with disabilities. We are looking after all these issues. I also wish to point out that there is a special bus, which is being run between the Ministry of the Office of the Prime Minister and Social Services and the International Institute for Human Health and Development. That bus is already operating on the bus route.

The Member for Naparima spoke about a scholarship scheme for persons with disabilities. I believe the Member for Naparima probably had in his mind the fact that an announcement was made a long time ago. Sometime last year, an announcement of a scholarship scheme for persons with disabilities was made and a scholarship scheme was introduced for persons with disabilities. It is not fair to say that we on this side are not heeding the calls of persons with disabilities in the society, but it is quite fair to say that we are addressing all the issues in order to attend to this

particular group in society. We are dealing with these issues effectively and as swiftly as we can.

Mr. Speaker, with that, 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.*

*Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 2.*

*Question proposed, That clause 2 stand part of the Bill.*

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 2 be amended as follows:

Delete clause 2 and renumber clauses 3 and 4 as clauses 2 and 3 respectively.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 3.*

*Question proposed, That clause 3 stand part of the Bill.*

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 3 be renumbered as clause 2.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 3, renumbered clause 2, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that renumbered clause 2 be amended as follows:

In paragraph (b), insert after the words “in subsection (3)” the words “,with effect from 1st December, 2003,”

**Mr. Baksh:** Mr. Chairman, I have a concern with 3(ii) “...period exceeding six months in the aggregate;” I want to recommend that it be 12 months instead of six months.

**Mr. Singh:** It is very reasonable when one hears the rationale.

**Mr. Baksh:** This is just to facilitate those persons who may have to seek medical treatment outside. These persons may have to stay beyond the six-month period.

**Mr. Singh:** If you put six months in the law, there would not be any discretion.

**Mr. Baksh:** There should not be any difficulty with this.

**Mr. Singh:** It makes sense.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Chairman, we believe that we will want to leave it at six months, and after a two-year period we could review it, but we will not want to go to 12 months at this time.

**Mr. Sharma:** Mr. Chairman, before you proceed to clause 4, clause 3(a) talks about a medical officer. Does it mean any medical doctor or a government doctor? There has been some confusion over that for a long time.

**Sen. Kangaloo:** The Interpretation Act defines “medical officer” as a medical person being employed with a Regional Health Authority or in the Government services.

**Mr. Sharma:** So, it would mean a doctor practising in a hospital or health offices? Before you proceed, in clause 3(c), where the Minister has a discretion to treat with applicants: Would it also include applicants who may not have obtained the age of 18, but who are in need of the grant?

**Sen. Kangaloo:** It is not an unfettered discretion; you will see that it is just in respect of the residency requirement. A person will still have to meet the other requirements.

**Mr. Sharma:** What provisions are provided for persons who are not 18 years, but are in need of this grant?

**Sen. Kangaloo:** Those persons will not fall under this. The persons who are not 18 years old will receive a special child grant. There is a \$300 per month grant for persons who are under 18 years.

**Mr. Ramsaran:** The hon. Minister referred to a ceiling. Is it too late to consider increasing the ceiling to at least cover the \$650, which was the norm before calculating the ceiling? The ceiling should be \$650 multiplied by 12 rather than \$3,600.

**Sen. Kangaloo:** We are leaving the income ceiling as it is, for the time being.

**Mr. Ramsaran:** What is the rationale?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** They have spent the money.

**Mr. Baksh:** There must be a balance. If you are giving a grant of \$650, the rationale is that you always give that income ceiling.

**Mrs. Kangaloo:** That cannot be the rationale, because as I indicated, it did not happen over the years, and I pointed out the situation in 1999.

**Mr. Baksh:** Well, this is an opportunity to correct it. Why can we not do it? If something was not in the best interest then well, let us do it now in the best interest of the people.

**Mr. Valley:** We will review it at the same time that we will be reviewing the six-month period.

**Mr. Baksh:** When? Are you telling us that this is also handicapped?

**Mr. Ramsaran:** Mr. Chairman, we were discussing at length the three years, and maybe the Minister did not understand what I said. What about those persons who are between 40 and 65 years? There is an anomaly there. I could understand that it would be good for persons who are 18 and 20 years old, but now there is a big gap. Will that three years be looked at again and put into segments like under 30 years or something like that so that we will be able to understand what is happening? It is now persons between the ages of 18 to 65 years who would be qualified for the disability grant. The old age pensioners will still have to wait. So there is an anomaly there.

**Sen. Kangaloo:** Mr. Chairman, I do not understand if the Member for Chaguanas is saying that there should be different eligibility requirements for different age groups. Is that what the Member is saying? I am not sure that I am grasping what the Member is saying.

**Mr. Ramsaran:** For example, if a person is 64 years old and that person lived all his life somewhere else, and returns to Trinidad at the age of 60 years, according to what is being done here, after three years that person would be qualified for this allowance. A pensioner at age 65 would have to use that 20-year qualifying period.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** That is for all the returning criminals.

**Mr. Sharma:** That is a very good point that needs some careful consideration.

**Mr. Ramsaran:** I believe that the Minister should go back to the drawing board and look at increasing the ceiling, the age factor and the qualifying period.

**Mr. Sharma:** It requires deeper consultation.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Chairman, we have noted what the Member has said. Again, based on experience, we will review it in a matter of two years.

**Mr. Chairman:** May I remind hon. Members that before the question is put, that is the time Members must raise their queries. Now, the question on clause 3 was put before and I have allowed it. All I am saying is, before the question is put to the final vote that is the time Members must raise their queries. If Members do have amendments, they should be circulated in writing before. I know there are times when that would be impossible.

**Mr. Sharma:** Mr. Chairman, you are moving too fast.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will slow down then.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 3, renumbered clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 4.*

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

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 4 be renumbered as clause 3.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 4, renumbered clause 3, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Long title.*

*Question proposed, That the long title stand part of the Bill.*

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Chairman, I would just like to inform the House that there is an amendment to the long title of the Bill as follows:

AN ACT to amend the Public Assistance Act, Chap. 32:03 and to validate certain things done thereunder.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Long title ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

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

*House resumed.*

*Bill reported, with amendments, read the third time and passed.*

*Adjournment*

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**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, January 30, 2004 at 1.30 p.m. Friday is Private Members' Day, and I am sure the Chief Whip would like to inform the House what he plans to do on Friday.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, on the Order Paper there is a Motion dealing with the issue of discrimination, which the Opposition will be debating on Friday.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.00 p.m.*

**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following question was asked by Mr. Subhas Panday (Princes Town):*

**Princes Town Region  
(Street Lights Installation)**

- 35.** (a) Could the Minister state how many street lights were installed in the Princes Town Region between January 01, 2002 to July 14, 2003?
- (b) Could the Minister state the date each street light was installed giving the name of the street and light pole number?

**The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas):** Mr. Speaker, the following is the response to the above question:

- (a) For the period January 10, 2002 to July 14, 2003 the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission reported that a total of three hundred and twenty one (321) street lights were installed in the Princes Town Region.
- (b) The date of installation as well as the street and light pole number for all street lights installed between January 01, 2002 and July 14, 2003 are provided to the honourable House at Appendix 1.

**Appendix I**

Details of Streetlight Installation in the Princes Town Region as reported by the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission January 1, 2002 to July 14, 2003:

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	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
1	241	St. Mary's Recreation Ground	1	27-August-2002
2	224/1	Marac Recreational Grounds	1	27-August-2002
3	224/2	Marac Recreational Grounds	1	27-August-2002
4	64	Martise Road	1	21-August-2002
5	16	Martise Road	1	21-August-2002
6	17	Martise Road	1	21-August-2002
7	18	Martise Road	1	21-August-2002
8	58/4	George Road		30-September-2002
9	58/5	George Road	1	30-September-2002
10	58/6	George Road	_1	30-September-2002
11	33	Hart Road	1	3-October-2002
12	42/1	Hart Road	1	3-October-2002
13	624	Naparima Mayaro Road	1	29-September-2002
14	625	Naparima Mayaro Road	1	30-September-2002
15	12	William Smith Mantacool Road	1	30-September-2002
16	53	William Smith Mantacool Road	1	30-September-2002 _
17	57	William Smith Mantacool Road	1	30-September-2002
18	59	William Smith Mantacool Road	1	30-September-2002
19	62	William Smith Mantacool Road	1	30 September -2002
20	4	Glod Road	1	30-September-2002
21	7	Glod Road	1	30-September-2002
22	9	Glod Road	1	30-September-2002
23	14	Glod Road	1	30-September-2002
24	58/4	Forte George Road	1	30-September-2002
25	58/5	Forte George Road	1	30-September-2002
26	58/6	Forte George Road	1	30-September-2002
27	11	Nohar Trace	1	11-October-2002

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
28	31	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
29	36	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
30	38	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
31	40	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
32	51	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
33	61	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
34	63	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
35	23	St. Johns Road	1	11-October-2002
36	109/3	Derrick Avenue	1	24-October-2002
37	52	Rampaul Avenue	1	24-October-2002
38	52/1	Rampaul Avenue	1	24-October-2002
39	52/2	Rampaul Avenue	1	24-October-2002
40	52/3	Rampaul Avenue	1	24-October-2002
41	277B	La Paille Road	1	24-October-2002
42	19	Lothians Road	1	24-October-2002
43	4/2	Seudath Avenue	1	2-October-2002
44	54	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
45	160A	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
46	152	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
47	154	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
48	155	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
49	156	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
50	140	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
51	134	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
52	134A	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
53	135	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
54	137	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
55	130	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
56	126	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
57	127	Reform Main Road		2-October-2002
58	128	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
59	130	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
60	A157	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
61	157	Reform Main Road	1	2-October-2002
62	2	Reform Road	1	24-October-2002
63	116/2	Sam Avenue	1	24-October-2002
64	74/2	Pond Trace	1	24-October-2002
65	74/4	Pond Trace	1	24-October-2002
66	74/6	Pond Trace	1	24-October-2002
67	56	Rochard Douglas Road	1	9-October-2002
68	140A	Dead Man Corner	1	3-October-2002
69	319	Rock River		4-October-2002
70	320	Rock River		4-October-2002
71	321	Rock River	1	4-October-2002
72	324	Rock River	1	4-October-2002
73	326	Rock River	1	4-October-2002
74	328	Rock River	1	4-October-2002
75	330	Rock River	1	4-October-2002
76	39	La Ruffin Road Junction	1	4-October-2002
77	40	La Ruffin Road Junction	1	4-October-2002
78	182/1	La Lune Road	1	3-October-2002
79	64	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
80	69	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
81_	79	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
82	78	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
83	88	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
84	93	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
85	101 <sup>f</sup>	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
86	106	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
87	107	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
88	109	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
89	114	Edward Trace	1	3-October-2002
90	21	Fifth Company Road		5October-2002
91	23	Fifth Company Road	1	5-October-2002
92	56	Weston Trace	-	5-October-2002
93	68	Weston Trace		5-October-2002
94	56	Diamond Road		5-October-2002
95	57	Diamond Road		5-October-2002
96	30	Jaipautsingh Road	1	5-October-2002
97	34	Jaipaulsingh Road	1	5-October-2002
98	38	Jaipausingh Road		5-October-2002
99	40	Jaipausingh Road	1	5-October-2002
100	42	Jaipaulsingh Road	1	5-October-2002
101	56	Moruga Road	1	5-October-2002
102	61	Hindustan Road	1	5-October-2002
103	62	Hindustan Road	1	5-October-2002
104	475	Naparima Mayaro Road	1	5-October-2002 -.
105	2	Brown Avenue	1	5-October-2002
106	3	Brown Avenue	1	5-October-2002
107	4	Brown Avenue	1	5-October-2002
108	5	Brown Avenue	1	5-October-2002

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
109	6	Brown Avenue	1	5-October-2002
110	8	Pooran Road	1	5-October-2002
111	11	Pooran Road	1	5-October-2002
112	74/4	Ants Nest Road	1	5-October-2002
113	74/8	Ants Nest Road	1	5-October-2002
114	69	Ants Nest Road	1	5-October-2002
115	82	Ants Nest Road	1	5-October-2002
116	82/4	Ants Nest Road	1	5-October-2002
117	69	Mantacooi Road	1	5-October-2002
118	82	Mantacool Road	1	5-October-2002
119	82/4	Mantacoot Road	1	5-October-2002
120	89	Mantacool Road	1	5-October-2002
121	92	Mantacool Road	1	5-October-2002
122	94	Mantacool Road	1	5-October-2002
123	26	La Rufin Road Road	1	4-October-2002
124	27	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
125	28	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
126	29	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
127	30	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
128	31	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
129	32	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
130	33	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
131	34	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
132	35	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
133	36	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
134	37	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
135	38	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002_ _

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
136	39	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
137	40	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
138	50	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
139	51	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
140	52	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
141	53	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
142	54	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
143	55	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
144	56	La R_ufin Road	1	4-October-2002
145	57	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
146	58	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
147	59	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
148	60	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
149	61	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
150	62	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
151	63	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
152	64	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
153	65	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
154	66	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
155	67	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
156	68	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
157	69	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
158	70	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
159	71	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
160	72	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
161	73	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
162	51	Lanse Mitan	1	4-October-2002

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
163	52	Lanse Mitan	1	4-October-2002
164	N/N	Lanse Mitan	1	4-October-2002
165	NIN	Lanse Mitan	1	4-October-2002
166	N/N	Lanse Mitan	1	4-October-2002
167	N/N	Lanse Mitan	1	4-October-2002
168	N/N	Lanse Milan	1	4-October-2002
169	N/N	Lanse Milan	1	4-October-2002
170	50	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
171	52	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
172	53	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
173	54	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
174	55	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
175	56	La Rufin Road		4-October-2002
176	57	La Rufin Road		4-October-2002
177	58	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
178	59	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
179	60	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
180	61	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
181	62	La Rufin Road	1	4-October 2002
182	63	La Rufin Road	1	4-October-2002
183	11	Maingot Road	1	11-October-2002
184	367/3	Sadoo Trace	1	11-October-2002
185	367/5	Sadoo Trace		11-October-2002
186	A56	Marcano Street	1	11-October-2002
187	52/1	Kingsley Street		11 -October-2002
188	15	Solomon Trace	1	11-October-2002
189	20	Solomon Trace		11-October-2002

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
190	3	St. Croix Road Extension		11 -October-2002
191	40	Gobin Village		11-October-2002
192	41	G_obin Village	1	11-October-2002
193	43	Gobin Village	1	11-October-2002
194	44	Gobin Village	1	11-October-2002
195	45	Gobin Village	1	11-October-2002
196	2	Rajack Street	1	11-October-2002
197	3	Duff Trace (Sisters Road)	1	11-October-2002
198	4	Duff Trace (Sisters Road)	1	11-October-2002
199	92/1	Seenarine Trace (Sisters Road)	1	11-October-2002
200	92/2	Seenarine Trace (Sisters Road)	1	11-October-2002
201	92/3	Seenarine Trace (Sisters Road)	1	11-October-2002
202	92/4	Seenarine Trace (Sisters Road)	1	11-October-2002
203	81	Man_allambre_Road _	_1_	9-October-2002
204	82	Manahambre Road	1	9-October-2002
205	83	Manahambre Road	1	9-October-2002
206	181/1	St. Johns Village (Radhay Trace)	1	9-October-2002
207	181/3	St. Johns Village (Radhay Trace)	1	9-October-2002
208	65/6	Cunjal Road	1	9-October-2002
209	30	Nanan Trace, South	1	9-October-2002
210	56	Spencer Junction	1	9-October-2002
211	31	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
212	36	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
213	38	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
214	40	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
215	51	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
216	61	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
217	63	Lothians Road	1	5-October-2002
218	4/1	Rampaul Avenue	1	24-October-2002
219	11	Pooran Road	1	4-November-20_02_
220	1	Jagville Avenue	1	11-October-2002
221	1	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
222	2	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
223	3	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
224	4	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2_003
225	5	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-20_03__
226	6	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
227	7	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
228	8	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
229	9	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
230	10	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
231	11	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
232	12	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
233	12/1	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
234	12/2	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
235	13	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
236	14	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
237	15	St. Julien Road	1	13-July-2003
238	16	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
239	17	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
240	17/1	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
241	17/2	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
242	18	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
243	19	St. Julien Village_	1	13-July-2003

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
244	19/1	Dhara Trace	1	13-July-2003
245	19/2	Dhara Trace	1	13-July-2003
246	20	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
247	21	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
248	22	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
249	22/1	Bonetree Trace	1	13-July-2003
250	23	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
251	24	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
252	25	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
253	26	St. Julien Village	1	13-My-2003
254	27	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
255	28	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
256	29	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
257	30	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
258	31	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
259	32	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
260	34	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
261	35	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
262	35/1	St. Julien Village	_1	13-July-2003
263	36	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
264	37	St. Julien Village	_1	13-July-2003
265	38	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
266	39	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
267	40	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
268	41	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
269	42	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
270	43	St. Julien Village		13-July-2003

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
271	44	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
272	45	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
273	46	St. Julien Village	1	13-July-2003
274	47	Burial Ground Trace	1	13-July-2003
275	1	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-2003
276	2	Kangalee Trace		13-July-2003 -
277	3	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-2003
278	4	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-2003
279	5	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-2003
280	6	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-2003
281	7	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-2003
282	8	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-2003
283	9	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-200_3
284	10	Kangalee Trace	1	13-July-2003
285	1	Burial Ground Trace	1	13-July-__2003
286	2	Burial Ground Trace	1	13-July-2003
287	3	Burial Ground Trace	1	13-July-2003
288	4	Burial Ground Trace	1	13-July-2003
289	51	Corinth Road Extension	1	13-July-2003
290	51/1/A	Corinth Road Extension	1	13-July-2003
291	5111 /B	Corinth Road Extension	1	13-July-2003
292	51 /1 /C	Corinth Road Extension	1	13-July-2003
293	5111 /D	Corinth Road Extension	1	13-July-2003
294	4	Wilson Road	1	23-September-2002
295	13	Dunmore Junction	1	23-September-2002
296	2219	St. Johns Road	1	23-September-2002
297	50	St. Johns Road	1	23-September-2002

	Pole Number	Street	Number of Lamps Installed	Date of Installation
298	51	Bachan Trace (Off Mofuga Road)		23-September-2002
299	52	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road_)		23-September-2002_
300	53	BachanTrace (Off Moruga Road)	1	23-September-2002
301	54	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)	1	23-September-2002
302	55	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)	1	23-September-2002
303	56	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)	1	23-September-2002
304	57	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)		23-September-2002
305	58	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)	1	23-September-2002
306	59	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)	1	23-September-2002
307	60	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)	1	23-September-2002
308	61	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)	1	27-September-2002
309	17	Bachan Trace (Off Moruga Road)	1	27-September-2002
310	18	Wilson Road	1	27-September-2002
311	50	Bachan Trace (Off Saunders Trace)	1	27-September-2002
312	51	Bachan Trace (Off Saunders Trace)	1	27-September-2002
313	52	Bachan Trace (Off Saunders Trace)	1	27-September-2002
314	53	Bachan Trace (Off Saunders Trace)	1	27-September-2002
315	54	Bachan Trace (Off Saunders Trace)	1	27-September-2002
316	55	Bachan Trace (Off Saunders Trace)	1	27-September-2002
317	56	Bachan Trace (Off Saunders Trace)	1	27-September-2002
318	57	Bachan Trace (Off Saunders Trace)	1	27-September-2002
319	84	Kanhai Road, South	1	27-September-2002
320	86	Kanhai Road, South	1	27-September-2002
321	598	Sieunarine Trace		27-September-2002

*The following question was asked by Mr. S. Panday (Princes Town):*

**Princes Town Regional Corporation  
(Electricity Costs Increase)**

- 36.** Could the Minister state what has been the increase in electricity costs to the Princes Town Regional Corporation as a result of the installation of the street lights in the Princes Town Region?

**Hon. R. Dumas:** The Princes Town Regional Corporation undertakes street lighting projects as part of its Rural Electrification Programme that is funded under the development programme. These works are executed by the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC), on behalf of the municipal corporations, upon approval of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment.

For the period January 01, 2003 to July 14, 2003, the Princes Town Regional Corporation requested the installation of two hundred and ninety-three (293) street lights.

It must be noted that the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment also installs street lights in the various municipal corporations through the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission as part of the National Social Development Programme. This is apart from that which was requested under the Corporation's Rural Electrification programme. The monthly billing for street lights installed by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment are settled by the municipal corporations.

For the period under review, January 01, 2002 to July 14, 2003, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission reported the installation of three hundred and twenty-one (321) street lights in the Princes Town Region. The Princes Town Regional Corporation reported an increased billing of \$9,771.55 per month, VAT inclusive.

**Caroni (1975) Limited  
(Equipment owned)**

- 41.** Would the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources provide this House with a detailed list including registration number, serial numbers and make of all transport, harvesting and ancillary equipment which were owned by Caroni (1975) Limited and which have now been distributed to the organizations/associations/individuals to harvest and transport canes owned by Caroni (1975) Limited?

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Jarrette narine):** The response is as follows:

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday, January 28, 2004

ORGANIZATIONS/ ASSOCIATIONS/ INDIVIDUALS	DESCRIPTION	REGISTRATION NUMBER	CHASSIS NUMBER
SOOKHA'S DIESEL SERVICES	SUZUKI 4WD GEN TPT	PAY 9599	SJ413VTXR000090
	ISUZUAMB MEDICAL	PBA 3887	JADDWFB62FS710082
	P/UP 2WD GEN TPT	TAY 5615	G720F64141
	MF390/4 W/TRACTOR	TAZ 3339	50091342276
	F/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4150	353319
	F/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4162	353328M
	LR SW13 GEN TPT	TBA 6259	SALLDVAF7TA983642
	P/UP 2WD GEN TPT	TBA 1788	CDER110SP 003 41
	L/R SWB GEN TPT	TBB 5375	SALL DBAF7T A98553
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBE 7338	360434M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBB 6547	364025M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	T13H 6549	364037M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBB 6550	364027M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBH 6552	364036M
	CAT. D6 CRAWLER	XAR 2826	4x2433
	T/7000 CANE HARVESTER	XBA 4255	8270
TRINIDAD AGRO SUPPLIES	P/UP 2WD GEN TPT	TAZ 5318	G720G47587
	P/UP 2WD GEN TPT	TBA 1789	COFKI IDSP00343
	MJBENZ	TBA 3868	61713125348166
	F/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4158	353332
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4163	353320
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBB 6661	364008M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBB 6553	364024M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBH 6556	364016M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBH 6557	364014M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBH 6658	364029M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBH 6559	364034M
	CA T/M/GR MOTORGRADER	TT 7709	87VII476
	CATD6C CRAWLER	XAU5110	8P1544-7N1539

*Written Answers to Questions**Wednesday, January 28, 2004*

<b>ORGANIZATIONS/ ASSOCIATIONS/ INDIVIDUALS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>REGISTRATION NUMBER</b>	<b>CHASSIS NUMBER</b>
	F/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4143	353330
	F/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4146	353331
	F/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4153	353258
	F/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4164	353322
	YWHEEL KL 44 MOBLE CRANE	XA 9581	SC44290
DIRECT DELIVERY FARMERS			
	T/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4175	353212M
	T/6610 W/TRACTOR	TBA 4178	353291M
	FORD 6610 W/TRACTOR	TBB 6572	364019M