

*Leave of Absence**Friday, March 12, 2004***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, March 12, 2004*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PRAYERS****LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Member for Siparia (Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar) requesting leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the hon. Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. The Agricultural Census Order, 2004. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. The Annual Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission for the financial year ended September 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.***ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, question No. 55 is not ready as yet. We want to ask for a deferral of that question for one week.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, on the last occasion, when this matter was raised before this honourable House, the Leader of Government Business indicated that he wanted a two-week period within which to provide the answer to the House. He comes here today unprepared and seeking a further week of delaying this matter.

Mr. Speaker: Would you be ready within a week?

Hon. K. Valley: Yes.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East):

**Video Lottery Terminals
(Details of)**

- 55. (a)** Would the hon. Minister of Finance indicate whether a committee was set up to review the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) and the Betting Levy Board (BLB) with GTECH for the provision of Video Lottery Terminals in Trinidad and Tobago and all other aspects of the gaming industry?

- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister provide the following information:
- (i) A list of the names of the people appointed to this committee;
 - (ii) The terms of reference of this committee?

Question, by leave, deferred.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member for Siparia has communicated with me and has asked for a deferral of questions Nos. 57 and 58 to the next sitting of the House.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, for the second week, the Government is ready to answer those two questions. I just want it to be noted.

Mr. Singh: I acknowledge that they were ready on the last occasion and it is because of the courtesy extended by the Leader of Government Business. I hope that the questions for written answers—there is one since December 2003. There are six questions for written answers on the Order Paper since 2003. This is March 2004.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, the Chief Whip ought to be guided by the Standing Orders.

Mr. Ramnath: What Standing Orders?

Hon. K. Valley: Read it!

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (Siparia):

**Ministry of Education Advertisements
(Amounts Paid)**

- 57.** Would the hon. Minister of Education state the total cost of advertisements placed by the Ministry of Education in the print and electronic media and the amounts paid to each media house from January 2002 to date?

**Computers in Schools
(Details of)**

- 58.** Would the hon. Minister of Education state:
- (a) the number of schools which have already received computers as at January 2002;
 - (b) the number of schools which are still without computers?

Questions, by leave, deferred.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

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

UDeCOTT (Details of Contracts)

- 15.** (a) Would the hon. Minister of Planning and Development state:
- (i) the names, job designations and remuneration packages of each person or company hired on contract;
 - (ii) the names and job description of each person or company awarded contracts for the supply of goods and services and the cost of each and such contract awarded; by UDeCOTT since January 1st, 2002?
- (b) In the case of companies, the names of the directors of each company;
 - (c) Whether the jobs/tenders were advertised and if they were, where and when were the advertisements placed;
 - (d) In the case of tenders, the bid made by each tenderer;
 - (e) What was the procedure and criteria used to hire each person and company and/or used to award contracts for the supply of goods and services?

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

The following question was asked by Dr. Fuad Khan (Barataria/San Juan):

CEPEP (Contract Details)

- 49.** (a) Would the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment::
- (i) list the names of the contractors by both Company names and Director's names who have been involved in the CEPEP programme since its inception to the present?
 - (ii) state the net monthly payment of salaries to each contractor excluding all payments to worker's salary, uniforms and working instruments?
 - (iii) indicate the method used to choose these CEPEP contractors?

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

**National Broadcasting Network (NBN)
(Imminent Closure)**

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter as a definite matter of urgent public

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)
[DR. MOONILAL]

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importance namely: the imminent closure of the National Broadcasting Network and the impending retrenchment of all electronic media workers, senior and junior staff and industrial workers at the only public broadcasting organization in Trinidad and Tobago.

The matter is definite since it refers to the specific and heightened industrial conflict at the nation's public broadcasting network. The matter is urgent since the lives, careers and future of hundreds of technical workers are now placed in turmoil. The matter is of public importance since there is the real risk that such continuous industrial action will escalate into a state of calamity within the broadcasting service.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the leave which the Member for Oropouche seeks is denied. May I suggest to the Member that he could in fact use Standing Order 11 for the same purpose.

Mr. Ramnath: Imbert, "yuh" leave the PNM?

Mr. Imbert: That and God face you may not see.

MULTI-SECTOR SKILLS TRAINING (MuST) PROGRAMME

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, this Government has identified human resource development as a top priority if this country is to meet the goals of Vision 2020. Consequently, we are committed to increasing and broadening access to upgraded training programmes of a quality designed to meet international standards, with particular emphasis on maximizing the use of the resources in our public and private institutions. In this statement, Mr. Speaker, I propose to address the scope of some of our existing programmes, the new initiative that I am announcing today, the sectors these training programmes are targeting, the numbers we are hoping to achieve, and the significant resources this Government is committing to this important enterprise.

The Government's preferred approach in this new training initiative will be to develop partnerships between industry and government. Indeed, during the last year, we have been consulting with relevant stakeholder groups to determine their needs. This will be an on-going process, since we are determined to ensure that our programmes will maintain their focus of being community-oriented, industry-relevant, student-centred and technology-driven.

Mr. Ramnath: Who write that?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, global trends and the very nature of our natural resource endowment suggest that this country would do well to invest in programmes designed to make our workforce multi-skilled. We must therefore establish systems capable of recognizing worker competence through continuous

assessment and accreditation. Making this approach to our human resource development sustainable would require us to:

- (a) improve the standard of our trainers and educators;
- (b) enhance the quality of training provided to meet national and international standards;
- (c) assess the skills of various levels of workers to ensure their competence;
- (d) recognize verifiable achievements and learning, acquired within the workplace and other environments outside the formal education system; and
- (e) recognize, encourage and reward high performance and achievement within the context of multi-skills development.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is convinced that by embracing and implementing the above measures, on a sustained basis, Trinidad and Tobago's human resource endowments will be considerably enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of existing government skills development programmes which will constitute the initial platform upon which our training initiative will be mounted. Let me give this honourable House an indication of some of these programmes:

On-the-Job Training Programme: This programme was started in July 2003, under the PNM administration. It is conducted over six-month cycles. It covers a wide area of training, with a target group in the 16—30 years age group. To date, the programme has trained approximately 7,000 individuals at a cost of \$12.5 million.

The Retraining Programme: This programme commenced approximately four years ago, targeting the unemployed in the 18—45 years age group. However, the programme was refocused in October 2003. The programme now targets retrenched and displaced workers in the 30—45 years age group. Initially it was conducted over six weeks, but the cycles now run for twelve weeks, for a period of 240 contact hours. The retraining programme now has four components: skills training, life skills, internship and mentorship. These two latter components were added in the refocused programme in 2003, to provide critical work exposure and a period of understudy for persons particularly interested in the development of micro-entrepreneurial ventures. Since its

recommencement, the Retraining Programme has produced 4,300 graduates at a total expenditure of \$15.8 million.

The Helping Youth Prepare for Employment Programme (HYPE): This programme commenced in 2002, again, under the PNM administration and was conducted over a nine-month period. Its target group is the 17—25 years age group of persons possessing post primary education and are desirous of entering the construction field. This programme seeks to develop self-belief in its participants and has turned out 2,028 graduates to date. A significant feature of this programme is the HYPE Construction Services Company, comprising graduates of the programme, which has received an NHA contract to construct 100 houses. This is an indication of the self-belief the programme has been seeking to inculcate in participants.

The National Skills Development Programme: This programme was established in 1996 and has a duration of 3½ years. It has an annual intake of 215 with 984 graduates to date. Its target group is in the 16—25 years age group, with a background in science subjects or technical education. The annual expenses of the National Skills Development Programme are \$8.4 million, while \$74.8 million has been expended to date.

Mr. Speaker, the country's relatively favourable economic circumstances, at this time, present an unparalleled opportunity for us to move Vision 2020 from possibility to reality. No one must be left behind. This is why the Cabinet has now approved a new Multi-sector Skills Training (MuST) Programme designed to train at-risk groups, among others, including the economically disadvantaged and the differently abled. The target areas include a wide range of key economic sectors, where the demand for employment is already substantial, and likely to increase in the near future. Our intention is to train and certify a competent labour force for critical industries and sectors.

We will start with the construction sector. A recent employer's survey, carried out by the National Training Agency, for June to December 2003 confirms the growing demand for employment within the construction sector. The survey recorded that of 839 public and private companies sampled, close to 30 per cent of the employment opportunities identified in the national survey were for employment in the construction sector. The data also suggest that up to 10,000 new job opportunities may become available in 2004, in the construction sector and related fields. Construction currently accounts for 13.2 per cent of the total labour force in Trinidad and Tobago. Given these facts, our intention in the first

instance, is to correct the mishmash in the construction sector by training our nationals for the current and projected vacancies in this sector.

Other important sectors to be addressed in the future include the tourism and hospitality sector, the process industry, and the agriculture sector. Our intention is to provide both institutional and workplace training for nationals, assess their competence, and provide the successful ones with nationally recognized technical and vocational qualifications, thereby creating opportunities for channelling graduates into areas of sustainable employment.

Mr. Speaker, the MuST Programme will provide trainees with:

- temporary employment during the period of training;
- opportunities to engage in entrepreneurial activities;
- equality of opportunity in training and development;

I am sure that my hon. colleagues on the other side would like that. I would repeat it:

- equality of opportunity in training and development; and
- lateral and upward articulation into further training and development.

Mr. Speaker, phase 1 of the MuST Programme will cater for training and multi-skilled certification in occupational areas such as:

- Carpentry
- Masonry
- Electrical Installation
- Plumbing
- Welding and Fabrication
- Site Supervision
- Painting & Finishing

Initially, the MuST Programme will train approximately 5,000 persons per six-month cycle in 2004/2005. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, let me say a word about certification and the resources our government proposes to commit to this aspect of our human resource development. Briefly, we have identified three main levels of certification at this time.

Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme
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- Level 1: the tradesman assistant or craftsman helper will provide basic knowledge in the specified trade.
- Level 2: the craftsman, a skilled operative, capable of functioning with much less supervision.
- Level 3: the master craftsman, the most highly developed and experienced skilled worker, capable of performing supervisory and managerial functions.

Participants in the MuST Programme will be trained and assessed against national occupational standards of competence, developed by the Joint Consultative Council of the construction industry and the National Training Agency (NTA), for the award of nationally recognized workplace certification.

Mr. Speaker, the NTA which will have the responsibility for training the trainers as competent assessors and verifiers, has developed an innovative approach for recognizing workplace skills and workplace learning, in order to award the Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualification (TTNVQ). The TTNVQ will be recognized as the national vocational qualification for work-based training. As a matter of interest, Mr. Speaker, this Trinidad and Tobago initiative is being considered by other CARICOM countries such as Jamaica, as a possible equivalent for their national vocational qualifications awarded within those countries; thereby giving regional recognition to the TTNVQ. There will, of course, be reciprocity in respect of the comparable certification from those countries.

The Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is looking critically at possibilities of articulation, portability and reciprocity of the TTNVQ with other qualifications offered at tertiary level institutions. In this way, persons achieving the TTNVQ can progress not only to higher levels of certification, but would receive credit towards higher education programmes. When the system is fully established, all of the training within formal education and technical and vocational education and training programmes will be integrated and coordinated within a national qualifications framework. This is similar to what pertains in Jamaica and other parts of the world such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Further, the NTA will provide mechanisms for ensuring the quality of training providers to guarantee national quality training in Trinidad and Tobago. In an effort to achieve truly sustainable, quality training and, as a matter of priority, the NTA will implement a system of quality assurance among training providers and provide approval for all those who meet the necessary criteria.

Mr. Speaker, the Multi-sector Skills Training Programme will cost \$130 million per year when it is fully established and will produce 20,000 trained and skilled graduates in a number of urgently needed skill areas. As indicated, the initial focus will be in the construction sector, but we intend to move swiftly to expand the programme to other important sectors.

Phase 1 of the MuST Programme will be implemented in April 2004, as a major social and developmental programme of this Government, geared to eradicate poverty and unemployment and to offer opportunities to develop the capability of all our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the MuST Programme, together with the other programmes and others that have not been articulated in this contribution such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Youth Training for Employment and Partnership Programme (YTEPP), represent the commitment of this Government to provide opportunities for all our citizens, from town to country, urban to rural, to play a constructive part in the development and transformation of our country. The sums committed are substantial. Let me repeat. When it is fully established, the MuST Programme will cost \$130 million per annum. We will insist that the taxpayer receives value for money spent. Once that value is received, these will be moneys well spent in building the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me therefore invite Members opposite to join with us on this side as we launch this enterprise for the strengthening of Trinidad and Tobago's democratic foundation. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have given leave to the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant to make a personal explanation. Is it the wish of the House to hear the hon. Member?

Assent indicated.

MORTGAGE TRANSACTION (DETAILS OF)

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Thank you very kindly for permitting me the opportunity to offer this personal explanation to this honourable House, on a matter concerning a mortgage transaction raised by Sen. Wade Mark in the other place. This has been the subject of widespread report and, in my view, warrants explanation. I want to shed some light and accuracy to a version of events now making the rounds, regarding a failed mortgage transaction that I embarked upon in 1984, some 20 years ago and 11 years before I became a parliamentarian in this honourable House.

Mortgage Transaction
[MR. HINDS]

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Extracts from a document entitled: *Report on Statute Barred Accounts for the period April 1, 1996 to December 31, 1999* in an *Express* article headlined:

“\$39 M write-off NIB forgives Hinds \$.2 m for Maracas house”

has been widely published and has generated much discussion in the print and electronic media.

Mr. Speaker, it is to be noted that the latest report of the NIB on debt write-off is for the period 2000—2003 and my name is not mentioned in that report. An earlier report for the period 1996—1999 dealt with my failed transaction, along with 211 others, and stated that, in my case, the deeds of conveyance and mortgage were never sent to the board. Upon its investigation, it was found that they were never registered. If there was no registered deed, then clearly I got no property or benefits.

Dr. Rowley: Repeat that.

Mr. F. Hinds: Nor did I use my position as Member of Parliament, as implied by the Member in the other place, to obtain any such benefit, since it was obviously in 1984 that I made this application, long before I became a Member of Parliament. I never received any money from the NIB—[*Desk thumping*] nor did I sign any mortgage or benefit from any conveyance in this matter. [*Desk thumping*] I therefore, assumed no obligation or derived any benefit.

Mrs. Job-Davis: They are mischief makers.

Mr. F. Hinds: Clearly, there was no completion in that transaction. The reason was because—it was widely reported at that time—the agents for the board, who were employed by them to handle the transaction, were alleged to have mishandled the board’s money and they absconded. My transaction was one of those caught up in that debacle.

The NIB never contacted me on this matter, not until 1998, when a former Minister of Finance for the UNC government raised this very matter in a budget debate here, along with some others.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Mischievous!

Mr. F. Hinds: I responded in that budget debate to this issue on that occasion. Where is he now? That is a matter apart. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, thereafter, the NIB contacted me. I responded to them and I never heard from the NIB on the matter again. I am advised that the—[*Interruptions*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please can we listen to the hon. Member in silence ? Please continue.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very warmly for your protection, Mr. Speaker. The 1996—1999 report was sent to the then Minister of Finance to be dealt with in accordance with the Act. That government did nothing at that time. What Sen. Mark did was to put—I am sorry.

Mr. Speaker: I wish you would stick very close to the text I approved for you.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Singh: He has to stick to the text!

Mr. F. Hinds: The report that was quoted was therefore an old report, not the most recent. Clearly, it was designed to sully my good name and impugn my hitherto, impeccable character. [*Desk thumping*] I wish again, to emphasize that I enjoyed no benefit, nor did I undertake any liability in the transaction referred to and, as such, I could not have received any debt forgiveness. No legal action was ever instituted against me, nor was any judgment ever registered against me with respect to this matter.

I now call on the NIB to issue a statement to further clarify this matter for the benefit of the citizens of this country, whose minds may have been corrupted by the unfortunate and perhaps malicious statements of the Senator.

In conclusion, I hope that this explanation will put an end to the totally false, malicious and erroneous impression that I owed the NIB and I benefitted from debt forgiveness. God is great! I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Panday: On a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] No point of clarification? Did you pay the NIB any money?

Mr. Speaker: Order!

TELECOMMUNICATIONS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Telecommunications Act, 2001 [*The Minister of Public Administration and Information*]; read the first time.

ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO BILL

Bill to provide for the establishment of an Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago and for related matters [*The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education*]; read the first time.

2.00 p.m.

METROLOGY BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to re-enact and revise the laws respecting Weights and Measures and to give effect to the International System of Units (SI units) be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is long overdue, and it replaces the Weights and Measures Ordinance of 1939, which is based largely on the Weights and Measures Act of 1878 of the United Kingdom, and which applies primarily to what is known as the Imperial System of Measurement. This Bill provides for measurement relating to length, weight, surface and capacity.

This Bill also provides for the appointment of inspectors of weights and measures, whose duties include the examination of weights and measures, as well as weighing instruments for accuracy and certification against secondary standards, which are determined by the Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures.

However, this law has long become outdated in light of the emergence of the more advanced SI units system, which is commonly referred to as the metric system. Mr. Speaker, as you know, the metric system is now being used internationally.

The existing law contains a number of significant deficiencies, for example, there is the issue with respect to the checking and stamping of weight masses, less than one quarter of an ounce and greater than 112 pounds; there is the issue of the checking and stamping of length measures, less than six inches and more than two yards; and there is also the issue of the checking and stamping of capacities, volume measures, less than one quarter pint and more than 288 gallons. With respect to these three items, there is no obligation to use accurate measures and weights in selling or buying items such as cane or petroleum or bulk goods such as cement, gravel, aggregate, coils, wire or cable, and in the case of land surveyor's chains, tapes and other measuring devices, which are more than two yards, need not be verified to see if they remain accurate. In addition, inspectors are not able to verify capacities greater than four gallons, which is the largest measure of their equipment, or lengths longer than one yard.

Mr. Speaker, there is the issue with regard to the checking of flow meters such as gasoline pumps. The present ordinance specifies that all measures for liquids

with a glass neck or other transparent material should be filled to the level of the line so marked when used. These forms of measures appear to disqualify mechanical gasoline, water or liquefied natural gas. Flow meters should be used to verify the accuracy of pumps and similar devices that are used to sell gasoline.

There is also the issue of the inspection and verification of measuring devices that are used in factories and which determine the characteristics or quantities by which products are sold. At present, inspectors cannot enter factories to check measuring devices that are used in these factories, which determine the characteristics or quantities of pre-packaged goods. If inaccurate measurements of pre-packaged goods are to be prevented, the factory is the place where one could make the corrections—there is where checks are to be made. For example, it is clear that a company such as the National Petroleum Marketing Company cannot be expected to bring its oil packaging plant to a stamping station, and that is what the current law contemplates.

There is also the issue of the checking and stamping of official measuring devices such as scales in post offices, licensing offices and other government departments. Measuring devices that are used for official purposes are not provided for in the ordinance. The scales used in post offices, the weighbridges at the licensing offices and measures used by customs gauging vessels are presumed to be accurate and this could lead to loss of revenue, or overcharging of a citizen.

Further, there is the issue of checking with regard to quantities of goods for wholesale transactions or industrial sales. Wholesale transactions or sales outside shops and open markets are not provided for in the ordinance. In addition, many goods that are now commonly used are specified in terms of units that are not covered by the present law, so the accuracy of claims and charges made cannot be verified legally, for example, electrical goods are specified in terms of bolts and amps; air-conditioners are specified in Btus per hour and photographic films are filmed by speed ratings. Other laws and regulations, specified limits in frequencies, speeds, decibels and lumens are not defined in the ordinance. All units that are used in commerce, industry or legislation should, of course, be defined in a comprehensive law of measurements. I could go on, but I think that I have made the case.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to primarily make the International System of Units (SI units) the primary system of measurement here, in Trinidad and Tobago. It is known that SI units are modified and it is the internationally accepted form of what is commonly referred to as the metric system.

While the present law, the Weights and Measures Ordinance of 1939, also makes provision for the use of metric units, the ordinance does not provide for the

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SI units to be the primary system of measurement in the country and, therefore, when the SI units were introduced in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1980s, by the now defunct Metrication Board, there was no legislation in place which mandates the use of this system and which would govern its implementation. So it was possible for unscrupulous persons to benefit from unfair trading practices by using both the metric and non-metric units in the same area of trade without running afoul of the law. This legislation is intended to address this lacuna in the law.

The Bill would also expand the scope of the present law relating to weights and measures by including measurements for pressure, density, temperature, voltage, resistance and current. This Bill would extend the application of the law beyond the limited measurements for length, mass and volume, which are contained in the present law. The Bill would create a comprehensive law of measurements that would address other deficiencies in the present law, as well as ensure that the law relating to legal metrology is kept in step with the pattern of technological development, particularly within the industry.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill would provide for the use of relevant and approved units of measurements in all aspects of commercial life and acquisition and maintenance of standards relating to these units. This Bill would ensure that the Government collect its share of revenue to which it is entitled, arising out of commercial activities of government offices such as the post offices, the licensing Department and the Customs and Excise Department. Mr. Speaker, accordingly, I would like to identify some of the significant provisions contained in the legislation.

Clause 3 of the Bill declares that the SI units should be the primary system of measurement in Trinidad and Tobago, and that all units of measurement should be determined on the basis of the SI units. This means that there would be no alternative or competing system of measurement that would be legally acceptable within Trinidad and Tobago. This clause also makes reference to the SI units and the symbols for these SI units are comprehensively defined in the first, second, and third schedules to the Bill. This would lend certainty and clarity to the expression of goods and services, in terms of measurement units for weight, length, time, et cetera, as there would be a legally accepted definition of a metre, a kilogram, or even a second. As I mentioned earlier, the lack of such definitions in connection with the use of or reference to certain units of measurements, is one of the major deficiencies in the present law and this deficiency has been addressed in the Bill.

Clause 4 of the Bill empowers the Minister responsible for metrology to declare by order that certain units of measurements or no other should be used in connection with certain classes of undertakings such as trade, goods, services or

measuring devices. Again, this will serve to add greater certainty to the system of weights and measures using commercial activity. While it is possible to use both the metric and non-metric units in the same area of trade this could lead to unfair trading practices. Under this clause, it would therefore be an offence to use any unit of measurement in connection with trade, which is not included in the schedule to the Bill, or in a manner contrary to an order of the Minister. This would offer greater protection to consumers and the general public than what currently exists under the present law.

Clause 5 of the Bill provides for the creation of a National Reference Standards, which would be the national standards against which measuring devices may be examined for accuracy and certified. At present, there is no system of National Reference Standards, and this means that many units of measurements currently used in commerce cannot be legally verified against any national standard.

Another significant aspect of this Bill is the provision under clause 6, for the appointment of inspectors of metrology, including a Chief Inspector of Metrology, for the purpose of administering the Bill. These inspectors would have wide powers to enter the premises of traders to inspect measuring devices to ensure that they are in keeping with the requirements of the Bill, and to seize devices in violation of the Bill. However, it should be noted that such powers are to be exercised within applicable constitutional limitations. The existing weights and measures inspectors would be reclassified as assistant inspectors of metrology, and the Minister under clause 27(2) of the Bill would prescribe their powers and functions.

The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards would be the national standards body and the national quality certifying body as it is so designated under the Bill, and it would therefore have the responsibility of administering the Bill. As such, the Bureau of Standards would be the custodian of the National Reference Standards and any secondary standards related thereto. That is in clause 5(5) of the Bill.

Additionally, the Bureau of Standards would be empowered under clause 21 of the Bill to inter alia establish a metrology laboratory equipped with the appropriate metrological testing equipment; to provide services for the calibration and determination of the accuracy of measuring devices; to examine patterns of measuring devices with a view to certifying that they comply with relevant regulations that are suitable for use in connection with any particular class or classes of trade. Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out as well that inspectors and assistant inspectors of metrology would function under the purview of the Bureau of Standards.

Under clause 23 of the Bill, the Minister with responsibility for the administration of metrology, may make regulations to give effect to the provisions

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of the Bill. I could inform this honourable House that as we speak, these regulations are being prepared and we intend to ensure that they are brought into effect, as soon as possible, in order to enhance the effective operation of this Bill when it becomes law.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, this Bill has been long in coming. In 1976, a Cabinet-appointed committee first drafted a Bill entitled the Weights, Measures and Metrology Bill. In 1984 this Bill was read in Parliament for the first time, but the Bill subsequently lapsed, and since that time the Bill has undergone numerous amendments, and in 1997 the Bill was eventually renamed the Metrology Bill. The Bill has since evolved into its present form before this honourable House. Although the subject matter of this Bill may seem innocuous, one cannot underestimate the importance of implementing and maintaining a consistent, accurate and relevant system of weights and measures.

Mr. Speaker, as we seek to integrate this economy into the global economy, and as we seek to participate fully in the global trading area, it is important that our system of measurements is in keeping with internationally recognized standards—domestically as well—and an appropriate system of measurement is a significant aspect of commercial activity as it would provide some measure of protection to consumers participating in such activities. Persons who run afoul of the provisions of the Bill in the course of trading goods and services would be subjected to sanctions under the Bill. It is therefore time that Trinidad and Tobago implement a system of measurement that would meet the growing requirement of the 21st Century.

Dr. Moonilal: I just want to ask a question on a point of information. The Member mentioned that this Bill has been long in the making and it had been to the House before. Could the Member indicate whether there are any changes to the Bill presented today and the Bill of 2001 with the same title, and if there were any changes, what are those changes?

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, in preparing for the debate in the Parliament—my concern is to bring legislation to the Parliament—I have not looked at the 2000 legislation or the 2001 legislation, so I cannot say if there were any significant changes in the legislation. What I know is that today we are legislating metrology in Trinidad and Tobago, which was not done in 1997, 1988, 2000, 2001 or at any other time.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is therefore institution building and represent just one of a number of pieces of legislation that would be brought shortly before this Parliament. Yesterday, in an article entitled “Waiting for fair trade”, a reporter

mentioned the fact that we have been waiting on competition legislation for the last 10 years. The reporter also mentioned that I have been extremely vocal in making the point that we need competition legislation.

Mr. Speaker, what hurts is that the initiative for competition legislation started by the PNM government in its last dispensation, when we brought the Adam Smith people to Trinidad and Tobago to look at the area of competition legislation—somewhere I think in late 1993 or early 1994—and nothing happened in 1995 after we demitted office, we now have to come back and see about things such as competition legislation. I want to inform this honourable House that competition legislation would be introduced into the Parliament at the next sitting of the House. The Law Review Commission (LRC) has already passed this legislation and it is coming to the House.

Mr. Speaker, there is also the investment promotion legislation which is before the LRC and this legislation would also be introduced in the House within one month.

There is also standards regulation. My friend, the Member for Oropouche, asked a while ago if there have been any changes to the metrology legislation. In 1997, they came to the Parliament and passed a Standards Bill and up to today we do not have the regulation. I want to inform this honourable House that Cabinet has approved the regulations and they were sent to the LRC for the final dotting of i's and so forth, and those regulations would also be in the House within one month. [*Desk thumping*]

The anti-dumping legislation is another issue. Again, as you know, the PNM government legislated the anti-dumping and countervailing duties legislation way back in 1992, before the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and because of changes and experiences in the operation of the legislation, certain amendments must be done. That legislation is before the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC). There are still certain discussions being undertaken after which a submission would be made to the Cabinet on its way to the LRC.

The fifth piece of legislation that I want to mention and which one could expect in the short term is the safeguard legislation, which would protect our local manufacturers from injuries that may be caused by surges in imports. That legislation is at the CPC undergoing final drafting before it comes to the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that as we prepare to take on the world, we have to put our house in order. There must be that institutional underpinning, and that is what we are doing. We are also doing other things. We are aware that as we

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engage the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), we have to provide our manufacturers with a trade assistance programme.

In early 2002, we went to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and got \$5 million loan to build capacity. We are using some of that funding to undertake a study of a trade assistance programme for our manufactures. Basically, the concept is to provide our manufacturers with some type of assistance to allow them to make their crossing. Some of the things that one would consider would be market grants, so as they go into new markets, they are helped in the exploitation of those markets. We would also have to look at providing financing on favourable terms and conditions, so that they could resize their capacity as they take on larger markets. We have to provide for transitions for companies, as well as employees as we take on the world.

I want to note the contribution of the manufacturing sector and, especially, the Manufacturers Association of Trinidad and Tobago, as they come to the end of another year—I think they are having their annual function somewhere around the 22nd or 23rd of March. Over the last two and a half years, it has been my pleasure to interact with the Manufacturers Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and I could say that the Government has received support from them. Yes, we have argued from time to time, but we listened, and as a major stakeholder in the country, I want to note their contribution and I want to thank them for it. I feel certain that they would be happy that this legislation is finally before the House, and I want to ask for the support of all my colleagues in having this legislation passed without haste.

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

Question proposed.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, the measure before us today is entitled a Bill to re-enact and revise the laws respecting Weights and Measures and to give effect to the International System of Units (SI units) also called the Metrology Bill 2004. It poses a particular challenge, and I think Members would have gleaned that during the presentation from our friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this posed a challenge because to make metrology interesting in a presentation is peculiarly challenging, and our friend on this occasion was peculiarly unappealing and charisma free. It is really hypocrisy on a truly imperial scale to talk about taking on the world when you cannot take on Barbados with

270,000 people or Haiti. That is hypocrisy on an imperial scale, and we can convert that by the end of his presentation to the SI scale.

Mr. Ramnath: Spineless.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Metrology is the science of measurement. It is the basis of many of humankind accomplishments, so we are dealing with measurements and standards. What is a metrologist? My definition is taken from the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, an official guidebook produced by the Employment and Training Administration of the United States Department of Labour:

“A metrologist is someone who develops and evaluates calibration systems that measure characteristics of objects, substances or phenomenon, such as length, mass, time, electric current, luminous intensity and so forth. Metrologists identify magnitude of error contributing to uncertainty of results to determine a measure of reliability.”

So we are dealing today with standards, measurements and performance. The Government may not want to hear too much about performance, so firstly, let us stay with measurement.

As our friend from Diego Martin Central indicated, the Bill before us today has a long shelf life. Indeed, its genesis in Trinidad and Tobago dates back to 1977 or thereabouts under another PNM administration. During the administration of the UNC, a bill to reenact and revise the laws respecting weights and measures and to give effect to international systems of units, SI units, was laid in the House, Bill No. 22 of 2001.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken a look at both the Bill laid in 2001 and the Bill before us today, and I am challenged to find any variation; so it appears, unless the Member for Diego Martin Central can correct me, that it is the same measure proposed by the UNC government. *[Interruption]* No, there is a next difference; I will come to that. It is the same Bill, unless I can be told otherwise, and I stand corrected. *[Interruption]*

In 2001 they were busy hijacking a democratically elected government. *[Desk thumping]* They were undermining a government and liaising with their parents, who later anointed them into office. In 2001 this measure would have passed under the UNC government had it not been for those on the other side. We had to wait from 2001 to 2004 because they were busy undermining and removing governments. That is why we are here today with this measure, and there are no differences that I have seen, but I stand corrected.

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Mr. Speaker, I raised that for another reason. In the *Business Guardian* of Thursday, January 08, 2004, under the headline: “TTMA—Govt must protect us”, there is an article by Sharon Lym. I will read only what is related to the Metrology Bill; there are other issues that I will come to later. The reporter writes:

“However, a representative from the T&T Bureau of Standards agrees that things are moving too slowly.”

At a meeting, the Minister of Trade and Industry responded to TTMA concerns:

“Trade is based on measurement and we do not have a metrology bill, not even an act. Measurement itself is the basis of trade. It (the legislation) is too long in the making and we have been waiting between 15 and 20 for this act,”

The article goes on to say:

“Enforcement, the representative said, is another problem.”

I am sure if I am wrong, the Member for Diego Martin Central is in the House, and will correct me, of course. The representative goes on:

“I’m not sure if the Government itself understands the urgency of dealing with standards and technical regulations as they relate to the FTAA,”

But Mr. Valley replied. I am saying “Valley” only because I am quoting here; I have more respect for him than that.

“Valley said the problem with the Metrology bill is that there is a clause in the bill that needs a special majority to be approved.

He said given the Opposition’s present position on passing bills the Government is looking at removing the clause without interfering with the effectiveness of the bill.”

Now hold on; I need to go slow, because, Mr. Speaker, you know me, I cannot understand these things too quickly.

The Bill did not change between 2001 and 2004, but in the newspapers the Minister said that in this Bill there was a clause that needed a special majority, “And you know the Opposition not supporting us on dat.” So when confronted by the T&T Manufacturers Association, he conned his way out. When they asked, “Why are you not bringing the Bill; why are you not coming to the Parliament with those measures to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of manufacturers?” he conned his way out of that. He said, “Dat need a special majority and we ain’t getting dat from the UNC.” But today when I asked if there was any difference

between the 2001 and the 2004 bills, I did not hear anything; maybe it is there. [Interruption]

Mr. Valley: If the Member would give way I would correct him immediately. I ask him to go to clause 7(2) of the old Bill and compare it with clause 7(2) in the new Bill.

Mr. Ramnath: Why did you not say that when you presented it?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. I will go through the Bill in some detail, and come to that. [*Crosstalk*] It appears that the Member, who did not read the bills at all, and could not answer the question earlier, is now informed that there is a change, and this Bill does not require a special majority. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker. No, no please. Are you not giving way?

Hon. Members: No!

Dr. R. Moonilal: He will distract me, as I know he is intending to do. He will deal with that when he winds up the debate. He will explain himself; that is not my job. Mr. Speaker, today we come three years after 2001 to debate and pass a measure that could have been passed in 2001; that is my first point.

On this matter, it is, again, interesting that given the crisis this Government faces today, we come to the House to debate and pass the Metrology Bill because, of course, "We need to get our house in order so we can take on the world," but this Government has not found the time to address matters relating to the equal opportunity legislation, to implement the Equal Opportunity Commission; no time with that. You do not need that to take on the world.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will not address the issue of labour unrest in the country in the Parliament. We should be debating the widespread labour unrest that has engulfed this country. No, no, no, that is not an issue.

Dr. Khan: He said it is a wildcat strike.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, I do not want to get into that, but that is not an issue. The Metrology Bill is an issue; that is what we hear. Poverty alleviation, injustice, discrimination, corruption, mismanagement; not the issue. But as I said in the beginning, our job today is not necessarily to oppose the Government, but really to expose the Government. We must support this type of legislation that is progressive.

We may have many differences, but the one big difference between the 2001 Bill and the 2004, is that in 2001 we had a government with the capacity to

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implement, the capacity to build the State institutions, with the political will to put resources in State institutions to run this country; today, that has long gone.

Mr. Speaker, it is common knowledge that in the hospitals of our country we do not have basic pharmaceuticals, or basic drugs, for the Member of Port of Spain North to understand. It is common knowledge that the Magistrates' Courts have collapsed. It is common knowledge that in certain ministries they do not have money to put gas in government vehicles. It is common knowledge that in certain ministries they do not have proper furniture. So that their interest is not in the State institutions, it is putting resources outside of the State.

Today, we bring this Bill, and we trust the Government with the responsibility of building fresh, new institutions and regulatory mechanisms; this is the responsibility they have today. But could we trust them? Could we trust them with standards of any kind? They perpetuated a hoax called Vision 2020, and when everybody asked, "What is Vision 2020?" they pulled together 12 committees to identify what it could be.

Interestingly, as we are dealing with international standards, conformity and, as my friend from Diego Martin said, "taking on the world", unless we are mistaken again—and they are free to correct us—Trinidad and Tobago is also obliged to implement certain policy institutional and regulatory mechanisms arising from the United Nations Millennium Declaration. But the millennium Declaration speaks about the year 2015, that in 2015 we must cut poverty in half; by 2015, 80 per cent of the people must have water; certain things must happen by 2015. We do not hear about 2015, but we now hear about 2020. So what about the Millennium Declaration and our conformity with the United Nations? Just like 2020 is a hoax being perpetuated on us; it is really unbelievable that this is the Government that will now be entrusted to implement this legislation.

Their record on standards is poor. This is a country as a whole where Government will not fund research and development upon which we can take policy decisions; fund research into poverty. I asked today of the Government when was the last poverty study done in Trinidad and Tobago so that we can assess where we are. I believe it was 1994, done by the World Bank.

The Bill before us today deals with several important issues that I would like to go into. The first issue is that there must be a commitment on the part of the Government to training and educating the grass root people, the average person, on what this Bill means. This conversion from the imperial system to the SI system brings with it enormous challenges for our average citizens who may not

have the books and articles to read, many who may not be able to read those books and articles on conversion and the law, the requirements of the Act, on numbers, the actual conversion rates. They may not have the knowledge, the awareness. That is why the Government must embark on a public education drive.

This Bill deals with traders, business people involved in trade who are using measuring devices for the purpose of trade. On the ground people are involved in retail, selling food items and selling goods. They must become aware of the provisions in this Bill and, in particular, of the offences that the Bill creates; the Bill creates offences. People must learn; they must have public education. They are not about public education; they are about public propaganda. So the Minister of Local Government goes to Arima, and we see full-page colour ads. Hooray, the Minister “finally reach” Arima, so we need full-page colour ads.

Mr. Speaker, that money could have been better invested in educating the population about this Bill before they came to the House, so persons involved in trade would understand the offences, the conversion rates and so on. It is not easy to read this Bill and raise matters that relate to units of measurements and measuring thermodynamic temperature, which, incidentally, is measured in the name of unit Kelvin. I wonder why the name Kelvin was selected for thermodynamic temperature?

Mr. Imbert: He gets hot.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The unit for the measurement of thermodynamic temperature being a fraction of one over 273.16 of the thermodynamic temperature of the triple point of water. Anybody knows what is the triple point of water? The engineers would tell you that the triple point of water is the temperature at which all three states of water exist in equilibrium, Couva South.

Mr. Speaker, there are technical issues in this Bill that require widespread public education. Passing the Bill is one thing, but if you do not have public education, persons might be breaking the law, because as you know in this country while you can go to the supermarket and look on the shelf and see items in grams and kilograms, many persons when they sell in their retail shop, at the side of the road or wherever, will give you “two pound” of this, half pound of this, a few ounces of that. Now they will be breaking the law, and they must know this.

When they should have been embarking on a course of public education on this matter, they are closing down the National Broadcasting Network (NBN). So they closed down NBN, retrenched all the workers, and in one cruel move sent all of them on the breadline, and talk about opening a new company, which we know

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nothing about. The rumour is that they “sell out” Channel 4, formerly AVM, and it may be sold or it might be by leasing [*Laughter*], or that might be a “jerry”, but they want to get rid of it. So while we should be expanding public broadcasting to educate citizens on measures like metrology, measurement, weights, new offences and the role of inspectors, they closed down NBN.

For the record, it was the vision of the UNC to use Channel 4 for education, for distance learning. In our vision we were going to build partnerships with the National Training Agency, with the private sector. We were going to create a distance learning channel so that persons could stay in their homes and look at the television to follow course outlines for diplomas, degrees and so on. That channel would have been used to educate citizens on the law, regulations and offences. But, hijack the government, three years later come with the Bill, close down NBN, send all the workers on the breadline, and now we must expect that somehow they would educate the public by putting a picture of a minister who visited the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) for drinks. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnath: “91.1, the Indian station, allyuh shut that down too?”

Dr. R. Moonilal: When persons in the national community must adjust to this change, you need to educate and build awareness. This Bill says nothing about another important point: Having three years to review the Bill, I thought the Government would have come to the House with another change, if there is one already, which is, that measures like this need time; they must be phased in. For the population to adjust to the new method, the new measurements, the new literature, the new figures, over time you phase it in, while public education is taking place, while the Bureau of Standards is doing its work inspecting and so on.

You do not begin immediately to charge people left, right and centre, the day after the President proclaims and, of course, the Government assures us that the regulations are already in the pipeline, while people did not have time to adjust to this new measure. In other countries in the world that has been the approach, to adopt the system but put an outer deadline when they would start charging and penalizing persons for offences under such legislation. But no: proclaim, put regulations in place and send people out to commandeering trucks and to look at the bucket from backhoes and so on, that is their approach; no phase.

There are other problems in the industry: several sectors operate with the imperial system; they have metering and measuring equipment that are based on the old system. They are now required to buy new equipment incidentally, from persons on a register who sell equipment. They are now required to get equipment

and have it certified and stamped and so on. So where you have industrial sectors in services, goods and so on, that require new equipment and metering, they need time to do that. That is another point for the phase.

Persons have to be educated even on labelling, because I imagine now that you need to put on a piece of paper the net weight of a double, you put it on a piece of paper, fold it up and have the net weight and that sort of thing, on selling food items and whatever; they are trading. So that my constituents in Debe now have to suddenly find the net weight of jelabee, gulab jamun, pone and toolum. Labelling poses an important challenge to businesspersons so they can conform with provisions in the Bill, but also regulations. Not everybody is part of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association (TTMA) or the Employers' Consultative Association (ECA).

The ECA just woke up the other day; they were sleeping all the time. They are now saying that we must do a social impact analysis on the effect of increased minimum wage in the energy sector; brilliant. Where were they when the 10,000 Caroni workers were being sent home? Did they call for a social impact analysis? No, but they just woke up with energy on an imperial scale. The bulk of small business persons do not fall under the TTMA or the ECA. In fact, they may not even fall under any organization, maybe some of them may fall under the Regional Business Association, but there must be some interaction with these persons to understand provisions as they relate to labelling and so on.

The Member for Diego Martin Central is far more qualified than I am to talk about the energy sector. The Member mentioned that the Bill provides for that dichotomy, for the change and for allowing measurements in the energy sector to continue in line with the American Petroleum Institute and the American Gas Association standards. So the petroleum sector has some challenges that they may face in terms of securing equipment and getting in tune.

Mr. Speaker, another problem that the Government has to address is whether we have in the country a pool of trained and qualified metrologists who will become inspectors and assistant inspectors to go around and inspect. A metrologist is not a physicist. Whereas under GCE Physics you can learn a bit of metrology, I do not know how it works under CAPE. I do not know if CAPE caters for Physics. I do not know if the Physics under CAPE addresses metrology. I do not know if that is the reason no good university in the world wants to recognize CAPE, but the Government is yet holding on to it.

A physicist is not a metrologist, and that is a specific science. Whereas we may have persons at the Bureau of Standards and elsewhere who would have

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done a little certificate or seminar here, and attend a meeting in Tobago to deal with metrology, I am not sure that we have the pool of people that would be required. I am not sure if we can depend on the Member for Diego Martin East to train people in metrology through the On-The-Job Training Programme, or the Multi-sector Skills Training Programme (MuST). I am not sure if the College of Science, Applied Arts and Technology of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) will be training our young persons in metrology. They certainly cannot train anybody in building collapsible walls or stadia.

Mr. Imbert: That is why we need standards.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The issue of getting trained and qualified persons to man the institutions is an important issue, and the Government must also address that.

Mr. Imbert: We can add metrology to the list.

Dr. R. Moonilal: You can add metrology to one of the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) projects, I am sure. *[Interruption]* Metro is not a cinema.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about labelling, but we also have the issue of conversion, which is a big challenge. The Member for Diego Martin Central, my friend and yours, may be accustomed, traditionally, to having a pint, but now he has to look for 450 millilitres. My friend from San Fernando East, the hon. Prime Minister—

Mr. Ramnath: Rum till I die!

Dr. R. Moonilal: —may want to know that a bottle of beer is 275 millilitres when imported. They may want to know that 500 grams equal one pound, so when they meet their friends from Mucurapo, who want their pound of flesh, they can now tell them it is .45 kilograms that they need, and 450 millilitres of blood that they are now seeking. *[Laughter]* That conversion is important to understand. The average person out there would not be in touch with that.

Mr. Imbert: They are doing that in the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) examination.

Dr. R. Moonilal: We cannot depend on the Member for Diego Martin East to understand that as well. *[Crosstalk]* For the average person, we are hoping that the Bureau of Standards and the Inspectorate would produce the charts for public consumption so that you can put them up in the business places of the traders.

Incidentally, under the definition of a premise in this Bill, it includes a stall. So unless I am wrong, when a “fella” stands on the highway selling cascadura—whether he might be breaking the law or not in the first place—that is a premise

under this Bill. He needs to have his scale well stamped and certified, otherwise they may seize his cascadura under this Bill. [*Crosstalk*] So if they think they had problems with flying fish, it is deeper. The point I am making here is on the conversion.

To come to the Bill directly, and look at some of the challenges inherent to the Government, under the definition of premises, it includes any place, stall, vehicle, ship or aircraft. A vehicle is defined as a premise as well. So if you are trucking gravel or sand, that is a premise, or in a motor car. We just hope that people driving motor cars know that.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill states in clause 5(8):

“The Minister shall, from time to time, cause to be procured and maintained such Working Standards and such testing equipment as may be necessary for use by the Bureau...”

The Bill establishes the Inspectorate and appoints a chief inspector under the Bureau so that there is an amalgam between what was formerly, I believe, the Weights and Measures Department—which always seems to be moving from the consumer affairs ministry to the Ministry of Local Government—but they will now be finally, according to this Bill, under the Bureau of Standards, and the Bureau of Standards under the minister responsible for standards. In fact, the Member for Diego Martin Central may be responsible for standards in this context, but not standards in any other context. In fact, he may be responsible for substandards.

Under the powers of inspectors in clause 7(1)(a):

“on production of his credentials...an Inspector may at any reasonable time—

(a) enter the premises of any trader or any other place in which he has reasonable cause to believe there are—

(i) measuring devices...”

Let me explain so my friend from Diego Martin Central can correct me, of course. Measuring devices used to measure height, density, temperature and so on, and used for the purpose of trade. So a measuring device in this sense would not be a bathroom scale, which the Member for Diego Martin Central must be using. [*Crosstalk*] Your weight is going down? My weight as well, but I am on a diet. Your weight goes down because the only thing you have been eating in recent time are your words, and they are empty. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Manning: Very unkind.

Dr. R. Moonilal: So there is a difference, but my friend from Diego Martin Central knows that I mean no harm.

The inspector must enter any premise at all where he or she has reason to believe that measuring devices such as scales or documents are there in connection with trade. There is a distinction here that the Minister may want to reflect on. I have to give example, because that would make the point easier than the technical explanation. If a scale in a doctor's office is used to weigh persons, is that a scale used in the conduct of a trade, as a physician, or is that scale used as an instrument for diagnosing?

Mr. Imbert: Obviously it is not for trade.

Dr. R. Moonilal: But the Bill is ambiguous on that. Certainly the Minister can consider such issues under the regulations. The Bill gives wide powers to inspectors to enter premises, to require production of documents and to look at labelling. But in the Bill under 7(1)(g) the inspector can:

“purchase, with public funds allocated for that purpose, any goods which, being subject to control by virtue of this Act are offered for sale..”

Apparently, this is like an undercover operation, where you can take public money and buy gravel and sand if you suspect that something is wrong with the weighing process, measuring and so on. That is some of the power.

Mr. Speaker, you can also commandeer vehicles:

“examine any vehicle which he has reasonable cause to believe is being used in connection with trade and require the driver in charge to proceed to the nearest measuring device suitable for measuring the vehicle or its contents...”

I imagine the regulations would deal with where would the nearest point be to measure. So if you stop a truck in Toco, you cannot tell the driver to go to San Fernando for a measuring device to measure whether it is seven or five cubic metres. The Government must be very clear in the regulations it does not add to the burden of the business community by putting in place cumbersome measures such as a suitable site for measuring, and that it does not use this legislation to really disrupt rather than promote business. I think the Minister, under the regulations, would have to prescribe a minimum or maximum distance for which you can commandeer a vehicle and take it.

Under the Bill, inspectors, by virtue of securing a warrant, can enter into premises, if need be by force, to break down doors and so on. They can enter into the premises of anyone conducting a business in pursuance of a trade to examine

measuring devices, books or stamps, because measuring devices must be stamped, of course, or certified if they cannot take a stamp. One has to be careful with this type of power to inspectors that they do not use this power to abuse and violate the rights of citizens. The regulations must speak to checks and balances to protect citizens from abuse by inspectors who can get a warrant based on sworn information, break down their door and seize scales, goods and everything.

Incidentally, while the Bill talks about seizing goods, I do not think the Bill addresses returning goods. It says that you have to seize the goods and keep them in a good quality, but it did not speak about returning them to persons if they are not found to be guilty of whatever offence. Of course, it is an act in contravention of clause 7 to import, sell, assemble or repair measuring devices, except as authorized by the Bureau.

The Minister will also address the issue for us, I am sure, of providing measuring devices with stamps and certification, because the Bill says, “prescribe measuring devices since the last stamping.” We will need to be told how often you are stamping or certifying measuring devices. How often would people be inspecting? I have to use these examples, Mr. Speaker: If someone is in a spare parts place selling spare parts and tools, and you are also selling wire—you need to have rulers, measuring tapes and so on to sell wire—but the Bill says that devices must be inspected, stamped and certified so that their margin of error falls within the ambit of the law; how often are you doing that?

Mr. Speaker, I am raising these issues to underline the importance of public education, the offences the Bill creates. Clause 10(1)(a) states:

“A person is guilty of an offence who, in the course of the business of—

- (a) selling goods by quantity expressed in units of measurement sells any goods the quantity of which, subject to the prescribed limits of error, is less than the quantity contracted to be sold...”

Meaning that if people are out there selling anything in the marketplace, and they are using a measuring device and actually giving people less than they are entitled to by law, given the measurement, that is, of course, an offence under this Bill.

So if you are selling cloth or Reebok shoes, could we use that as an example? You are selling cloth, you measure and you cheat on a decimal point or two or three, obviously, when you multiply that by the 1,000 bolts of cloth, you would have made a profit from ripping off the consumer.

Mr. Ramsaran: And they are importing coke in containers?

Dr. R. Moonilal: For persons engaged in doing so, giving less, this is an offence. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro suggested that this was always an offence, so that the weights and measures people would always be policing this, and people would always be charged, fined and imprisoned. That is what the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro is telling us. I bow to his wisdom. So previous to this Bill, people were always fined and jailed for that.

Under clause 10 it is, of course, an offence, but, interestingly, it is an offence to sell less, but I guess if you sell more, you are stupid, so the Bill does not deal with selling more, only if you rob other people, not yourself.

Mr. Speaker, in the marketplace today many persons are involved—and by this Government may be encouraged to be involved—in a multitude of small retail trade. They are teaching persons to sew and to make all types of foodstuff and local drinks. Notwithstanding whatever might have been in place, you can see now, because there are penalties here. We will come to the penalties later. They involve some jail time and money; they involve a fraction of the \$200,000 that we heard went missing in 1984. But of course we are now corrected, it is not the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. The money just disappeared in 1984 from the National Insurance Board so, at least, it is not the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Ramnath: The NIB is lying.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The NIB is lying. Mr. Speaker, you are charged under this provision for a fraction of that \$250,000 that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant said he never took.

The Bill creates this offence with penalties and fines. It also deals with packing and packaging, and separating the contents of goods to the package, the container and so on. I am hoping that all the National Entrepreneurship Development Company (NEDCO) recipients of loans really understand this legislation. The NEDCO recipients who might be making foodstuff and goods are trained well by the Member for Diego Martin East to understand packaging, pre-packing, labelling and net quantity. I am sure they would educate their NEDCO recipients.

Mr. Speaker, I am raising this because I told you that there is a big difference now. We are not convinced that the Government has the will to educate the citizens. We are not convinced that they have the will to implement such legislation, and I quoted before the TTMA and the Bureau of Standards representatives condemning the Government in January 2004 on moving too slowly.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. At clause 11, titled “Evidence of possession” we are now being asked to entrust this Government with policing this clause:

“Where a measuring device, subject to control by virtue of the provisions of this Act is found in the possession of any person carrying on trade or at any place or on any premises which are used in connection with trade, that person or, as the case may be, the occupier of those premises or that place shall be deemed for the purposes of this Act, unless the contrary is proved, to have that measuring device in possession for use in connection with trade.”

So it could well be that someone in a store or business place using faulty equipment, unknown to him/her is in possession of using equipment that the boss, occupier or employer would have had stamped, whether fraudulently or not, and that person under the law may become liable to being charged, tried, fined and imprisoned.

I am sorry to go back to the cloth store example, but what happens if the person is measuring cloth with faulty measuring devices, would they hold accountable that low wage worker, invariably female, or would they hold accountable the Member—well, not Member, but anyone else? One has to be careful with this type of legislation in the hands of the PNM, because they cannot be trusted. This week we got a good example of that; they cannot be trusted.

Look at the industrial unrest in the country. I am happy to announce to this House that we are now clear on that labour; in fact, yesterday the Prime Minister clarified everything by indicating at his post-cabinet press conference, that the reason for all this industrial unrest may really be the growth of country. So now that we have clarified that it is really linked to the growth of the country, by that theory of social action we can now confirm that Haiti is bursting with prosperity. [*Laughter*] Everybody vex because everybody happy.

I heard the Prime Minister on television last night, while I was trying to get the cricket highlights, saying that it is really the growth in the country responsible for the unrest, that is why everybody vex.

Mr. B. Panday: People are happy, that is why they are angry.

Dr. R. Moonilal: And it makes sense, if you applied some other type of logic. We would hear much more about that theory of social protest later.

The Bureau of Standards is entrusted, under this piece of legislation to:

“publish annually a register of the names of persons carrying on the business in Trinidad and Tobago of selling, manufacturing, assembling, importing, exporting, repairing or adjusting prescribed measuring devices for use in trade.”

I imagine the regulations will address what the Minister means by “fitness to carry on a business”.

I am quoting very recent articles, because I do not want the Minister to accuse me of raising issues which were in the public domain before 2001. In another article on page 8 in the *Business Guardian* of February 26, a few days ago, Wesley Gibbings quoted one Theodore Reddock, who heads the Metrology Unit of the Bureau. He made a few interesting comments indicating:

“‘Metrication alone is not the issue,’... ‘but having a clearly defined system of measurement.’”

Very important. Mr. Reddock goes on to state:

“‘The problem is the confusion of not knowing which system is dominant and to be used for official expression of quantities. This is what creates conflicts between parties and wastes time and money.’”

So we have identified that there is a problem of confusion in the national population.

Another authoritative voice on these matters made another point, and that person is no less a person than Mr. Bertrand Harnanan, retired head of the Laboratory Services Division of the Bureau of Standards. In this interview he stated that the problem, among the several problems raised, was:

“‘...the Metrication Board had been disbanded and further work on metrication was passed to the Bureau of Standards. ‘But this went with neither staff nor money.’”

So the problem here is one of resources; so that you are empowering and adding to the responsibilities of the Bureau of standards, but not providing staff or money. This is 2004, so I hope the Member does not get up with hilarity and tell us that on December 24, 2001 they did not have staff and resources; I hope that is not the excuse now.

Two and a half years later, \$60 billion later, we do not have staff or money for the Bureau of Standards, while this Government will comfortably disgorge half a billion dollars on 10-day make-work programmes, but the Bureau of Standards complaining “no staff, no money”, and now they are entrusted with implementing this measure. I was going to say manning this, but I will not. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnath: Manning is a verb. [*Laughter*]

Mr. B. Panday: A masculine verb?

Dr. R. Moonilal: While there was a concern in January 2004 about the lack of resources and money for the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards—the Minister must tell the House whether he intends to deploy the resources for the Bureau of Standards to undertake this responsibility; for the Weights and Measures Inspectorate and the Chief Inspector of Metrology to be hired, to have the resources. Well they cannot find resources for the police.

It is very interesting that it is linked to resources. On the evening of Carnival Monday, the Police Commissioner appeared on television and had an impromptu interview with the TV6 news presenter, not Natalie Williams, at which the presenter asked Mr. Snaggs, “Mr. Commissioner, you are reporting that Carnival is safe, but if we are safe for Carnival Monday, why can we not be safe for the rest of the year?” Mr. Snaggs replied innocently, “Do not forget, during Carnival I have all my resources available to me.” So the point, clearly, is that for the rest of year I need resources; I do not have resources.

There are no resources to find for police. During the crisis with the University of the West Indies (UWI) students—they complained about no police at UWI. Subsequent to raising the matter in Parliament and outside and threatening to write the CARICOM Prime Ministers, they put the mobile police post at UWI. They now have some patrols; I do not know how long it might last. This Government has demonstrated that it cannot back up policy with resources, and it does not have the will. They will spend the money in MuST or dust or whatever, but do not expect them to get money for this. Then they would take a few of their party friends, make them inspectors and go around seizing people fish at the side of the highway. I pointed out this because it is a problem of resources in 2004. [*Crosstalk*]

Of course, the Bill deals with the offence of committing fraud. It also deals with people who interfere with metering equipment in cars to get better resale value. A person is guilty of an offence under this Bill, and the most minute of the penalties would include \$5,000 and imprisonment for six months. It gets more to two years and \$25,000 and so on. So in the context of persons on the street lacking information on this matter, they are subject to the smallest fine of \$5,000.

Mr. Ramnath: If you build a wall and it falls down, what penalty is there for that?

Mr. Imbert: There are other laws for that.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Not if it is intended as a Lego set wall.

Mr. Speaker, I am coming to the harsh penalties to become law, and persons out there may not be in the know that they are breaking the law. The Minister could correct me if I am wrong. For example, if you are exporting goods to another country where they use a different system of measuring, you are free to put the label for that country. So someone sending a ton of nails or nails, the importing country determines the label, but if you are selling locally, then you change that label and put another for this market. That is also the requirement of the Bill. It tells you that persons have to be in the know with these matters, and to know about the penalties for which the Government would be after them.

Mr. Ramnath: You could change it from Queensway to Shoe Locker!

Dr. R. Moonilal: Of course, as I said before, they would be “chasing down people scale” as if they were weapons of mass destruction. Incidentally, under this Government, we can trust them with State witnesses and protecting witnesses, particularly, for voter padding, because where a person is charged and that person then squeals on someone else, he would not be charged, because he could say that the measuring device was really not in his possession and that another person falsified the stamp. They know about doing that under this Bill.

These are some of the issues in the Bill. The Minister would be eager to tell us that everything we are enquiring about would really be answered by regulations, because the minister has these powers. It says in the Bill that the minister may make regulations. There is an enormous amount of regulations from this minister, who will be regulating everything: fees to be collected; circumstances in which the condition under which and manner in which the stamps may be destroyed; materials and principles. Our friend will learn a lot about metrology. The minister makes regulations, but it is not stated here that he does so on the advice of the Bureau or of this institution that we are creating called the Chief Inspector of Metrology.

It is not stated at all in the Bill that this big new Chief Inspector of Metrology and all his inspectors—*[Interruption]*—they have him hired already. They can find them easily, man. They can find people for the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and “dey cyah” find somebody for that? It is not stated here that the minister in making serious regulations would be under any obligation to take advice from professionals, from

the scientific community, researchers and from the people who are now holding offices under this Bill. The minister just makes regulations. But I am sure the Member for Diego Martin Central is well qualified on matters of metrology.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister may also make regulations in respect of certain classes of transaction as well, not just scale and measuring devices, but transactions. You can actually determine what is trade; make regulations as they regard vending machines used in connection with the sale of certain classes of goods to be determined by regulations. So under no obligation is the Minister to accept advice from public officers established under this Act. And, of course, we need to trust the PNM Government with this.

Mr. Speaker, they also address the fact that this repeals the Weight and Measures Ordinance and the Member for Diego Martin Central would be very familiar with repealing another Act, the Spirits and Spirit Compound Act. So this measure repeals sections 27 and 30 of the other Act.

The Minister with responsibility for standards in the country as a whole, must inform the population, and not just by regulations telling us that in the next six months we would see the regulations and we will learn, but he must tell us clearly his position on several matters raised; training, education, labelling, and public widespread education because we would not accept this sorry excuse that we have a weights and measuring department already, and they go around selling ochro to people and look at their scales. This is a stronger institution with wider powers. The very fact that several Governments have tried to bring the Weights and Standards Division under the Bureau of Standards, suggests that that division may not have been carrying out its mandate in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, we must support this because we support the development of an intelligent nation. In fact, it is interesting that the UNC's vision is termed "Developing an intelligent nation" and the PNM's is Vision 2020, and part of the intelligent nation is developing our business community, the service sector, tourism and technology and also conforming with international standards and agreements.

You may be interested to know, and the Member for Diego Martin Central did not tell us, but we believe this Bill will also help Trinidad and Tobago to conform to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on technical barriers to trade that addresses the issue of conformity assessment which means in a nutshell that when you trade with other countries in the world, there must be some common platform for measuring performance, standards and so on. Article 10 deals

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with conformity assessment, the WTO agreement to which Trinidad and Tobago must also comply.

This Bill is important so we must support it. It is, after all, a UNC measure brought to the Parliament in 2001 as I said before when they were busy with the former President undermining the Constitution. This was before the Parliament and it could have been passed and implemented and we could have had a massive education programme well on the way, but they chose on that occasion to retard the development of the country.

Mr. Speaker, the final plea I want to make to the Member for Diego Martin Central is that he should tell us clearly how the Government intends to communicate with the critical public because you do not have to communicate with someone who is doing A'level Physics, or persons at the university level who are studying measurement, you have to communicate with the average person who has involved himself/herself in trade, and how are you doing that by closing down the public broadcasting service?

In fact, I want to call on the Minister and the Government to indicate clearly their policy on public broadcasting because they give the Parliament a wishy-washy document—National Policy on Broadcast and Broadcasting Industry—that dealt with public broadcasting in about five or six lines and when they were proudly laying this in the Parliament, they closed down the National Broadcasting Network (NBN).

In a plural society like ours; a multi-ethnic, multicultural society where persons in the national community have their own way of communicating with different groups like churches and clubs in different villages and so on, not everybody reads the newspapers. In fact, people believe because they sell a lot of newspapers, people actually read. You will be surprised that people do not read, so this one-page, colour advertisement really does not help in communicating. In fact, the post-Cabinet press conference probably helps more, but in communicating the wrong message.

Mr. Speaker, spending millions of dollars in newspaper advertisements will not help persons who are selling on the streets. One needs to develop innovative communication and public relations techniques otherwise we can reach the stage where persons out there continue to buy half pound of potatoes, a few ounces of cheese and continue to be robbed. The inspectors are not aware of it and when they are, mischievously they may focus on certain categories of business persons for one reason or another and violate their rights. So public education is the big issue.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the Minister must also tell us the phase; if they are going to implement this the day after it is proclaimed and regulations are made, or is there some time to phase it in? I think we have raised some issues, and the Minister is very eager to correct whatever misinformation he believes has been given in the public domain and we look forward to his response.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I would be exceedingly brief because there is not much to respond to.

The Member for Oropouche took one hour to make all sorts of assertions, insinuations and declarations with respect to various deficiencies within the legislation. He spoke about the need for public education, but there is clearly a need for education per se on that side, because some of the issues raised by the Member demonstrated an alarming lack of comprehension and I shall deal with a few.

The Member for Oropouche made very heavy weather of a clause in the Bill that spoke to an inspector taking a vehicle to the nearest measuring device if he felt that the vehicle was not properly marked or stamped. He made a big song and dance about a truck being stopped in Toco and asked where would the truck be taken; if we would take it to San Fernando, we need to deal with that, and that the Minister must tell this Parliament what he intends to do about that mischief.

However, I have just heard my colleague full of sound and fury signifying nothing. For example, if one goes to clause 7(2)(d), if the Member for Oropouche had bothered to read, if he had the ability to comprehend at the level of the secondary entrance examination, because when one looks at the comprehension passage, the material is no more difficult than this and clause 7(2) says:

“The powers of an Inspector under this section shall in no case include the power to—

- (d) stop a vehicle on a highway or require its driver to travel more than such distance as may be prescribed for the purpose of proceeding to a measuring device.”

So it is there in black and white. An 11-year-old child could have determined that the answer to your question is contained in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is very thorough and all of these hypothetical, speculative issues that the Member raised; like where is the check and balance, and yet in the very Bill it says that should be prescribed in regulations. He asked,

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would it be prescribed in regulations? If the Member had read, he would have seen. It is there in Standard 5 English.

Let me show another example. The Member for Oropouche made another big song and dance about the Minister making regulations. A big song and dance about why should the Minister have the power to make regulations without the chief inspector or some other adviser, one set of noise. But when one goes to clause 22(1) it says:

“There shall be established an Advisory Committee on Metrology comprising the Permanent Secretary, or his representative, the Chief Inspector of Metrology or his representative, the Executive Director of the Bureau or his representative, a representative from the Ministry responsible for Consumer Affairs and not more than four other persons with knowledge in metrology as the Minister may direct.

(2) The Advisory Committee... shall, if directed by the Minister to do so, make recommendations concerning any matter relating to—

(a) Regulations, Orders or technical specifications...;”

It is there in the Bill. All the answers to these foolish hypothetical, irrelevant questions were all dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, when this other Bill which was laid today, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Bill, comes into being and we can examine the credentials people have received or claimed to have received from alleged institutions of tertiary education, we would have to examine the credentials of some of the people on that side. Because if the Member for Oropouche cannot comprehend at the level of a Standard 5 child, one has to wonder about these alleged credentials he claims to have.

Mr. Speaker, clause 18 makes it very clear when it states:

“In any proceedings for an offence under this Act it shall be a defence,...for a person charged to prove—

- (a) that the commission of the offence was due to a mistake or to reliance on information supplied by another person whom he reasonably believed to have had knowledge of or experience in the particular subject or to reliance on the act or default of another person, or to an accident or some other cause beyond his control; and
- (b) that he took all reasonable precautions and exercised all due diligence...”

Therefore, if a clerk is selling cloth—since you like that example—in a store and an inspector comes in and deems the clerk to be the occupier of the premises and determines that the scale or tape measure says that a metre is 36 inches—the example used by the Member for Couva South—then that clerk can say as a defence that he/she acted in good faith, relied upon the tape measure given by his/her employer and it was not a deliberate act on his/her part. It is all there.

Every issue that he raised, there is an answer for it in the Bill. Every clause that he read out of context is dealt with in another clause. Every piece of mischief or danger that he alleged is contained in the Bill or dealt with in another part of the Bill, there is an answer for every foolish question that he asked.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Every question was foolish.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am certain that my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, will educate him on the public education programme that must, of necessity, accompany the implementation of this new system of measurement. It would be ludicrous to introduce a completely new system of measurement in this country without a proper system of public education and a phased implementation of the new system. It would be ludicrous to do otherwise, and before I take my seat, the absurd example that he gave that growth leads to unrest and therefore unrest leads to growth. The lawyers on that side should explain to him that in law, that is something that is easily distinguishable. It is a nonsense, as was every submission by the Member for Oropouche.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a brief intervention on the Metrology Bill. I want to congratulate the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central for bringing to the Parliament once more this Bill—a variation of it—having been laid sometime in 1977 by the late and former Prime Minister, George Chambers, when he was Minister of Industry and Commerce, and then subsequently in 2001. So it has over a 28-year history, and clearly during this period there is currently existing in the country a dual system; the imperial system alongside the metric system. In that context, it becomes necessary to us that there should be a public education system as my colleague, the Member for Oropouche, indicated to the House to which the Member for Diego Martin Central is in agreement now that we are seeking to pass this legislation to make the metric system the primary and dominant system.

Mr. Speaker, when one goes to the person in the Beetham Market, the Chaguanas Market, the Marabella or Penal Markets, they are still dealing with the

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imperial system; a pound of potatoes, a pound of saltfish, or a few ounces of cheese. When one goes to the supermarket where the goods are packaged, to a large extent the metric system is in place, kilograms or what have you. When one seeks to purchase lands, depending on the conveyancer— I know that you are one of the principal conveyancers in the country, Mr. Speaker, and you can traverse both the imperial measure and the metric system. So you see, there is the compelling need for us to educate our people on this dual system.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister in his presentation spoke about the necessity of this system to protect the consumer and you know protection at times is needed from the vituperations of the hon. Member for Diego Martin East. Instead of looking at the merit of the contribution of the Member for Oropouche, he sought the easier way out by attacking the messenger; Personal attack on the Member for Oropouche, rather than dealing with the significant content of what he had to say.

I want to congratulate the Member for Oropouche for a very excellent contribution on a topic, as he indicated as being a very dry one. When one looks at this Bill in the context of what the social priorities for this Government are, I was pleased to listen to the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, the Leader of Government Business, indicating and promising that certain legislation would be coming; the Computation Bill, the Anti-dumping (Amdt.) Bill, and the safeguard legislation amongst other things. I am happy he said that because it is clear to us on this side that there is no coherent legislative agenda, notwithstanding the fact that those on the other side have been in office since December 24, 2001. That is a fact.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at this Bill, one recognizes that when the Minister spoke about the protection of the consumer and the necessity for them to have confidence in the dominant and primary system of measurement and one compares that to what is happening and the reality of Trinidad and Tobago's economy today, one recognizes that notwithstanding whether you use the imperial measure, or the metric or SI measures, there are significant increases in the cost of living in Trinidad and Tobago. Whether you say it is a kilo of flour or a pound of rice, there are increases; whether it is a kilo of saltfish or a litre of oil there are going to be significant increases in the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, for protection of the consumer, there ought to be a dominant system and in the marketplace today there are significant increases in the cost of living and perhaps a cursory glance at the increases— *[Interruption]* Metrology has to do with weights and measures amongst other things depending upon how much one buys, or depending upon the moneys one expends and the amount one gets.

For example, a basket of goods one can purchase in a supermarket—whether in imperial measure or the metric system—would cost about \$600. Within the past few months, that has increased to \$800. That is a significant increase and notwithstanding the wage increases, we now have the inflationary spiral taking place. So we have not only significant increases in the food basket, but also in other sectors and I will give you an example.

You have in the housing sector increases in steel, PVC, and purlins, there is a significant increase in everything. Before I get to the housing sector, I would like to indicate the changes in food prices. A two-kilo bag of flour was \$6.39 in September, 2002; in January, 2004 it is \$7.59, a significant increase. And one can do one's own conversion using the imperial measure. Rice increase; one kilo of rice was \$4.33, it is now \$4.90 and there are increases throughout; rice, flour, oil and do you know what is the response of the hon. Minister with responsibility for Consumer Affairs? When the price of flour increased, he told the population to eat cassava. In a "Burnham like" fashion they were told to eat cassava.

Mr. Ramnath: By the pound or kilos?

Mr. G. Singh: I do not know whether he knows that cassava is a root crop or it grows on trees, being part of the cocktail circuit.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at this cassava recommendation by the Minister, and also when the price of cheese increased by 30 per cent recently he said to eat less cheese. You know at that rate under the Minister with responsibility for Consumer Affairs, one would not be able to eat crux and cheese.

When one realizes what is happening, one recognizes that this impact is also being felt in the increase in the cost of living, and in the cost of building homes and I will give you an indication because the steel and other building materials are still in the imperial measure.

A half-inch steel length was \$15.50 it is now \$26, an increase of \$10.50, a 68 per cent increase; half inch imperial measure PVC pipe was \$14.00, today it is \$16.00, a 14 per cent increase; BRC, the very foundation of the construction industry was \$210, now it is \$300, an increase of \$90, a 30 per cent increase; beams were \$125, they are now \$240, an increase of \$115 with a 92 per cent increase in the price; steel purlins lengths were \$70, they are now \$98, a \$28 change in price and a 40 per cent increase; one foot of aluzinc was \$5.50 previously, it is now \$7.25, an increase of \$1.75, a 32 per cent increase. Nails, a box of nails of 44 lbs—because all these are quoted in pounds and, therefore, there would be the need for the conversion—was \$62, now it is \$89, an increase of \$27 or 19 per cent.

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Mr. Speaker, the question that really arises is that in these circumstances, having regard to the increase in prices already in the food sector and now in the housing sector, what would be the method of conversion? Would there be a period of education to allow it, so people can appreciate what they are buying? This must be looked at in the context of the increase in the price of fuel, both gas and diesel have increased by some 5 per cent per litre.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at that, one understands why the Central Bank Governor said in today's newspaper that there is the likelihood that inflation could pass 5 per cent. So when we introduce this metric system, we should introduce a measurement system in place. In the *Trinidad Guardian* of Friday 12, 2004 it is reported:

“Inflation may go beyond four per cent in light of increasing food prices, the Governor of the Central Bank Ewart Williams said yesterday.

“There is no doubt that the adjustments to food prices taking place now and continued wage pressures could raise inflation beyond the four and five per cent that we were projecting.”

Mr. Speaker, so clearly in the context of this Bill, if there is no proper conversion, there can be further increases in the spending patterns of the consumer and the value of the dollar decreasing.

4.00 p.m.

When one looks at clause 9 of the Bill the Explanatory Note says:

“Clause 9 would create the offence of using a measuring device indicating units of measurement other than units provided for in clause 3 which had not been stamped or bears a stamp which is outdated, or which is false or fraudulent. The clause also creates the offence of selling or offering to sell measuring devices which are false or fraudulent.”

The Bill retains in the definition section the use of barrel for the oil sector. It retains the use of metric carat for precious gems. It retains the use of troy ounce for gold. Mr. Speaker, inherent in the Bill is the jewel system also. Now, Mr. Speaker, you know that in the jewellery sector there is need for significant regulations. There are absolutely no regulations in the jewellery sector in this country and that is something, perhaps, the hon. Minister may want to look at.

When we look at the whole question of the conversion in the oil sector we still use imperial measures. When we use imperial measures then we have an appreciation of whether or not we are collecting the appropriate revenues or that

we are getting value for our money, royalties, as the case might be. At Atlantic LNG when one saw that \$48 million was lost as a result of the strike action this week and, subsequently, one saw that the royalty taken from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was \$2 million, one has to ensure whether or not the conversion is the metric system or the imperial measure.

Mr. Speaker, at the gas stations diesel, super or unleaded gas is being sold in litres. In Petrotrin, however, they still use the old imperial measure and that is because, to a large extent, in the oil sector the Americans dominate the environment, and they have not shifted to the metric system. The Americans still maintain the imperial measure and in order, therefore, for Petrotrin to maintain its place in the marketplace, and instead of engaging in this constant conversion process, it continues to maintain the imperial measure.

Mr. Speaker, one can understand and appreciate that, but one cannot understand why Petrotrin paid Cudjoe Construction an additional \$9 million for work not done. One cannot understand, Mr. Speaker! *[Interruption]* Well, I know there is an ongoing investigation. I also know that there is need for us to look at that investigation and make sure it is not interfered with, and the executive chairman does not manipulate the investigation, as he manipulated the other processes. *[Interruption]* You know, I love to hear the Prime Minister defend his good friend. I respect his sense of loyalty and fidelity.

Mr. Speaker, clause 16 of the Bill says:

“Prosecutions	16(1) Proceedings for offences under this Act may be instituted only by or on behalf of an Inspector who may prosecute before a court of summary jurisdiction in respect of any proceedings instituted.”
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So it is the Inspector who will bring about the prosecution in a court of summary jurisdiction. Now the question arises: Can the hon. Minister, on the basis of this legislation, give a directive to that Inspector to withdraw any prosecution that he may have instituted? Can the Minister, in this piece of legislation request, or give a directive to the Inspector to withdraw any prosecution that may be instituted? You see, Mr. Speaker, it is the pattern of this Government to interfere with the judicial process. What checks and balances do we have that would ensure that interference would not take place under this legislation?

It was a Minister of Government who gave a directive to a policeman to withdraw the prosecution in a matter in Tobago. I do not know how many pounds of fish were involved in that matter, Mr. Speaker! I do not know how many kilos

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of fish were involved in that matter, Mr. Speaker! But I understand there were over 3,000 pounds of flying fish. [*Interruption*] I will go to the newspaper report. I will quote to indicate the kind of weight of this fish. I make reference to the *Newsday* dated Wednesday, February 18, 2004. It says:

“...Director of Public Prosecutions, Geoffrey Henderson, sent a memo to Commissioner Everald Snaggs in an effort to find out who gave instructions to the police not to proceed with the case.

Commissioner Snaggs sent the memo to his Deputy Commissioner Trevor Paul to handle the matter.

Snr. Supt Benjamin Watson, the officer who is investigating the matter, is expected to submit his report by Friday.

On Monday, Director of Public Prosecutions Geoffrey Henderson confirmed that a letter was sent to Snaggs on the release of the Bajan fishermen.

On February 7, 47-year-old Joseph Mason and 61-year-old Samuel Firebrace were held by the Coast Guard and later charged with fishing illegally in Trinidad and Tobago waters. Last Monday, Cpl John Morrison, a prosecutor at the Scarborough Magistrates’ Court, told Magistrate Joan Gill that the police had decided not to offer any evidence in the matter and the two fishermen were allowed to leave the courtroom free men.

The fishermen departed Tobago on Monday with the fish they caught which included 13 king fish, 11 dolphins and over 3,000 pounds of flying fish.”

Mr. Speaker, there is no indication as to the conversion here but, clearly, in a matter that affected foreign relations between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago—I know that the Bajans have already gone metric—the Minister of Foreign Affairs would have had to do a conversion of this 3,000 pounds of flying fish in order to engage his counterpart in Barbados, Mia Mottley or Owen Arthur. But the point I want to make with respect to this matter is: Can the Minister—I do not expect my good friend from Diego Martin Central to interfere with the summary court judicial process. He does not have a history of that. He has been a parliamentarian too long to make such an elementary error. He understands the separation of powers principle. He knows as a member of the Executive he is accountable to the Parliament and that the Judiciary is separate and apart. He would not interfere with the Judiciary. I have high regard for my friend from Diego Martin Central.

However, Mr. Speaker, that was not so in the Bajan fishing matter. A newspaper report said:

“A Minister of Government gave a directive to a senior policeman who in turn gave a directive to the prosecuting policeman, Cpl. John Morrison to withdraw the matter.”

That is interference in the Judiciary.

Mr. Speaker, how would any society that has a Vision 2020, that has ambitions of being a First World society, have operated in a situation like that, having regard to the concept and the principle of separation of powers? They would have allowed the matter to continue. They would have allowed the court to come to a judicial decision in the matter. They would not have interfered with due process. If the parties were found guilty then they might have made a plea in mitigation or, alternatively, used Executive authority and bring about a pardon. But no, the banana republic that we aspire to, we interfere with the judicial process in this country.

When you look at that kind of approach you would understand the concern raised by my colleague, the Member for Oropouche, in dealing with clause 24 with the whole question of ministerial power to make regulations. When you look at clause 23—

Mr. Valley: In the old Bill or the new Bill?

Mr. G. Singh: I am dealing with the Bill before us, and the Bill before us is 2004. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, when you look at clause 23(1):

“The Minister may make Regulations which he considers necessary for giving effect to this Act and may, in particular, make Regulations with respect to —“
a series and very detailed set of guidelines.

We have to keep in mind the point made by my colleague, the Member for Oropouche. Generally, “The Minister may make Regulations...” is just another way of saying the technical group who has responsibility for this would make regulations; the Minister would have his team review them, and then the regulations are brought before the Parliament, which is consistent with the policy in the Bill. [*Interruption*] I said generally. And that is my concern. Because under this Government when you give the power to make regulations you have to be very careful.

For example, my colleague the Member for Nariva, asked a question dealing with NEDCO. What transpired was that in the interregnum between the period that the question was asked, and the period for answering the question, the Cabinet intervened by making NEDCO one of the exempted organizations under the Freedom of Information Act. When you have that kind of power and you abuse it,

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do you understand what is happening, Mr. Speaker? I make specific reference to that because I do not want my colleagues to lose sight of the fact that when you give this Government the right to make regulations there is likelihood of abuse.

Mr. Speaker, the question was asked on January 17, 2003; it was gazetted in February and it was made an exempted organization. We asked the question in this House, and then they sought under the Freedom of Information (Exemption) Order, 2003, dated February 18, 2003, to exempt. So it was exempted and therefore the question was not answered.

Mr. Speaker, this society has now become a very discerning society and if there is an abuse of power in any arena people take it upon themselves to provide the information. My colleague had asked a question with respect to the recipients of NEDCO loans because he was of the view that there was abuse of power. Do you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? I have received in my mailbox a listing of all the beneficiaries of NEDCO loans. I have begun the process of reviewing this. When you realize what is happening in the body of NEDCO and the number of loans of \$30,000 that was disbursed in the run-up to the last general election, you would understand why they did not want to make this information public knowledge. It was an abuse of power and an embarrassment.

Mr. Speaker, now you understand why regulations have become so important. You cannot put regulations in the hands of that Cabinet without the scrutiny of the House. They distributed the loans under NEDCO, but when we asked the question about the geographical locations, the hon. Minister gave us the cardinal points: North, so much; South, so much; East, so much and West, so much. [*Interruption*] We will crystallize it because not only do we have the names but also the areas. In San Fernando, 379 loans, \$3,848,775 disbursed; San Fernando West, in particular—[*Interruption*] We are dealing with the abuse of regulations. [*Crosstalk*] Moruga, in the constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro: 108 loans, \$1,279,000; Tunapuna: 223 loans, \$3,598,000; Chaguanas: 151 loans; head office: 586 loans; the majority of these loans being over \$30,000.

Mr. Speaker, when you understand those regulations, which they sought to enforce under the Freedom of Information Act—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I must agree that you are straying a bit, please come back to the Bill before us.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, with great respect—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you are trying to link regulations with that but I do not think there is a link. Please, move on with the Bill.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, when you look at some of the beneficiaries of those loans—[*Interruption*] When you have an abuse of power by virtue of regulations, which the Cabinet made in order to avoid answering a question, and when we come in this House to debate the vesting of power of regulations in the hands of a Minister, then we see the relevance. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we are in agreement with the nature and content of the Bill itself, but we are saying that through this whole process you look at the question of fraud in this Bill. Many land transactions are in square metres, and much fraud takes place in land transactions. [*Interruption*] Square metres. The hon. Member for San Fernando East has become an expert in conveyancing. I think he should take advice from you, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] You can have square metres in land. For example, the land that my friend, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant spoke about, comprised of 1,396.4 square metres. That is the piece of land that got him into trouble. [*Desk thumping*] Now, if he had used the imperial measure when he entered into that agreement for sale in 1983, the land would have been in square feet, as the Member for San Fernando East said.

Mr. Hinds: What were the square feet of InnCogen?

Mr. G. Singh: I will find out and tell you. But you must tell this country why you paid \$13,000 to NIB when you said you received no benefit from it. [*Desk thumping*] You would make a payment without receiving any benefit? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order, please! Hon. Members, let us hear the Member in silence.

Again, hon. Member, I am appealing to you to come back to the Bill.

Mr. G. Singh: I was dealing with land transactions and this is a very important part of conveyancing. It is an important part of the metric system. If you are going to do the conversion in this country this afternoon, you are going to have to do the conversion. If the National Insurance Board has to do the conversion—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant and the hon. Member for Nariva wish to carry on in the manner in which they are carrying on, may I suggest that you use the tea room for that purpose?

Please continue, hon. Member.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, land transaction, which is really the engine of certain parts of the real estate economy, and having regard to what is happening, if there is not proper conversion we would therefore find ourselves at the level of

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the land registry. It is the level of the land registry where my good friend got into trouble, or out of trouble, as the case might be.

It is clear to us on this side that where you have a situation where you have a dual system, notwithstanding it is 28 years to date since the first Bill was laid, you must continue that dual system because you have crossed generations. You have people who have grown up with the imperial system and with the metric system and you, therefore, have a situation—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, he is provoking me, you know. I have to tell him that I have a copy of the agreement which he and Margaret Hinds signed. I also have a copy of the approaches—

Mr. Hinds: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Which is it?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. Are you on a point of order? Name the point.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order No. 35(1).

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no, please.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I told him not to provoke me because if he provokes me I would tell this country that on February 03, 1984 he signed the mortgage with NIB and he made an acceptance. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, as I was indicating to you we have a dual system in place and, therefore, I was making the point that you cut across generations. There are those who have internalized the imperial system and they would then have some problems making that adjustment to the metric system. And the younger ones would have internalized the metric system and therefore pounds, ounces and so on would really be irrelevant for them. I think that the targeted group in this country must be the retail group in the markets and so on, and we must come up with a particular plan for dealing with that.

I have had the experience where this Government made regulations and the administrative authority was not in a position to tell the citizens of this country what was applicable, whether it was old, whether it was new, whether there was a transition period and a cut-off period. We have had problems in several areas in which we had made regulations, and I believe it is incumbent upon the Minister to address that.

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

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by thanking all Members who have participated in this debate. As a fact, I think we have all agreed that this has been long in coming and we are pleased that it is here today.

I will first deal with my colleague from Oropouche. I will just go in the order that I have noted the points. The first point is that the Member wanted to know whether it was not hypocritical to suggest that we wanted to take on the world when we could not even take on Barbados. Obviously, the Member does not understand that, first of all, as a family member, we have to treat Barbados in a particular way. And rather than attempt to beat up on a little brother, we simply complain or make a case before the court as was done at CARICOM. The newspapers have reported what has transpired there.

We feel, and our manufacturers feel, that we have taken on CARICOM, and the extra CARICOM markets that we are heading for Costa Rica. They are pleased that we are signing the Costa Rica/CARICOM Agreement. They know that we have to improve our competitiveness here. Mr. Speaker, that is the manufacturers' cry. Let us all work together to improve the competitiveness in Trinidad and Tobago as we look towards the FTAA, so that we are confident we can take on the world and we would live through that challenge.

Mr. Speaker, the Member also made the point that there is no difference between Bill No. 22 of 2001 and Bill No. 5 of 2004. Honestly, the first time I am looking at this 2001 legislation is today. The Member claimed that he has compared the legislation and it is the same, he cannot see a comma that is different. But, Mr. Speaker, just casually one looks at the legislation, on page 16 clause 7—one does not even have to do much—in the old Bill, clause 7 has A, B, C, D, F, G, H, I, J, K, but if you look at clause 7 in the new legislation, K is not there. But more importantly, the point quoted in his article is correct. We had to amend the legislation so that it would not require the parliamentary majority. We did that in clause 7(2)(b) where we said that if you look at the old clause it said, quite simply, that:

“7(2) The powers of an Inspector under this subsection shall in no case include-

- (b) power to detain a measuring device or any goods for a longer period than two months, unless proceedings have been instituted in connection with that measuring device or those goods;”

The new clause talks about:

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“7(2) The powers of an Inspector under this section shall in no case include the power to-

- (b) detain any measuring device or goods referred to in subsection (1)(c) except pursuant to a warrant issued by a Magistrate who, upon receiving sworn written information, is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe that such measuring device or goods are on the premises;”

When you look at the old legislation there is no (1)(c); that is taken out.

When the Member talks about their being able—[*Interruption*] Let me just finish. [*Crosstalk*] I will always give way to you. You are a new Member of the House; I will always give way to you because you have to learn, all right. But at the same time you must respect seniority. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is 4.30 p.m. which is time for tea. Is it the wish of the House to continue? Would you be long, hon. Minister?

Hon. K. Valley: I will be 15 minutes, maximum, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there consensus?

Assent indicated.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Please continue.

4.30 p.m.

Hon. K. Valley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

When the Member claims that they were ready to pass this legislation in 2001 and we threw them out—did we throw them out? They said we connived with some other people. [*Interruption*] That you implode. Tell the country the right thing—you implode in the Parliament. You collapsed or something of the sort. That is what happened. They had nothing to do. They had from 1996 to pass this legislation, but they were on autopilot over that period. They did nothing! They left everything alone. So, when I came back here I had to deal with BWIA. I have to do the computation policy. I have to do metrology. What did they do, but pave roads? That is the reality.

Mr. Speaker, the Member talked about labour unrest. I understand that gentleman is supposed to be a labour expert. Where is the labour unrest in Trinidad and Tobago? I remember their leader talking about “after Carnival ‘yuh’ go see”. Yes, they may try to drum up something, but they are not going to be successful.

Perhaps, I should talk at the same time about the point my friend, the Member for Caroni East, made about the cost of living. It is not simply cost of living. If one looks at what is happening, all prices are rising; whether it is equity prices, whether it is land prices, whether one wants more wages. All it means is that people are feeling better. Yes, they are happy and there is a general upward movement. There is that expectation and all stakeholders, on the expectation that their cake/economic pie is now getting larger, they are all positioning to get their share. It is a negotiation and all we have to do is to ensure that it is structured properly. Let them all come together.

The Member perhaps by chance made a few valid points. He pointed to the need for public education and there is nothing new. One of the things that we have done at the Ministry of Trade and Industry is to ensure that we beef up our communication area and we are ready. It is not simply metrology, but in our whole quest to be the secretariat for the FTAA, there is that need to communicate. One cannot possibly consider moving to the SI system without ensuring that there is a proper public education programme in place.

Dr. Moonilal: Just for the benefit of the House, would the Member also look at clause 7(5) in the 2001 Bill and he would see that clause 7(5) in the 2001 Bill is 7(5) in the 2004 Bill, which deals with seeking and getting a warrant to detain measuring devices.

Hon. K. Valley: There is a clause 7(5) in 2001 and there is a clause 7(5) in 2004. What you do not have in 2001 is (7)(1)(c) and the amendment to (7)(2)(b). *[Interruption]* We will talk about it at tea. The Member wants to know how we would do this public education while at the same time we are closing down NBN. There are two things wrong with that. First of all, one expects that this young doctor would know that one can always outsource and one does not need to have an NBN to have a public education programme—that the Government could purchase that from anywhere else. Secondly, the fact that NBN may be closed does not mean something is not going to rise up in its place. I do not understand the logic of my friend, but he has this problem from time to time.

The Member also mentioned the fact that we may need to phase the implementation of the programme and one takes that point. One can do that via the regulations—different ways. That is a valid point and, of course, we are going to take that on board.

The Member made an interesting point—I think my colleague picked him up on it. He said we were saying that people are happy and that is why they are

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complaining. [*Interruption*] What is it? That there is growth. So, similarly, we can say that all men are mammals and all mammals are men. That is what they teach in the Hague.

My friend, the Member for Caroni East, spent an extremely long time on his first point—the issue of the cost of living. I have dealt with that. It is not simply the cost of living, but I think prices generally are rising. Look! Life is a trade-off. If we want to achieve certain things—we have been existing with an inflation rate of about 3 or 4 per cent for quite some time—if, in fact, we are going to increase capacity utilization, we would expect—and I am sure my friend, the Member for St. Augustine, would concur—that we would have to trade off some increase in inflation. It has to be managed.

We have to make a decision. It is either we are going to slow the pace of economic activity or we are going to accept a higher level of inflation. It is a trade off. That is what we would have to do. [*Interruption*] That is the adjustment. As we increase there is going to be economic growth; there may be some inflation and there are going to be more imports and so forth. That is the equation.

The other point the Member also spent some time on were the regulations under section 23, attempting to make the point that one is putting too much power into the hands of the Minister, trying to draw some nexus with NEDCO. Mr. Speaker, section 23 is in the new legislation; it is in the old legislation, therefore, if in 2001, it was good for a UNC Minister to have that power, I want the Member for Caroni East to tell me why is it wrong for Ken Valley as Minister of Trade and Industry to have similar powers to what the UNC Minister would have had in 2001? I just want him to tell me. I do not know.

The Member's last point was that we should keep the dual system since there are old persons who may be more familiar. This is a fact, but we had made the point that if there is the dual system, then there may be unfair trade practices. Having driven home that point, I cannot understand why the Member would want us to then continue having the dual system.

Having said all of that, I think this was a very good debate. I thank Members on all sides and I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

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Clauses 1 to 28 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Schedules ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, March 26, 2004.

On that day, we would do the motion with respect to the Agricultural Census Order, the Telecommunications (Amdt.) Bill, which was introduced today, as well the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Bill, 2004.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.47 p.m.

**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
TO BE ADDED IN A SUBSEQUENT UPDATE**