

*Leave of Absence**Friday, April 02, 2004***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 02, 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 Couva North (Mr. Basdeo Panday) requesting leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. National Insurance (Benefits) (Amdt.) Regulations, 2004. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. The National Insurance (Contribution) (Amdt.) Regulations, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. The National Insurance (Medical Expenses) (Amdt.) Regulations, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the period October 14, 1991 to December 31, 1991. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1992. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
6. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1994.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, we are missing 1993.

Papers 4 to 6 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, three of the four questions are

not yet ready today. We are answering question No. 95, and we are requesting a deferral of questions Nos. 72, 73 and 75 for one week.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence. I am objecting to the request for a deferment. In addition to these questions, last week the same thing happened. The questions to the Minister of Education were deferred for two weeks. There are questions for written answers that have been here since December. I really, really object to Government's handling, and I believe it is abusing the process of the Parliament with respect to the answering of questions that they are not coming forward.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member that the Government does its best to answer questions on a timely basis. I repeat, with respect to written responses, first of all, they are written because of their nature and secondly, according to the Standing Orders, written responses are circulated when received by the Parliament.

I think the framers of the Standing Orders contemplated that with the nature of written questions one cannot put a time on them. With respect to the oral response, I think, the Member should be concerned that there are only four questions from the Opposition on the Order Paper to be answered.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! The hon. Member has indicated that questions Nos. 72, 73, and 75 would be answered at the next sitting.

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

Schools Heads and Deans

- 72.** A. Would the hon. Minister Education list the steps and date/s of each step taken, since January 2002 to implement the system of Heads and Deans in the nation's schools and the reasons for the delay in implementing same;
- B. Could the Minister state the date when the system of Heads and Deans would be fully implemented?

Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP)

- 73.** Would the hon. Minister of Education state:
- (i) the steps and dates of each step taken, since January 2002 to implement the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) in the nation's schools and explain the reasons for the delay in full implementation of same;
- (ii) the date when same would be fully implemented?

Final Curriculum

75. Would the hon. Minister of Education state the steps and date/s of each step taken since January 2002 to provide a final curriculum (as distinct from draft curriculum) for each subject area and level in our nation's schools and the reasons for the delay in providing same?

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information:

Private Consultancy Firms (National Broadcasting Company Limited)

95. (a) Can the Minister indicate whether private consultancy firms "Elder Associates Limited" and "Lonsdale Sachi and Sachi Advertising Limited" have been retained over the past twelve months by the National Broadcasting Company Limited and if so for what purposes?
- (b) Would the Minister indicate the terms and conditions of such consultancies and the cost incurred by the National Broadcasting Company Limited and/or any other state agency for such services?

The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith): Mr. Speaker, in response to question No. 95, may I indicate that the Government has no responsibility for any firm called National Broadcasting Company Limited. It does have responsibility for the National Broadcasting Network (NBN) Limited. The firms Elder Associates Limited and Lonsdale Sachi and Sachi Advertising Limited were hired during the period under question by NBN. The former was hired to provide employee assistance programme services for all employees. Lonsdale Sachi and Sachi Advertising Limited was hired to provide communications consultancy services as the Government seeks to wind up the operations of NBN.

Mr. Speaker, the services provided by Elder Associates Limited encompass career counselling, personal financial consultation, job search activities and personal counselling through work groups and individual sessions.

Workshop seminars have already been conducted in the following areas: change management, résumé writing, presentation in interview skills, development of

business plans and small business management. NBN's policy is to underwrite the cost of up to five hours worth of counselling for its employees.

The services provided by the firm of Lonsdale Sachi and Sachi Advertising Limited include dissemination of information regarding the VSEP exercise and closure of the company. The cost incurred for these consultancies are as follows:

Elder Associates Limited: For employees' counselling the fees are \$300 plus VAT for employees. To date, NBN has been billed \$3,795, VAT inclusive in 2003, and \$2,185, VAT inclusive, in 2004 for these services. And for financial counselling and out-placement workshops, the fees are \$6,000, plus VAT for workshop. To date, NBN has been billed \$86,480, VAT inclusive, for these services.

Lonsdale Sachi and Sachi Advertising Limited: NBN has agreed to pay Lonsdale Sachi and Sachi Advertising Limited the sum of \$36,000 plus VAT and fees for the duration of the project. The estimated cost of material for the contract is \$120,000, plus VAT.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: Would the hon. Minister be able to tell us on what basis these particular companies were awarded such contracts and services?

Sen. The Hon. Dr. L. Saith: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the information, but I can get it from NBN. Normally, what they would do is go out and get proposals, but I cannot say at this stage what process was used.

**EXTRADITION (COMMONWEALTH AND
FOREIGN TERRITORIES) (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL**

Senate Amendments

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion in my name.

Be It Resolved that the Senate Amendments to the Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) (Amdt) (No. 2) Bill, 2003 listed in Appendix 11, be now considered.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 7.

Senate amendment read as follows:

First Column	Second Column
Clause	Extent of Amendments
7	<p>A. In paragraph (a) delete the words “sex,”</p> <p>B. Delete paragraph (b) and substitute the following new paragraph:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“ (b) in subsection (7) (a), by inserting after the words ‘state,’ the words ‘Head of Government or Minister of Government;’”</p> <p>C. Delete paragraph (c).</p>

Mr. Gift: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House of Representatives doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Miss Lucky: Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to be very long in terms of making this particular point, but it would be to some benefit certainly for those of us on this side, for some justification for what is the proposed amendment which has already been agreed to by the Senate, more specifically the justification for deleting the word “sex” as it presently appears in section 8 of the Act. If I am to be guided by the other place, it was felt both by the hon. Minister and also by a Member from the Independent Bench, that the use of the word “sex” was synonymous with the use of the word “gender” and, therefore, there was a feeling that the two words meaning one and the same, one of them ought to be removed.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out to the hon. Minister, who no doubt has a great anxiety that this particular Motion, and these particular amendments be approved of without any sort of controversy, or perhaps, any opposition to just reconsider the position, because there is a reason that each word has been used separately and independently and certainly the drafters who would have drafted that particular clause 7 as it now stands dealing with section 8 of the Act, had a reason for it.

Mr. Speaker, based on the case of *Corbett v Corbett*, a very famous case which is reported at [1970] 2 *All England Law Reports* at page 33, the issue had to be determined whether, in fact, there was a distinction to be made between sex

Extradition (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MISS LUCKY]

Friday, April 02, 2004

and gender. What was held in the particular case of Corbett that I have just referred to is that the two words are, in fact, not synonymous. The use of the word “sex” is determined rather at the point of birth, and for the purposes of the law it can never be changed. In other words, based on certain characteristics at the time of birth, a person is determined to be male or female. However, the law—and we follow the English law and *Corbett v Corbett* was actually an English decision. It is a case that also reached the European courts dealing with human rights.

What was determined at the highest level, both at the House of Lords and also in the European court dealing with human rights, was the fact that gender is distinct from sex because gender is something that can be changed. Without going into any details the reality is that there are some persons who, by way of operations, may choose to change for the purposes of their gender what they would have been born, and so the law had to recognize the word “sex” means male or female. “Gender” deals with persons, for example, who may be transsexuals and, therefore, still for the purposes of the law, either be male or female but might have chosen to change their gender. That is why it is important to make the distinction because the one that has been removed by the Senate is the one that is considered to be more important, that is, the word “sex” which is determined at birth. It is that particular word and that particular meaning that continues to reign supreme in the English law as we know it and which we are bound by. I ask the hon. Minister who I know is very anxious for reasons that may be disclosed later on, for this legislation to be passed and approved so that it would not have to go to another place. But it is important that we get it right.

If the removal of the word “gender” was the issue perhaps, I would not have felt strongly as I do on this particular point but what has been removed is the word “sex” and that is the determining factor, as far as the English law is concerned, with respect to the issue of what a person is—male or female—and bearing in mind that this law is meant to protect persons. And one does not want, and I am sure the Government does not want, to remove a word that is meant to offer the very protection that the clause is meant and the very category of persons that the clause is meant to protect.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gift: First of all, there is really no super anxiety on this side to have this Bill rushed as is being premised.

Mr. Speaker, on the question of the definition, indeed, during the course of the debate in the Senate it was felt that in the use of the two terms “sex” and “gender”, deletion of one was in consonance with the meaning of the one that is remaining, because whatever happened at birth, when you use the term “gender” as an adult you are either referring to a male or female. So that I do not know if it is a question of splitting hairs between the time of birth and the time of adulthood. I do not think that removal of the term which seemed to us in the Senate as superfluous, really affects the essence of what is intended in this amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 14.

Senate amendment read as follows:

14

- A. In the proposed section 19, delete the words “19A, 19B and 19C” and substitute the words “19A and 19B”.
- B. In the proposed section 19A, delete subsections (3) to (7) and substitute the following:

“(3) A document purporting to have been signed by a judicial, prosecuting or penal authority, or other officer administering a Government Department, of the declared Commonwealth or foreign territory shall be admitted without proof of the signature or official character of the person appearing to have signed it.

(4) A translation of a document into English shall be admitted into evidence only where it is certified by a judicial, prosecuting or penal authority, or other officer administering a Government Department, of the declared Commonwealth or foreign territory and purports to be an accurate translation of the original document.

5 A record of the case or supplementary evidence shall not be admitted unless –

Extradition (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MR. GIFT]

Friday, April 02, 2004

- (a) in the case of a person who is accused of an extraditable offence, a judicial or prosecuting authority of the declared Commonwealth or foreign territory certifies that the evidence summarized or contained in the record of the case or in the supplementary evidence is in a form that would be admissible at the trial; and
 - (i) was gathered according to the law of that territory; or
 - (ii) is sufficient under the law of that territory to justify prosecution; or
 - (b) in the case of a person who is alleged to be unlawfully at large after conviction of an extraditable offence, a judicial, prosecuting or penal authority of the declared Commonwealth or foreign territory certifies that the documents in the record of the case or in the supplementary evidence are accurate; and
 - (c) each document contained in the record of the case or in supplementary evidence bears the signature of the certifying official.”
- C. Delete the proposed section 19B.
 - D. Renumber the proposed section 19C as section 19B.

Mr. Gift: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House of Representatives doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause 16.

Senate amendment read as follows:

Insert after clause 15 the following new clause:

“Application 16. This Act applies to extraditable offences committed before as well as after the commencement of the Act.”.

Mr. Gift: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House of Representatives doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Miss Lucky: Mr. Speaker, this particular clause, with the greatest respect to the hon. Minister, is one that is of great concern to the Opposition because it is almost as though this particular clause which has great repercussions in terms of the law and the applicability of the offences for which persons will be extradited is literally being snuck in. This was not a clause that was a part of the original Bill that was brought for debate. In fact, once again, because of the manner in which we are to follow the procedure when amendments by way of motions are being debated, the Opposition does not get the benefit of a justification before it gets a chance to respond. It does not get the benefit of a justification for why this particular clause is being introduced, that justification coming from the hon. Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I have looked however at the *Hansard* reports from the other place and this particular amendment was proposed during the contribution of one of the Independent Members. The point that was made is that it was necessary to have included in the amendments a section that would literally ensure that if a person committed an offence before the passage of this legislation and such offence was not extraditable—in other words, it did not come within the category of extraditable offences—such a person, by the purpose or by the passage of this particular clause 16, would now be brought within the net of persons who could be extradited.

The interesting thing when one reads the *Hansard* for those who have prepared themselves for this particular debate, and, of course, I do not include my colleagues on this side, because we have read it, it is clear that even though that was the reason stated in the *Hansard* for including this particular section, it is interesting that the hon. Minister when dealing with it at a later stage in the other place said that he agreed with the proposal and it is now a part of the amendments before us. In fact, the hon. Minister said that it would deal with the issue of

Extradition (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MISS LUCKY]

Friday, April 02, 2004

retrospectivity. What is interesting is the very person who proposed the amendment indicated that the amendment would not create double jeopardy or retrospectivity as it is referred to, yet the hon. Minister seems to have understood this particular clause, to have retrospective effect. And even the person who proposed the amendment admitted that by virtue of this particular clause, persons, previously not within the net of extraditable persons would now be persons who could be extradited.

Mr. Speaker, I am very well aware of the rules of sub judice, and, therefore, I am not going to embark or refer to any particular matter which is presently before the court, both in the Magistrates' Court and now the subject of a sub judice review matter.

I am pointing out that if we do not get it right here the State is going to be bombarded with legitimate constitutional actions challenging the fact that such a clause, even by its very wording, is meant to have retrospective effect and even though the intent of the Parliament, at least in the other place, seems to be somewhat confused and one cannot resort to the intention of the Parliament or the mischief rule as it is referred to initially. The fact is, what the Government should be doing, even though it is saying it is not doing it, is seeking to have a particular clause that would have that retroactive effect.

As I am sure many of us would well know when a clause is having that kind of effect there must be a constitutional majority. And even though recourse might be had to the parent Act, more specifically section 25(2), which states, among other things, that the parent Act "applies to offences committed before as well as after the commencement of this Act," and I have just quoted section 25(2), one cannot rely on the fact that the 1985 parent Act legislation did not get a constitutional majority and had a similar clause and, therefore, we ought not to have a constitutional majority here.

The reason I say that is this. In the case of Lolita Saroop, which is always considered to be the case in which the very fundamental point about lacuna in our law was discovered, we have never had in Trinidad and Tobago a situation in which a person has had to be extradited or there was a request for extradition dealing with an offence that was committed before the passage of legislation. In other words, in the Saroop matter the request was made in 1993, but the commission of the offence, as she was found guilty, occurred after the passage of the legislation.

What we have now, and I am aware of the sub judice rules, is a situation in which there is a clause that is being snuck in—a very important clause—perhaps

the most important and far-reaching clause. It has the potential to have retrospective or retroactive effect and there is a case before the court—I am just sticking to the facts—in which there is an extradition request for certain persons who have committed an offence before the passage of this legislation which now makes their alleged commission of those offences within the category of extraditable offences. Therefore, it is important that the other side take the time to understand because it is clear, based on my previous contribution, the distinction was not understood, and whereas I can accept that, this is one that has serious repercussions.

Once again, bearing in mind the manner in which the proposed amendment was made *ex-improviso*, one might say, I am asking the hon. Minister to consider again the reason for including this particular clause which is not even worded in like manner to the parent Act. The parent Act referred to offences. This particular clause refers to extraditable offences. I am saying let it be clear, at least from this side, let the *Hansard* record that this clause is only unobjectionable if it is not meant to have retrospective effect, if it is just merely meant to say all those offences which were extraditable offences before the passage of this clause would now be subject to the procedural changes that these amendments and the substantive Act seek to do. There is nothing wrong with procedural change. In fact, this was the justification given for not needing to have a constitutional majority because it was stated that the change was merely procedural. That is what a Member for the Government indicated when the point was raised.

Clearly, I too, agree that if there is going to be a change that is merely procedural there is no need for a constitutional majority; but here is a clause, that by the very explanation adopted by the hon. Minister, is an explanation that is going to allow retrospective or retroactive effect, a person who, prior to the passage of this legislation, was not going to be able to be extradited for the commission of a particular offence is now going to be extraditable or is going to be committing an offence which previously was not extraditable but is now going to be an extraditable offence. I am just saying it is important that the hon. Minister understand that because a lack of understanding is going to mean that the State is going to have to pay out much more money than it is already paying out when these kinds of actions are brought against it.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Gift: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the new clause 16, if we were to examine it, does not create any new offences. Indeed, a similar provision is included—I am

Extradition (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill
[MISS LUCKY]

Friday, April 02, 2004

reliably informed—in all the previous extradition Acts and amendments made thereto. Furthermore, an offence will still need to be criminal in both the requesting and requested state before an offender could be extradited. So the omission in the other place—at the time the omission was noted—was nothing more than an oversight.

Question put and agreed to.

ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That the Bill to provide for the establishment of an Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago and for related matters, be read a second time.

This matter has had a very long history. There have been attempts over the last 30 years to establish a system for the recognition of institutions of higher education in Trinidad and Tobago and for the accreditation of programmes. The first attempt was made some time in the 1970s when Cabinet first established a committee to carry out the following functions:

- Assessment of the value and quality of university qualifications;
- Evaluation of the status of universities and other educational institutions; and
- Verification of the bona fides of persons presenting qualifications deemed to have come from institutions of higher education.

The acronym for that committee was CORD—the Committee for the Recognition of Degrees—established under the aegis of Niherst. The focus of this committee was the issuance of statements of recognition of foreign and local qualifications required by government agencies, companies in the private sector and people generally when making decisions regarding recruitment and employment. As I said, this committee functioned for 30 years.

A few years ago, an organization called the National Training Agency (NTA) was established and it began to undertake the accreditation of programmes at the post-secondary level. However, just like CORD, there were several limitations and the National Training Agency was not adequately equipped to examine the quality of offerings at a higher educational level, especially with the consequent growing

demand for accreditation of institutions and programmes at the post-secondary and tertiary levels.

Hon. Members opposite should be aware that there is currently no legal mechanism in Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that any individual, organization or group of individuals offering or desirous of offering tertiary level education to the public meet any nationally approved standard or quality criteria. As a matter of fact, I would describe it as a free-for-all at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, you would be aware that there are many colleges and schools that have sprung up over the last 10 or 20 years offering diplomas, certificates, degrees and so on, both at the bachelor's and the master's levels; and the time has come to put some order into the system because many persons who attend these institutions are unsure of the quality and the credibility of the certificate or diploma that they receive from these institutions.

There is also no legal framework at this time for the granting or the use of titles such as university, technical university, tertiary institute, community college or other typical titles used to describe institutions of higher or post-secondary education. You will know, Mr. Speaker, that the use of the words "university", "community college" or "polytechnic", as the case might be, has different connotations in different countries, with the word "university" being recognized generally as an institution at the highest level; the word "polytechnic", the next level; the words "community college", the next level. There are myriad levels and stages between these three broad parameters.

We in the PNM have made a commitment to take this country to developed-country status and the time frame we have established for ourselves is the year 2020. Members opposite will agree—even some with qualifications that we will have to check, such as those of the Member for Oropouche; and even he would agree—that the only way we can achieve developed-country status is through the development of the country's resources—our technical, financial, human, intellectual and cultural resources.

A significant indicator of national development is the level of tertiary education in the country. Most developed countries and most that have become highly developed over the last 20 to 30 years use the level of higher education as a yardstick to determine their development. We can take many of the Asian countries—Singapore, for example—where the number of persons enrolled in higher education or the percentage of persons leaving secondary education and moving to tertiary education is of the order of 25 to 30 per cent. In Great Britain

they are aiming for an enrolment of 50 percent. Many European countries are also aiming for enrolment in tertiary education of the order of 40 to 50 per cent. Canada is also aiming to have 50 per cent of persons who complete secondary education move on to programmes of tertiary education.

At the present time, in Trinidad and Tobago, the percentage of persons who continue from secondary education into higher education is of the order of 10 or 11 per cent, depending on how you count it, Mr. Speaker. In the Caribbean, some of our Caribbean partners use different criteria. One would say that maybe they are adjusting the figures by adding the number of persons engaged in studies for the Cambridge advanced level certificate. [*Interruption*] It could be a form of padding at the tertiary level, as the Member for Caroni East has pointed out. However, in many of the Caribbean countries, they count the number of persons engaged in A'level studies as being part of their tertiary education component. We do not do that. We still define advanced level studies as being contained within the secondary education system. Using our definition, our percentage of persons who continue on to tertiary education is approximately 11 to 12 per cent.

We have set ourselves a target of 25 per cent by the year 2015. I want to correct some information that was in the system where there is a point of view expressed that we wanted to do that by the year 2005. Of course, that is not possible. If we are at 11 or 12 per cent at this time, it is impossible to get to 25 per cent by 2005. The target is in fact 2015, when we believe we would get up to 25 per cent, and we hope by 2020 we would be as high as 30 per cent of our people moving on from secondary education to post-secondary and tertiary education.

You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, that within the last several months the Government has announced a number of initiatives designed to encourage our citizens to get involved in the process of higher education and also to give them the support they require to enter institutions of higher education.

I refer primarily to the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) Programme. I need to deal with that for a short while. I am going to be extremely brief. The difference between GATE and the Dollar for Dollar Programme—and we need to understand the difference—is that under the Dollar for Dollar Programme, the student was entitled to 50 per cent. GATE allows the student to get up to 100 per cent. That is the fundamental difference. I will not say much more on that. What the Dollar for Dollar Programme did was to deny a number of people access to tertiary education.

We have also established a programme of financial support within the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT),

where we have decided that it is extremely onerous for students who have to go into our technical institutions such as John Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes, the Colleges of Languages—persons entering the community college system, where the target group for entry is people who, in the main, come from depressed circumstances and therefore would not be able to afford the entire tuition fee. We have established a system of tuition support—this was approved by Cabinet about two months ago—for students within the COSTAATT system. This includes a system of scholarships, a system of bursaries, a complete waiver of tuition expenses for students, particularly coming out of depressed areas where they would be required to meet a minimum grade before they can access these financial support programmes.

However, through the COSTAATT Tuition Support Programme and through GATE we believe we will set the framework for the expansion of tertiary education in this country. In order to allow the expansion, we must get everybody on board. This is why I tell the hon. Members opposite that I welcome any proposal they may make because this is not a political thing. It cannot be. In order to get 25 or 30 per cent of our citizens enrolled in tertiary education, we must get some of the people who do not at this time vote for the PNM involved in the programme. I am making a call to hon. Members opposite to assist us with our proposal for tertiary education. We want everybody, regardless of political persuasion, regardless of class, regardless of religion and regardless of race. We want everybody, including Members opposite and their associates, to get involved and benefit from our initiatives in tertiary education. We must get everyone on board and as a result we must expand the reach of the Government's programmes into the private education sector. This is why, in our financial support system, we are expanding our programme of assistance from public institutions to private institutions.

At a recent post-Cabinet press conference I announced that, in the first instance, while we develop the systems for registration and accreditation of private institutions of high education, we would set a cap at the level of assistance that we would give people going to private colleges at a figure of \$5,000 per annum in the first assistance. At the present time, the average grant given to students in the Dollar for Dollar Programme is in the vicinity of \$5,000. We thought we would set the cap for private institutions for tuition support for students going to private institutions—

Mr. Singh: Is that \$5,000 for degree programmes, or is it for diplomas or certification?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the intention is that it is for all post-secondary programmes and programmes of higher education once they meet certain criteria. Obviously one would expect that the minimum cost of instruction might be one year. In certain cases, we might want the course of instruction to be two years.

As the Member for Caroni might know, to get a bachelor's degree the minimum period of instruction is usually three years and many institutions ask for a four-year period of study leading to the baccalaureate degree. In many recognized colleges across the world, you can have a master's degree programme, if it is an intensive programme, lasting just one year, whereas some other master's degree programme might go for two years. The MPhil may go for three years and some diploma and certificate programmes may go for 12 or 15 months. However, the intention is that our support programmes will extend to all valid and credible programmes of higher education. This is something that will evolve as we go along and it is something that I expect the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago to get very involved in, in the first instance.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Would this be a one-off grant, if the programme is for more than one year, or would it be a yearly grant?

Hon. C. Imbert: The intention is to allow the student to complete his or her programme of education so that if the programme is approved and it lasts for two or three years, the person would get the support on an annual basis. Does that answer your question?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Would there be criteria in terms of performance? For example, a student may take three years to complete a one-year programme. What would you do in such a case?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, these are quite interesting questions and are some of the matters that the Accreditation Council and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education would have to address. You may be aware, hon. Member for Siparia, that people who receive scholarships have to meet strict performance criteria and if they fail their programme, they sometimes lose their scholarship. Sometimes extenuating circumstances allow for a case to be made for them to come back into the system. These things are well established all over the world. We are not reinventing the wheel here. Certainly, there would have to be performance criteria attached to any programme of support.

I thank Members for these comments because these are some of the issues that we would have to deal with within the next six months or so.

Let me come back to the point of private tertiary education providers. This is where the focus must be within the next six to 12 months. As I pointed out, a number of schools have mushroomed over the last 10—20 years. Higher education has become big business. I will give an example. When I graduated from the University of the West Indies in 1979, it was not a requirement in industry for persons to have a second degree—a postgraduate degree. Persons could have gone straight into industry with a bachelor's degree and risen to the very top of the organization. Members opposite will be aware that this is no longer the case.

Organizations are demanding postgraduate training; they are demanding continuous education and they are demanding specialization. It is now incumbent on persons, if they wish to rise through organizations, to get a second degree—a postgraduate qualification—and specialize in some particular aspect of the general area of competence that they were successful at. This and other factors, I believe, have led to the mushrooming of private institutions of higher education and colleges all over Trinidad and Tobago.

These colleges have partnered with foreign institutions. In the main, depending on the area of study, most private colleges have partnered with universities in the United States, but several have partnership arrangements with institutions in Canada, United Kingdom and Europe. The challenge that faces us now, Mr. Speaker, is to design and implement a system where citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would have the confidence that when they enroll in one of these private schools of higher education, at the end of day, when they receive their diploma or certificate, it has credibility and is recognized by a legally constituted body in Trinidad and Tobago. This is really what the Accreditation Council is all about. It is all about establishing quality.

How do we establish and maintain a system of quality for higher education schools and higher education programmes in Trinidad and Tobago that suit our local needs and is internationally recognized? There is a lot of migration taking place in the world. Many people move around the world. They work for several years in other countries, but many will do their first degree in Trinidad and Tobago and may wish to get a posting abroad. It would be very important to such a person that the degree or diploma he or she receives in Trinidad and Tobago has international credibility and recognition. That is another reason why it is necessary to establish the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

Another reason is that education is not static; it is dynamic. The quality of programme offerings and the quality of education have to be continuously

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 02, 2004

monitored to ensure that the institutions are meeting the standards. I will use myself as an example. One of the reasons I decided to attend the University of the West Indies to do my first degree was because it was recognized at that time that the Faculty of Engineering and in particular the Department of Civil Engineering was internationally recognized. The university was affiliated to British institutions, such as the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Institution of Structural Engineers and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. They would visit the Faculty of Engineering at St. Augustine on a regular basis and give approval. They would recognize the degree being produced and the quality of the graduate. I believe these “missions” came out of England every three years.

When I went there in the 1970s, the Faculty of Engineering was well recognized in the United Kingdom and the degree offered by the university was well recognized as well. So there was a form of accreditation, but it was not local accreditation. It was international accreditation and it was really up to the foreign institutions to give their seal of approval to the University of the West Indies.

The reason I went to the University of the West Indies is that it was free. That is a point that needs to be made. The PNM administration established a system of free education in this country. The introduction of university fees came with the introduction of CESS under the NAR administration, of which the Member for St. Augustine was a part. Prior to that, university education was free, so I did not have to pay for my university education in the 1970s. I think that the Member for Caroni East was also involved with that administration that decided to introduce the concept of payment for university education.

Now, the PNM is bringing us back to pre-NAR days—to the concept of free tertiary education. I want to put that on record because there is this myth that the Dollar for Dollar Programme was some fantastic innovation. It was the PNM, long before that programme came up, which introduced the concept and principle of free university education in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we need to double our enrolment in tertiary education and to ensure that we get everyone on board—all of the private tertiary institutions. The Bill before us will establish—let me go to the Bill itself—a body to be known as the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. That is clause 3.

Clause 4 gives the composition of the Accreditation Council and we have tried to make the Accreditation Council as broad-based as possible—get everybody involved in the process. I will just go through—

- three persons nominated by tertiary institutions, including a nominee of the Association of Tertiary Institutions of Trinidad and Tobago;
- two persons with expertise in accreditation;
- two persons nominated by professional associations involved in the discipline of education;
- one person nominated by the Ministry;
- two persons nominated by organizations most representative of employers;
- two representatives of the general public; and
- the Executive Director.

So the membership of the Accreditation Council is broad-based.

2.30 p.m.

The members shall hold office for up to three years. The normal clauses would come after that, allowing the council to establish the terms and conditions of remuneration for its officers and staff. The council shall have an official seal.

Clause 8(2) states the functions of the council, which are quite extensive. I quote:

- “(a) to maintain a list of accredited institutions and programmes in Trinidad and Tobago;
- (b) to accredit institutions and programmes of institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago;
- (c) to register post secondary institutions, foreign and local, which offer programmes in Trinidad and Tobago;
- (d) to recognize programmes of accredited foreign institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago;
- (e) to advise on the recognition of foreign institutions of education and training and their awards;
- (f) to determine the equivalency of programmes and awards;”

That is one of the bases for accreditation; what is the equivalency of one programme as compared to another programme. Further, to develop and advise on a unified credit based system. We are moving to the credit based system; the seamless system of education, where people would accumulate credits over their

entire life cycle and thereby move throughout the various stages of education, from primary to secondary to post secondary and tertiary. Continuing; to establish relationships with regional and international accrediting and quality assurance bodies; to provide authoritative advice on accreditation; to seek to enhance the quality of tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago; to disseminate good practices; to provide the public with information. This is a very important aspect of it. One of the more important functions of the Accreditation Council would be to provide the public with information about the quality and recognition of programmes in institutions in order to protect the public interest. Once this council is established, a register of approved institutions of higher learning and a register or approved programmes of higher learning will be established and be available to the public, so that members of the public will have a place where they can go to determine whether the offering from any particular tertiary education provider meets certain acceptable standards.

“(n) to ensure that the quality of all post secondary and tertiary education delivered in Trinidad and Tobago meets the standards set by the Council;”

Continuing; to ensure that the appropriate standards are maintained; to protect the interests of students; to undertake audits, reviews of bodies of higher education; to establish the requirements for the registration of institutions and accreditation; to advise the minister on the criteria for the registration and accreditation of institutions; to withdraw or cancel approval or recognition of the title granted or conferred on any institution or provider; and to facilitate the free movement of skills.

Mr. Speaker, you will see that the duties and functions of the Accreditation Council are very wide ranging. In essence, if I can summarize these functions, the purpose of the council is to determine the programmes and institutions in Trinidad and Tobago, that meet the quality standards set by the council itself and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, for programmes of this nature. It has to monitor, review, register, accredit and discredit, as the case may be.

The council will not function in a local environment only. The council intends to be part of a global network. One example is the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. That is one of the international bodies that the council would be looking to, in order to increase their database and maintain their knowledge, in terms of programmes that have come on the market; institutions offering programmes of higher education. Using this and other international networks, the council will have access to a very large pool of

professionals, within the wider Caribbean and internationally to enhance their ability, to evaluate programmes and institutions of higher education.

Before I take my seat, I think I should go into some more history on the whole concept of accreditation. I am aware that in October 2001, just before the last UNC government collapsed, Cabinet had agreed, at that time, that pending the establishment of an accreditation commission—I am giving some history, Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Singh: You are catching up.

Hon. C. Imbert: I can use my own method. I am coming to that now. Do not be anxious. The last administration, in October 2001, agreed that pending the establishment of an accreditation commission, a committee should be appointed by the then Minister of Human Development for a period of six months, to look at provisional accreditation criteria, the development of mechanisms by which tertiary level institutions can be accredited, to identify priority areas for training, *et cetera*. It is quite a long list. That committee reported in May 2002, to the new PNM administration. The report of that committee is here. I will be happy to circulate this report for the benefit of Members opposite.

That formed the basis for further studies by the present PNM administration, leading to a Cabinet-appointed team for the establishment of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. The accreditation team utilized several of the members from this team. This previous team was chaired by Dr. Anna Mahase. The team that actually led to the establishment of the Accreditation Council was chaired by Dr. Ruby Alleyne. I wish to put on record my congratulations to the Anna Mahase team and the Ruby Alleyne team for the very valuable work that they did to bring us to this point that we are at today. One hopes that in the future, we can draw from the expertise of these people, as well as other people who have distinguished themselves in the field of higher education.

I would also like to let hon. Members know I have received comments on the Bill from interested parties. I received some comments today, dealing with the definition section, which I will be looking at. If I am of the view that some of the definitions need to be tightened I will make the appropriate amendments in the other place, or in this place, if hon. Members have some ideas that we can incorporate into the legislation today. I will be most happy to incorporate their views and any suggestion they may have to tighten up some of the definitions.

Mr. Speaker, this is landmark legislation. I cannot underemphasize how important the establishment of the Accreditation Council is. It establishes the

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 02, 2004

framework for the identification and recognition of institutions offering quality education in Trinidad and Tobago. It will sift the wheat from the chaff. It will allow our citizens a framework, a system or set of regulations and rules that would be published, where they can understand how institutions and programmes become accredited. It would also give them the opportunity to search the list of registered and accredited institutions programmes to determine whether a particular programme has met the requirements established by the Accreditation Council and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

In conclusion, in the same way schools offering primary and secondary education are required to register with the Ministry of Education, another feature of this legislation is that it requires schools and colleges offering post secondary education to register with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. It will now become compulsory. If you want to call yourself a polytechnic, a community college or a college of higher education, you must register with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and you can then apply for accreditation.

The process would be in two stages. The process of registration would not be as rigorous as the process of accreditation. In the registration stage, the institution will have to meet certain criteria. First of all, they must have physical facilities, a proper curriculum, they must be able to demonstrate that they have a competent staff/faculty and meet the minimum requirements for a tertiary level institution. That will allow them to be registered. Once they are registered, there can be applications made for the accreditation of programmes within these institutions. It is unlikely that one can accredit an entire school. What one would do is accredit the programmes offered by that school. It would be the bachelor's programme. To use Roytec as an example, that would be submitted to the Accreditation Council or the Ministry for inspection. Then the Accreditation Council would give a certificate of accreditation to that BSc programme within that school. That is the intention. *[Interruption]* That is secondary education.

I want to give another example of how important accreditation is. I pointed out when I went to the University of the West Indies to do my first degree, it was recognized by foreign institutions. That is one of the reasons why I went. When I went on to do my master's at the University of Manchester, one of the reasons why it was easy for me to be accepted to do my master's degree programme was because the external examiner, who examined the degree programme at the University of the West Indies, was a visiting Professor at the University of Manchester, where I did my second degree. He was able to inform the university

of the high standard of engineering education in UWI, at that time. There was no need for me to go through a rigorous process of evaluation of the quality of my bachelor's degree from the University of the West Indies, because it was recognized within the United Kingdom. It was very easy for me to enter the University of Manchester to get my master's degree. There was, I would call it, an informal system of the accreditation of the University of the West Indies engineering degree programme at that time. I know that the Faculty of Engineering continues to seek to keep itself up-to-date and continues to invite foreign institutions to accredit its programmes.

If we have an Accreditation Council in Trinidad and Tobago, which is affiliated to the accreditation council or a similar body in the UK, or becomes part of a global network of similar accreditation councils, then a person who gets a diploma or degree from a college in Trinidad and Tobago—and that is an accredited programme, recognized by our Accreditation Council—then it is also recognized by the accreditation council in a foreign country, that person would have automatic entry into institutions of higher learning in foreign countries. This is another reason why it is so important for us to establish the accreditation council in Trinidad and Tobago. It is to determine the quality of programmes locally and to give our citizens easy entry into institutions of higher learning in foreign countries.

I trust that I have given an adequate explanation of the aims and objectives of the legislation before us. The Members opposite are now familiar with the history of this process. It is a long process. It has taken over 30 years and has passed through several governments. We have come to this point today where we are now debating the Accreditation Council Bill. I am certain that I would get the unqualified support of the hon. Members opposite, as all of us work together to build our country and as we all seek to achieve developed country status.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question proposed.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, once again, we have to expose the PNM for its sleight of hand. The PNM has surreptitiously introduced this Bill in the Parliament without any consultation with the stakeholders. The PNM has a history of no consultation. Mr. Speaker, you would recall that the PNM has introduced into this country, the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination

(CAPE) without any consultation with the stakeholders. Later on I would deal with the Members individually.

On page 47 of the PNM's budget speech for 2004, it was stated:

“We shall introduce the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) in secondary schools from the new academic year on a phased basis.”

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education asked what this has to do with the debate. His view is that the A'level examination is of secondary status. It is the view of others—[*Interruption*] That is secondary. There is another view that has to be considered where the A'level examination is post secondary in a secondary school environment. The Minister said in countries in the region, A'level examinations are being put into the community colleges. It is relevant with respect to CAPE. If you examine the genesis of CAPE, you will understand why I am making this case. I feel very sorry for the students who are taking that examination this year. You must understand why I feel sorry for the students.

This is a pilot project that the Government has been engaged in since September 2003. It was a pilot project in the Caribbean islands in 1997. I will show this honourable House what has happened with respect to this particular examination, under the UNC administration and how we dealt with it. This particular idea is a Caricom Ministers of Education mandate to the Human and Social Development Council. They were to come up with an examination that is equivalent in standard or higher to the Cambridge A'level examination but different in philosophy and structure. They engaged CXC. That was before 1995.

When the UNC administration came on board in 1995 we had to deal with this matter. This is how we dealt with it. A consultation to deal with the issue of accreditation was held at the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre in November 1996. Cabinet mandated this consultation because it came before Cabinet. The report went to Cabinet. Cabinet decided that the single consultation was not enough. Cabinet mandated another series of consultations in the education districts during the period May to August. Based on the series of consultations, it was the view, and it was supported by the National Advisory Committee on Education at the time, that CAPE was not for Trinidad and Tobago.

Today in 2004, the students are being used as guinea pigs. The view of Caricom with respect to this particular pilot examination was that the students were free to write both examinations. Today I call upon the Government to allow those students who are to write CAPE, to write both examinations in 2005. They should be allowed to write the Cambridge examination and/or CAPE. The students

are being used as guinea pigs. When they write CAPE they are going to compete with students who are writing the A'level examination. *[Interruption]* Listen to me. The befuddled Minister of Education—when we asked the question in this House about the credit system with respect to this examination—said she did not know what would be the credit system with respect to the Canadian and American universities. She gave a vague answer about the United Kingdom's recognition. That was what sent the alarm bells ringing. When I researched I saw in this budget document where the Member for San Fernando East said it would be introduced on a phased basis. I thought the phased basis would have been either/or.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I am really trying to follow his argument. Is he saying that CAPE is not recognized for entry purposes in foreign universities? Is that what he is saying?

Dr. A. Nanan: What I am saying is exactly that! Let me tell you why. I have done the research. I went on the website. That is CXC propaganda in Trinidad and Tobago. We would not tolerate that. Member for San Fernando East, right now our students are placing first, second and third on the world stage in the Cambridge A'level examinations. Why are our students who are writing the exam in 2004 being used as guinea pigs? They should be allowed to write both examinations. Why must one set of students write CAPE and another set, the A'level examination? They must be competitive at the same level. Do you know the Faculties of Medical Sciences are going to recognize grades I and II in CAPE and nothing else? Is that the kind of competition the Government is placing on the students who would be writing that examination for the first time and want to get into that faculty? The examination is totally different. The Cambridge A'level examinations have gone through a period of adjustment.

Mr. Valley: Let me ask a question for my own education. If you are saying that you have different syllabuses for the two examinations and you are asking a student to write both examinations, are you asking them to follow both syllabuses? Is that what you are asking them to do?

Dr. A. Nanan: We are giving them the option. If you look at the syllabus you must be aware of what has happened in the CAPE syllabus. It takes approximately 10—15 years for a syllabus to become modified. Cambridge has the experience. It is the goal standard internationally. *[Interruption]* Let me put the point and then you can argue. What has happened is that over the period of time, the examinations have been modified. Cambridge has now gone to critical thinking. CAPE is going back to memorization and recall. That is what I took in 1978.

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[DR. NANAN]

Friday, April 02, 2004

[*Interruption*] It is going back. I want to make the point of memorization recall. Cambridge has modified their syllabus for the Caribbean region. They have done so, based on the analysis of world events. The examinations now are going to be with respect to critical thinking, which is an important area. CAPE is using the old syllabus that they are now coming to modify with respect to memorization and recall.

I also want to make the point that there is no multiple-choice paper in the examination. We know the importance of a multiple-choice paper; it is a wide-ranging testing system throughout the syllabus. You do not have to be detailed in certain areas, but you could be tested throughout the syllabus. That has been eliminated from—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Are there any negatives to a multiple-choice system of which you are aware?

Dr. A. Nanan: Let me just put the point and then you could argue. With respect to multiple-choice, I took 150 questions in an examination. I do not want to get personal. The Member for Diego Martin East spoke about himself as an engineer in Manchester. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: In a postgraduate degree?

Dr. A. Nanan: I want the Member to listen because it is very important for those students who are being used as guinea pigs. The multiple-choice examination has been removed. The Government has also introduced projects. [*Interruption*] No, I have nothing against projects. The science students would have to do projects. The kind of horrors that these students are going through—this thing has not been thought out.

I have tried to give CXC the opportunity to defend this examination. I called CXC in Barbados. Trying to get information out of CXC is like pulling teeth. They would not give any information. I must know. Why is there a hidden agenda?

Mr. Valley: They always say he was not good at his job.

Dr. A. Nanan: There is a smokescreen. This is the point I am staying with, with respect to the examination. The science students are doing a project and there is stress that is being placed on them to go to the EMA, Cariri and the Caroni Lagoon for information after school hours. What are we doing? What message are we sending?

The particular issue here is the structure of the examination. The students are having a hard time. What CXC is saying is that the teachers are pushing the

students too much. The syllabus is a simple one and is not as rigorous as it should be. If they are competing for grades I and II for entry into the Faculty of Medical Sciences, those features would push those students to the edge for competition. That is what is happening right now in those schools. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Would the Member give way?

Dr. A. Nanan: No, I am not giving way. Let me finish my—

Mr. Manning: Please, just one more “nah”. They are pushing them? How could you say that?

Dr. A. Nanan: I do not want to be distracted. I have much information to give to the Member for San Fernando East this afternoon. [*Interruption*] You are also included, but I would leave that for later. [*Interruption*] I hope you can defend yourself when I come. I would be coming real good. Mr. Speaker, I feel sorry for the students. As I said before, they should be given the opportunity to write both examinations.

Let me get back to the initial point that was asked by the Member for San Fernando East, with respect to the syllabus. I said the syllabus was going back to memorization and recall. The teachers in those schools are saying that they can teach both subjects so that the students would be able, with lessons, to write both examinations. Why not give them the opportunity? Let the students choose. This was a pilot project for Caricom. The pilot project is now being introduced here. Give them the opportunity to do the examination side by side. It is an option. I call upon the Government this afternoon to give the students the option to write both examinations in 2005, because the A’level examination would take place in 2005.

Mr. Manning: If you say both, that is different.

Dr. A. Nanan: I want to move on. I have made the point with respect to this examination. I have placed it in the context of this argument this afternoon.

I wanted to get information from the Member for Diego Martin East, the Minister who is piloting the Bill. In terms of the history, he did not give us something to hold on to. I want to remind the Member when he was in the Cabinet 1992—1995, the PNM government—I have the figures, which I will quote—with respect to Niherst, cut the funding for every year during that period. The Government allowed Niherst to become dilapidated. The teaching fraternity was demoralized and tuition costs were increased because of the shortfall of the Government. That is one area. The Minister comes here this afternoon to ask for

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[DR. NANAN]

Friday, April 02, 2004

our support of this Accreditation Council, I want to remind him of the PNM's history in education.

I also want to go to the situation with respect to the John Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes. That is why I said I would share some information with the Member for San Fernando East.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we are going back to history. I want the Member to recall a period when a former permanent secretary—I would not call his name—was given instructions from the Member for San Fernando East to move the principal of the San Fernando Technical Institute.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Tabaquite for giving way. I just want to let the hon. Member know that my style of governance recognizes constitutional realities. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Ask Marlene Coudray! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: It is most uncharacteristic of my method of operation to do something like what is being suggested here. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for San Fernando East. I was told that the Member for San Fernando East gave instructions to a permanent secretary to move the principal of the San Fernando Technical Institute. The reason for this particular instruction was as a result of the principal putting a fair system in place that would have eliminated the opportunity for someone with a PNM party card or a member of a PNM constituency to get into the San Fernando Technical Institute. It goes even further, because it was against the wishes of the Teaching Service Commission. The Teaching Service Commission refused to move the principal of the San Fernando Technical Institute.

Mr. Speaker, this is how it was done. I was told that a meeting was held with the students and staff of the San Fernando Technical Institute in the auditorium—of course, it was organized—and they were told that the principal was not wanted at that institution, and there was a new principal, Mr. Joshua Sam. To make matters even worse, the Teaching Service Commission did not appoint that principal. So that principal would have had to remain there at the desk without any appointment by the Teaching Service Commission.

There was another issue at the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute. The reason I am bringing this matter into the debate is that the Member for Diego

Martin East came to this House and said that the United National Congress (UNC) government was responsible for the situation at the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute. Of course, we cleared that issue with respect to the number of students in the institute, but I want to deal with the issue now. I would also deal with the Member for Arouca North but he is not here yet.

I was told that a former BWIA worker applied to the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute to teach and, lo and behold, instead of that person being given a position to teach, that person was given an interview to head the Telecom Department at that institute. There were persons acting in that position for 15 years, but this person was interviewed and then given the job to head the Telecom Department at the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute. I was told that the instruction came from above. That is the PNM style of management. That is why today they have come to this House to ask for our support with respect to this accreditation council. We have to be careful; we have to be very guarded, because the activities of this administration are questionable.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Niherst, in 1992, the government's contribution was \$7.1 million; in 1993, \$6.4 million; in 1994, \$6.1 million and in 1995, \$5.6 million. During the period 1993 to 1995 the government cut the funding to Niherst. I want to see how the Member for Diego Martin East is going to respond to this matter.

Mr. Imbert: Rubbish!

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I am going to show how this matter is related to the Bill. So, we have seen a history where this Government has eliminated a possible tertiary institution by reducing its funding. Niherst suffered since it was in a dilapidated condition. It was the UNC administration that took Niherst and all the other linkages to form a community college. Today, because of the initial injection of capital into that community college, we have a standing community college called the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT). It was the UNC administration that brought back Niherst to where it is today.

The Minister must tell this House this afternoon—I was told that the Government intends to move the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and the San Fernando Technical Institute out of COSTAATT to make these institutes part of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Did the Government hold discussions with the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA)? Why are people being left in the dark? Why is the Government making these dramatic,

draconian approaches—moving these institutions and merging them with the University of Trinidad and Tobago? We have heard nothing from the Member for Diego Martin East with respect to the proposed University of Trinidad and Tobago, which is a tertiary education institution.

The Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT) was set up under the UNC administration to deal with the technical/vocational area. We have heard nothing this afternoon from the Member for Diego Martin East on that matter. The Minister was not briefed properly this afternoon. The Minister was speaking of an accreditation council and he did not even mention anything about technical/vocational educational training in this country, which is a major issue. People are suffering in the technical/vocational area because the PNM administration is not dealing with the regularization of the National Training Agency (NTA).

Mr. Speaker, in fact, this Government set up the NTA. It was a Cabinet decision under the PNM to set up the NTA, but it was not implemented properly. The NTA was supposed to be an agency that would have replaced the National Training Board and the Board of Industrial Training. The Government has not vested the assets of the Board of Industrial Training into the NTA. The Government should bring a Bill to this House to vest the assets of the Board of Industrial Training in the NTA. The Minister must tell this House what is the role of the NTA. How are the NTA and the accreditation council going to interact? The Government has had no discussion with the professional bodies. What would be the linkages with the professional bodies and this accreditation council? Why are we being kept in the dark? Why is this matter such a mystery?

I would continue to show what is happening with respect to the technical/vocational training area, because this is the post-secondary sector that we are speaking about. There are a number of training institutions under the NTA. In fact, there are certain levels of training that need to be regularized.

I do not know if the Member is aware of the National Examinations Council (NEC). The NEC was a part of the National Training Board Secretariat and they are still certifying craft courses. What would be the role of the NEC when this accreditation council comes on board?

The Member spoke about the Committee on Recognition of Degrees (CORD), which is a body that recognizes degrees. What would be the role of that body? Is the Minister collapsing CORD or would it be a part of the accreditation council secretariat? The Minister should tell us because we need to know. What would be

the secretariat's position with respect to the accreditation council? How are the professional bodies going to be represented? The Minister said that these tertiary institutions would have a nominee. Did the Minister look at this association to see whether it was necessary to have a nominee on this accreditation council?

How is the Government going to deal with the Dental Council and the Pharmacy Board? Presently, the Dental Council is looking after the examinations at the Dental School. What would be the relationship? Would the Dental Council be marginalized? Would the Pharmacy Board be marginalized with respect to the accreditation council or would all these bodies be able to merge to have these linkages? The Member for Diego Martin East should tell us about these linkages with respect to these professional bodies and this accreditation council.

We are aware that the National Accreditation Council would be interacting with the Regional Accreditation Council. The Minister said nothing with respect to the setting up of this Regional Accreditation Council which was part of Caricom's initiative. Caricom has mandated that a Regional Accreditation Council be set up. The National Accreditation Council with various Caricom countries would have representation on this Regional Accreditation Council. What the Member showed us here was the linkage between the National Accreditation Council and foreign accreditation council, but he said very little with respect to Caricom's initiative.

I want to stay on track with respect to the technical/vocational and training area because it is very important when one considers the present situation in this particular area. The technical/vocational training area is a very important component of any society, especially in a developing industrialized country, and that is why under the UNC—the TTIT was an institute that has far-reaching effects, and this Bill also has far-reaching effects, like an octopus with tentacles, but I do not know how far this Bill would reach.

The tentacles in this particular Bill have reached all over the various areas of post-secondary and tertiary education. It is very important for us in this House to know where we stand with respect to the technical/vocational area. Technical and vocational training are not only assigned to post-secondary education but it goes to various levels.

Mr. Speaker, I would make some references to the various levels. The NTA was mandated to have a training policy for Trinidad and Tobago. They have also been doing a lot of work with respect to the levels of training. The format that was being put forward has five levels. I am sure the Member for Diego Martin East is

aware of the various levels: level I is semi-skilled; level II is skilled; level III is technician, level IV is professional and level V is advanced professional.

Now, there is a burning issue here that I would like to address. The Youth Training and Apprenticeship Centre comes under level I. Youth Camps are supposed to filter into this particular system. The Chaguaramas Youth Camp building was a very old building, and this youth camp was closed because it was an old building, and it was not because of spite by the UNC. The students from the Chaguaramas Youth Camp were relocated. There was no loss of continuing education for the students at the Chaguaramas Youth Camp. I just wanted to make that point with respect to youth camps. The Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), Servol and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) fall under level I.

Level II would include the skilled areas. The community college, which is COSTAATT, falls under level II. The National Energy Skills Centre (NESC) also falls under level II. I am drawing reference to these levels because of their importance. The Member for Diego Martin East spoke about a seamless transition that would lead to a seamless upward spiral. At level II, you would have skilled occupations and this would come for the community college. The National Skills Development Programme (NSDP) and NESC also fall under level II.

COSTAATT could fall under level II or level III depending on whether we are talking about skills or technicians.

Level IV is the professional level, and under this level you would find the University of the West Indies, the NESC, the TTIT and NSDP. As I made reference to the NSDP, I was told that in 1994, the PNM administration surreptitiously introduced \$94 million into the budget to support the NSDP. It was surreptitious because the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and the San Fernando Technical Institute—I want to remind Members who were in the Cabinet during the period 1992—1995; a former education minister went to these training institutes and told them that they had outlived their usefulness.

Mr. Manning: Who said that?

Dr. A. Nanan: I was told that a permanent secretary and a former minister under the PNM administration said that the technical institutes had outlived their usefulness. That came about because of a last minute injection of \$94 million into the budget. I see the Member for San Fernando East is smiling. The Member is well aware of this matter. It was because of the injection of that capital into the NSDP these institutes are now becoming obsolete.

Mr. Speaker, why is this taking place? Well, I was told that under the NSDP a number of PNM friends and family were sent to Germany to be trained. Over \$5 million was spent to train persons under this particular programme, and when they returned from that training many of them went back to their original jobs. In addition, another team of PNM friends and family went to train for another \$5 million. I was told that is why this particular programme—now, I am not knocking the NSDP because it is a very good programme, but it was the approach, the wastage of taxpayers' money on this particular programme.

Mr. Speaker, the NESC, as well as the TTIT, falls under level IV and Technical Technology Junior Management Graduate Professional Occupation.

Level V is the advanced professional level, that is the University of the West Indies, the Hugh Wooding Law School, the Institute of Business and other professional bodies. I thought that the Minister would have come to this Parliament today and told us about that format to allay the fears of students who are in the technical/vocational area. When the Government moves the San Fernando Technical Institute and the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute from under the community college concept—I brought some documents that I would like to make reference to.

Mr. Speaker, I am dealing here with the community college and the importance of the community college. I was told that there is a review that is on the way with respect to the community college. I do not know if it is because this community college was a UNC initiative that it would be scuttled. I do not know. I am only speculating.

I want to give the House an idea of how the community college operates.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, for my own edification, I just want to ask the hon. Member if he could inform the House why there was the need to bring in COSTAATT when there was Niherst? This happened under the UNC.

Dr. A. Nanan: I cannot believe the Member for Diego Martin Central asked that question. [*Desk thumping*] The Member is the Chairman of the House Committee and that is the question he asked! [*Laughter*] The Member disappointed me.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, after saying all of that, I wonder whether the Member would, in fact, answer the question?

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I want to move on. I would probably come back to that matter later on. I want to draw reference to the Centennial College so that

the Government would understand the community college concept. Mr. Speaker, permit me to read from this document and I quote:

“Centennial College is one of four post-secondary, career training institutions serving the city of Metropolitan Toronto, Canada. The college has four major campuses located in the regions of Scarborough and East York, which serve a primary client base of nearly 1,000,000 people in the east end of the city. The unique and high quality programs offered by the college have resulted in over half of our students enrolling from outside of this primary service area.”

I just want to let the Member for Diego Martin East know this because he needs to get his facts straight. The Member is leading the tertiary education sector into higher education, so when the Member speaks in this House, he must speak accurately. The Member spoke about Singapore and he quoted a figure for us of 25 to 30 per cent. I do not know where the Member got his figures. In the year 2000, Singapore aimed for 60 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, just for the Member’s edification, the percentage of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) countries is as follows: the Bahamas, 13.7 per cent; Barbados, 21 per cent; Colombia, 13 per cent; Mexico, 16 per cent; Panama, 25.9 per cent; Venezuela, 26.4 per cent; Hong Kong, 19 per cent and Singapore, 60 per cent by the year 2000. I just wanted to make reference to these figures to clear up some of the misconceptions being put forward by the Member.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to the Centennial College and I quote:

“Toronto has been declared the most multicultural city in the World (United Nations, 1995), and Scarborough is the most multicultural region in Toronto, with Asian and Caribbean populations being the ‘majority’.”

That is why I am drawing reference to the Centennial College:

“The mission of Centennial College is to educate our students for career success. We take this mission seriously, whether the students are Canadians seeking their first career, or experienced international teachers seeking to upgrade technical or pedagogical skills; at Centennial, our students come first.

Centennial College provided one-year certificate, two-year technician and three-year technology and career skill programs in 100 different career disciplines to 10,000 full-time students each year. In addition, the college provides apprenticeship training to 2,200 students, and continuing education

programs for over 80,000 part-time learners each year. College programs are designed and delivered by 582 full-time and over 1,000 part-time faculty.

The college's programs are delivered in six major career fields: Applied Arts, Business, Communications, Hospitality, Engineering Technology, Health Sciences, and Transportation. All programs within the college are developed in close cooperation with the businesses and industries which employ our graduates. Each of the over 100 full-time programs is supported by an industry advisory committee responsible for identifying the skills and training outcomes expected of the graduate.

The School of Continuing Education, in addition to providing career programs to part-time learners, provides a wide range of industry-specific and customized training programs to meet the training needs of particular businesses and industries within the region. The Business and Industry Training Services of our college provides training development and consulting services to regional business. This consulting service provides training needs assessments, and customized training programs to address the identified needs."

I drew reference to this particular college to show the kinds of linkages that could take place with a community college; the opportunities are there. So, when I heard this rumour that the two institutes were being pulled out from the community college so that they could be merged with the University of Trinidad and Tobago—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

3.30 p.m.

Dr. A. Nanan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members.

The community college has great potential; the linkage can take place. When I heard the Member for Diego Martin East say that for the year 2020 the target will be 30 per cent access to tertiary education, I had to wonder what kind of vision he was utilizing, when we have the opportunity, with community colleges, to expand the area of tertiary education. The University of the West Indies is also expanding. I do not know if the Member read the governance report, the strategic

review, or the increasing enrolment figures taking place at the University of the West Indies, or if he just came here to parrot a figure given by a technical officer with respect to what will happen in the year 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I have a figure with respect to the growth rate, which is important, to which I would make reference. In 1995 there were 1.2 million citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; of this figure, 800,000, approximately over 60 per cent of the population, was 25 years and under. This is from the Central Statistical Office. With a 1 per cent growth rate, by the year 2005, we would have, roughly, a population of 1.5 million; of this 1.5 million people, 600,000 will be between the ages of 15 and 44 years; that is what we are looking at. When you are visioning, you have to use these kinds of figures to see what your population would be like, what would be the composition of your population, who you would be targeting and what would be the structure of your education system. Will the education system cater to the needs of this 15 to 44 age group?

When you look at this particular growth of the population and the 15 to 44 age group, you see why the technical/vocational area is so important, and why the University of Trinidad and Tobago needs to be considered very carefully. Are you going to take the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) and, to use a medical term, surgically dissect it, or are you going to use it as a catalyst for the improvement of tertiary education? The Minister has to tell this honourable House what would be the role of COSTAATT in this particular plan for the future.

The role of the community college, the Institute of Technology, the National Energy Skills Centre and all the other various levels would have a smooth transition; that is the importance of an accreditation council. It is to ensure that all these programmes that are going to be in place for post secondary and tertiary education will be able to withstand scrutiny, as the Minister mentioned, with respect to their credit system.

Mr. Speaker, I have a few questions to ask the Minister. I do not know if he has the answers, but I will still ask him: What will be the role of the National Training Agency with respect to accreditation? Right now the National Training Agency is dealing with various levels of training. I do not know if the Minister is going to tell this honourable House that levels I, II and III, which I identified, would be under the National Training Agency, and levels IV and V would be for the particular accreditation council, but he needs to say something with respect to technical/vocational education and training.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that in some countries people are skeptical of the government? [*Crosstalk*] In some countries the population is so afraid of the government that there is a distinction between an accreditation council and government. There should be no politicizing of this process. When the Member for Diego Martin East said that he was bringing a political aspect into this debate, although he initially said that it was beyond the political realm, we have to wonder. He said that this debate was beyond the political realm, but then he talked about the PNM and giving free education.

Mr. Speaker, who will accredit the University of the West Indies? What will be the role of the University of the West Indies as the premier tertiary educator in the West Indies? I do not know if he has the answer, but what would become of the expertise of the members making up the Committee of Recognition of Degrees? What will happen to the Ministry of Education? What will happen to the National Examinations Council? Will the Accreditation Council be able to accredit foreign universities offering courses through local institutions, like the University of London through the School of Business and Computer Studies? I also ask the Member to reconsider the identification of the nominee of the Association of Tertiary Institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

I now give this House some idea of a quick chronology of events, and the role of the National Examinations Council (NEC). The Minister seems to be unaware or he does not care about the NEC. I have a list of examinations administered by the NEC each year. What will happen to the NEC and all these examinations?

The purpose of the National Examinations Council is to administer awards of high standards within the field of vocational and technical education at craft and technician level, with a national currency, and available for students in technical institutes or colleges and vocational schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister did not make mention of the National Training Board (NTB) at all. Way back in 1979, the NTB was to assume the responsibility for the National Examinations Council and, today, we still have the National Training Agency (NTA) existing in limbo.

Mr. Speaker, there is a situation that needs to be clarified by the Member for Diego Martin East, the Minister for Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. Because of the mandate of the NTA it cannot step into the realm of the tertiary education area, that is the University of the West Indies. The National Training Agency has a mandate for training, so it must be given some role in this particular Accreditation Council.

There is one more area I will deal with before I close, and it has to do with the secretariat of the National Training Board. Because of the situation with the National Training Board and the Board of Industrial Training, the secretariat of the NTB has now become almost obsolete. There are a few functions being taken on by the secretariat. The Minister made reference to a retraining programme for displaced workers. I am sure he would have been aware that under the UNC administration there was a retraining programme for displaced workers also, and the secretariat of the National Training Board was responsible for that particular programme. So there is a lot of expertise with respect to the secretariat of the NTB that needs to be considered, with respect to the whole issue of accreditation.

The Minister also has to be aware, when he is planning for tertiary education, that there is almost a 65 per cent failure rate in secondary schools: almost 65 per cent of the students leaving secondary schools do not have a full certificate of CXC passes. That is why it is important that there is some national certificate of secondary education which will give the employer an opportunity to see that a particular student has passed through the secondary school system at a certain level. They may not be able to pass the CXC examination, but the employer will be able to recognize that the student has done a certain amount of work and could be fitted into various levels. That is an important area that needs to be considered.

Under the UNC administration, the whole concept of secondary school improvement was taking place. I would not go into that area, because that deals with secondary schools, and the Bill deals with post secondary and tertiary education.

The reason countries like Singapore and Hong Kong have such a vibrant tertiary education sector is because of the mix in educational provisions. In these two countries you have traditional university programmes being complemented by applied and technological programmes offered by technological universities, polytechnics, technical and community colleges. In the United Kingdom there is a Higher Education Council as well as a Higher Funding Council.

The Higher Education Council deals with tertiary education, but there is a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) that deals with the technical and vocational aspect. I want the Member to be aware that is the kind of structure in the United Kingdom: there is a division for the NVQ as well as a division for the education council that deals with the universities. In the UK there was a situation where the polytechnics were giving associate degrees. They are now giving degrees. The Member for Diego Martin East said that he was an engineer. He

must be aware that the polytechnics are now being called “new universities” and are now giving degrees in engineering.

Mr. Imbert: A bit of knowledge is a terrible thing.

Dr. A. Nanan: That is what is taking place with respect to international developments in Singapore, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I make reference to the importance of community colleges. As the Minister rightly said with respect to the “free for all”, in various ministries at the time there were many training programmes, but there was a duplication of efforts. The UNC administration recognized what was taking place, in terms of the wastage of resources, and that is why there was streamlining of training and division with respect to the training components. Where there was duplication, these particular areas were streamlined and the budget allocations were of such that there was no wastage. What we are seeing today, because of the efforts of the UNC, is that training has been placed on a higher plain.

The technical/vocational area, which plays a major role, has been because of the efforts of the UNC administration. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ramsaran: Take that and smoke it!

Dr. A. Nanan: So duplication in the various ministries has been removed and a particular programme put in place where the community college became a component of the whole training exercise. The common thread now running through the community college would make it possible to have programme structure, academic standards, organizational structure, quality assurance system—and the Member for Diego Martin East also talked about nomenclature—possible programme nomenclature, faculty requirements, and the transfer of credits, whether horizontal or vertical. Before there was no central administration and coordinating mechanism, now we have a coherent national system because of the UNC’s efforts. It utilizes, very cleverly, the public and private tertiary level institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about the regional developments in tertiary education. I want to speak about Belize and Jamaica. I am speaking about this because it is important to know where we stand in Caricom. When our Prime Minister goes to Caricom we must be able to hold our heads high, but when I give you these figures you would wonder what is happening with the sector under the PNM administration; we must put that in perspective. [*Laughter*]

Belize, Jamaica, Barbados, even non-campus countries like St. Lucia, the Bahamas and Antigua have degree-granting status. You have the University College of Belize; the University of Technology in Jamaica; the Barbados Community College; the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St. Lucia and the College of the Bahamas. All these colleges, again, in the technical/vocational area, offer associate degrees, bachelor's and master's programmes; it is all about linkages. That is why it is so important that our foreign affairs Minister must be aware that in this Single Market and Economy and the movement of skill within the region we must be certain of the quality of all tertiary educational institutions, whether it is nationally or regionally.

These countries that I have listed have made the linkage. They have all linked themselves utilizing the efforts of our University of the West Indies. What has the PNM administration done with respect to COSTAATT, the University of the West Indies and the linkage within the Caricom region? We have to ask that question when we are dealing with accreditation. We are dealing with the quality of tertiary education, whether at the post-secondary or tertiary level.

As I close I recall the Niherst situation: Mr. Speaker, Niherst had a White Paper in 1977, then a community college report in 1989, but there was no support. The School of Languages came with Niherst in 1984; the College of Health Sciences came in 1984 and the College of Nursing in 1990. I make reference to this because when the Member spoke about the efforts being made by the PNM administration, we ask the question: Why could you not have utilized the Niherst college, as the UNC did, with respect to the community college concept?

Mr. Speaker, when I wrote this it rang an important bell: It is important to note that all programmes offered by public and private tertiary level institutions would be normally offered by a single community college in the United States or the United Kingdom. That was the kind of vision of the UNC, and I made reference to Centennial College.

I took the opportunity to show the Government that when you present a bill dealing with accreditation in the post-secondary and tertiary sector and you speak about a seamless approach, you must be aware of linkage and having discussion with the stakeholders; you must not force this kind of accreditation council on the stakeholders, because you still have to win them over. The only way to win the stakeholders is to have discussion and come to an agreement before you come to Parliament; that is standard procedure.

Mr. Speaker, I showed, in terms of the seamless transition, that the technical/vocational area must be streamlined and you must have a definite

position with respect to the National Training Agency and the National Examinations Council that are doing the work right now with respect to certification of the tech/voc area. I also showed the importance of the Caricom perspective, whether it is the position with respect to the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) or tertiary level institutions within the Caribbean, and I linked it to the community colleges in the various Caricom countries that are progressing much faster than we are doing right now in Trinidad and Tobago. We have a golden opportunity. I gave the example of Centennial College, because I wanted to show Members how it has moved so far ahead. We have the opportunity here, with respect to COSTAATT, and we should not waste it. Before I sit, I make another plea to the Government to allow the students writing CAPE in 2005 to also write the advanced level examinations.

I thank you.

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a brief contribution to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Bill. I congratulate my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, for his sterling contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

The hon. Minister, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East, gave a historical analysis, with certain gaps of course. He attempted to correct those gaps coming to the end of his presentation, but I congratulate him for bringing this Bill to Parliament at this time. I know that he is new to the ministry, having only been recently reshuffled; his predecessor in office being first the Member for La Brea, whose distinction whilst in office was to provide Citadel with that licence for which the court found that he was guilty of discriminatory practices. So you understand the burden that my good friend from Diego Martin East had to carry. Subsequent to the hon. Member for La Brea, the next Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education was the hapless, "cassava minister". I understand the burden the Member has to carry. He has to catch up with two and a half years of work that ought to have been done by his predecessors. [*Crosstalk*]

In the report which is in his ministry, the Key Guiding Principles, Dollar for Dollar 2001 to 2005, prepared for the Cabinet-appointed interministerial committee, it is said that a national accreditation agency would be established in 2001 to ensure the integrity of all tertiary level institutions and the programmes offered. So what the hon. Minister told us today is that there was draft legislation in place. The draft legislation was in place by the Law Commission and a committee, as he indicated, chaired by Anna Mahase, a very reputable educationist, was to create the transition for the legislation to come into being and

to continue the process of discussion and consultation with the private sector institution, because dollar-for-dollar in its initial phase covered only the public sector post-secondary tertiary level institutions.

The next phase would have embraced the private sector institutions like Roytec, the Caribbean Union College, the School of Business and Computer Studies (SBCS) and the School of Accounting and Management (SAM). That was the thinking in order to reach the articulated goal of 20 per cent by 2005. The Minister might drop two years because of the non-performance of his colleagues, but he can still recover with proper advice.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister attempted to place this concept of the regulatory framework for higher education in this country in the context of a larger architecture of the provision of higher education and the role that it would play in human resource development and locating Trinidad and Tobago as one of the most competitive economies in the western hemisphere. I really want to congratulate him for so doing, but it is clear that the Minister is feeling his way. In order to assist him as he gropes around, it is our intention to help by grounding and anchoring him in clear principles. [*Interruption*]

You like everything about me. The only thing you do not like about me is that I am UNC. [*Crosstalk*]

When we did the analysis for the Dollar-for-Dollar Programme, we said that there were certain identifiable gaps in Trinidad and Tobago's thrust for competitiveness. We must keep in mind that we located the dollar-for-dollar funding mechanism for higher education in the context of an articulated vision for Trinidad and Tobago. What was the mission of the government of the day, at that time, the UNC mission? To be a knowledge-based society with a globally competitive, technologically driven, diversified economy that would sustain full employment, growing prosperity, equal opportunity, a secure life, social cohesion and the highest standard of living for all citizens. [*Desk thumping*]

In the context of that articulated vision for the society, we then looked at what were the gaps required and how we could achieve that goal. I quote from page 8 of the Key Guiding Principles for the Dollar-for-Dollar Tertiary Education Plan:

“Some identifiable gaps in Trinidad and Tobago's thrust for competitiveness: The following gaps exist in Trinidad and Tobago and thus are stumbling blocks in the way of global competitiveness. The following gaps therefore need to be addressed in order to be one of the top three most competitive countries in the Western Hemisphere—

- (1) Absorptive capacity—a need for the strengthening of the primary and secondary school system and the massive expansion of tertiary enrollment;
- (2) Science and technology—need for more university graduates in science and technology subjects.” [Interruption]

It was 164 for 8 about 20 minutes ago.

When we demitted office there was a draft science and technology report. Three years hence, that draft science and technology report has not seen the light of day. I do not blame my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin East. The Member for La Brea as the Minister with responsibility for higher education would have reviewed that draft science and technology report, but he was too busy singing Louis Lee Sing. His successor in office, Sen. D. Montano, “planting cassava,” would have seen that. There is this obstacle, this gap in science and technology.

The plan continued:

- “(3) Entrepreneurial and managerial competence—business, entrepreneurial and management education.”

We are not talking about the National Entrepreneurial Development Company (NEDCO) here. We are talking about serious developmental practices with respect to the building of entrepreneurial talent; Herman Desoto talks about that.

- “(4) Internet connectivity—To create conditions for self-learning and self-teaching;
- (5) Intellectual and cultural awakening of the citizenry—for an informed citizenry that can take advantage of the opportunities of globalization but who also understand the significance of authenticity in a globalizing world;
- (6) Distance education capabilities to bring more and more people into the education net.”

It is clear then, within that frame of reference. We did not only have that to guide us.

I want to guide my colleague from Diego Martin East that he should proceed with a measure of consultation with all the stakeholders. [Desk thumping] In my interaction with them in preparation for this debate, they indicated to me that it was the first time they had heard that the Bill was coming, at this point in time.

Clearly, there is need for consultation. If you are going to embrace the tertiary level institutions in this country or partner with them, it is necessary that you make them aware of Government's policy decisions; it would fast track your approach in bringing them to buy into the process. The integrity, credibility and quality assurance, which you so desire, will be made easier when they are partners in the process.

From page 63 of a consultation on higher education in the Caribbean, which took place in St. Lucia from June 29 to July 01, 1998, it states:

“Indications of some of the policy positions in relation to the role and functions of tertiary education in the region are:

- (i) Tertiary education will be used as an instrument to achieve democratization of education to produce the trained manpower geared to the employment requirements of the country and should generally be viewed as a means of achieving national, socio-economic and political goals;
- (ii) In order to develop a critical mass of local expertise so as to cover the upper and middle range of professional, managerial, technical, supervisory and entrepreneurship needs, local tertiary education institutions and programmes must be expanded and maintained;
- (iii) National and/or regional tertiary educational systems must be developed as a response to the rising cost of education abroad to stop the consequential brain drain and generally to accommodate higher numbers of students from an expanded secondary school system.”

In the regional and local context there is the absolute necessity for the expansion of the tertiary education system. That is why we recognized the necessity for a regulatory architecture. We called it the accreditation agency; you call it the council; it does not matter, the role and functions remain the same. I have some reservations with respect to some of the contents of the Bill.

When you look at that context, it becomes a critical part of the architecture that you have a proper regulatory arm. You must have a regulatory arm that has, in itself, credibility, public trust, and the trust and confidence of the tertiary education providers and the customer base, the persons who attend these institutions, so it becomes absolutely necessary that your regulatory arm be insulated from any kind of external interference. [*Desk thumping*]

When you look at the legislation—I know that the hon. Member indicated that he has received certain remarks with respect to the definitions section; he should give us the benefit of that. When you look at clause 4 of the Bill it states:

“The Council shall comprise not less than ten nor more than thirteen members appointed by the President.”

So you have this accreditation council which is responsible for the integrity, quality assurance and credibility in the tertiary level sector, appointed by the President, 10 to 13 members. In this context, what does appointment by the President mean? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Service commissions!

Mr. G. Singh: Appointment by the President, in this context, does not insulate you from political interference, because it means Cabinet; everybody knows that. So appointment by the President, in this context, really means appointment by the Cabinet of the country. Having regard to what recently transpired at the Statutory Authorities Service Commission—Mr. Speaker, those serious allegations made in the affidavit of Marlene Coudray have not been refuted nor answered.

Having regard to what has emerged in this society and the context within which we are passing legislation, we must be aware of the circumstances in the larger society: abuse of power and direct political interference in the operations of institutions of the State. Where we are at the stage of legislating, for what my good friend, the Member for Diego Martin East calls “landmark legislation”, let us get it right. [*Desk thumping*] Let us legislate for all times: between your tenure as Minister from previous successors, and for all times, retrospectively and prospectively. Let us insulate this institution that is going to award, register and accredit institutions and programmes from political interference. Let us give the President power to appoint, as he has that power, in the case of service commissions other than the Statutory Authorities Service Commission.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make legislation consistent with the letter and spirit of the Constitution. It is the intention of this legislation to have integrity in the offerings. [*Interruption*] I am not saying the Executive; if you want to say that, you say it. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, so that is why there is the need for checks and balances. [*Desk thumping*] We are not ostrich-like or blind to the reality of what is happening in society. I can give you a list of cases where citizens have to go before the courts in order to assert their rights because of a rampaging Executive. And you are telling me about the integrity of the

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[MR. SINGH]

Friday, April 02, 2004

Executive! Let us today protect the integrity of the Executive and the institution. [Crosstalk] I am not going to be distracted.

Give the President the power as you have in the case of the Public Service Commission, the Teaching Service Commission and the Police Service Commission. You are already bringing the President into the foray here. Give the President the power as you have in legislation, to appoint after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Valley: That is not in the draft Bill?

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, that is beside the point. You have drafted legislation and you have legislation that is before us; drafting goes through a series of processes. I am suggesting and recommending that you take this point. If you want the assurance of the integrity of the system, you ought to give the President the power insulated from direct political interference, so the President appoints after consultation, as is the case with the Police Service Commission, Public Service Commission and the Teaching Service Commission.

Hon. Member: The same President that appointed the PNM?

Mr. Valley: Let us ban elections!

Mr. G. Singh: I do not want to carry the absurdity of the Member for Diego Martin Central. I know he has seen the merit in this, and I understand what he is trying to do.

When you look at the powers of this council and the spirit of the legislation, what you, in fact, see is that it is really a creature of the Minister. The Minister determines the compensation for the Executive Director and members of the Council. [Crosstalk] The Minister determines the composition of the members of the Council. You determine the composition, the compensation—the Executive Director—so this council is a creature of the Minister. [Crosstalk] How are you going to assure this country, having regard to what is happening in society and what happened in the Marlene Coudray case of blatant, flagrant and remorseless interference in the operation of the Statutory Authorities Service Commission— [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk] How are we going to redress that kind of thing? Let us do it at the legislation stage.

When you look at this Bill and you understand the role and function of the council and the power in the hands of this council and, by extension, the Minister, if it were to be politically interfered with, which is the mischief we want to correct here this afternoon, you want to protect the Minister against pressures from the

Prime Minister. It is the Prime Minister who told her, as Marlene Coudray said, and which is unrefuted in her allegation, "I will deal with you." [*Crosstalk*] I do not want my colleague from Diego Martin East to be a messenger with a message from the Prime Minister to one of the tertiary level institutions.

Mr. Imbert: You know that would not happen. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. G. Singh: When you look at the wide-ranging powers! If this council fails to provide accreditation, there is no appeal except to the courts, judicial review of a decision, so it is back to square one. So there is political interference, you have to go to court, and in the meantime being in the marketplace, which is so competitive, you are eliminated as a tertiary level education provider; enormous power in the hands of the Minister.

I like the continuation of the drafters in paragraph 10, which says:

"The Minister may, after consultation with the Chairman of the Council, give to the Council in writing such directions of a general nature as appear to the Minister to be necessary in the public interest."

This is something we started in our time. It is clear that in order to protect the Minister and the Council it is necessary that the Minister give direction in writing. This is a society within which the value system that permeates institutions are not necessarily value systems that can be crystallized in writing alone.

We can look at the SASC in the Marlene Coudray matter, which is really a landmark decision for unmitigated interference in the operation of a service commission. What that tells us is: Let us protect institutions from direct political interference. In this instance, the Minister has to give directions in writing, but if the Minister chooses the current members, as the current law says, then in that situation you would find that notwithstanding the power vested in them they would give up the power willingly, as in the case of the SASC, without regard to the spirit and letter of the Constitution. So we have to guard against that; we have to cure the mischief.

Let us take a hypothetical case. Suppose a member of a tertiary level institution, the provider of tertiary education, decides to become a candidate against the Member for Diego Martin East; look at the power that the Minister has at his disposal immediately: to undertake audit reviews and evaluations independently or in cooperation with other bodies, as the council may consider necessary. So he is in charge of the council, and then he will let loose his dogs. He will let loose the power that he has within him against this provider. We must protect them. [*Crosstalk*]

Then we may have the contrary: Suppose you have a good friend of the PNM who is a tertiary level provider; let us say he is currently an advisor in foreign affairs. So he is in foreign affairs, although he had a one-man operation, and they do not have the infrastructural support necessary to qualify as a tertiary level provider consistent with the criteria set by the council, but there is intervention by the political directorate—I do not think my friend would intervene—

Mr. Imbert: Not at all!

Mr. G. Singh:—to facilitate a good friend, as was the case of the intervention by the Prime Minister to support William Munroe in the Marlene Coudray matter, to write off the debt owed to Skinner Park and the San Fernando City Corporation. It is on the affidavit. It is unrefuted in the affidavit. Do you know what is said in the affidavit? That Mr. William Munroe is a staunch supporter of the PNM and Marlene Coudray giving him pressure because she did not want to write off the debt. Moneys owed to the State, but pressure being brought upon a public servant for standing firmly in the national interest. How can we give you this power?

Mr. Imbert: Trust me! [*Laughter*]

Mr. G. Singh: Trust you? You know Jesus trusted Judas and Panday trusted Ramesh.

Dr. Moonilal: Trust? Open a parlour.

Mr. G. Singh: When you understand the context of what is emerging, then what is the support infrastructure? We move away from the fact that there is absolute need for the integrity of this legislation for it to be insulated from political interference; that is accepted; they all agree, so they will be voting for the President to appoint and not the Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Who agreed to that?

Mr. G. Singh: The Minister spoke about the whole question of expansion to the private sector, then he spoke about grants for tuition in the private sector. Look Minister, dollar-for-dollar worked well, [*Desk thumping*] there was no hiccup; it was a smooth, seamless transition.

Mr. Imbert: What is your point?

Mr. G. Singh: You have a precedent, why do you not apply that precedent to the private sector? Establish the credibility of the offering and allow that kind of transparent and open system. There will be more need for greater monitoring and

regulation within the private sector, because you do not want an abuse at that level, but at the level of the public sector institutions you can fine tune the mechanisms we put in place for dollar-for-dollar and create that for the private sector.

Mr. Imbert: Would you give way?

Mr. G. Singh: No, no, I have five more minutes. After tea I would give way. I do not blame you, hon. Minister; I blame your colleagues who came subsequent to you. We had approached the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) for funding for support infrastructure for the Ministry of Higher Education with a view to providing that kind of support mechanism: institutional support, institutional strengthening for the ministry, in order to deal with this expansion in the offerings at the tertiary level, not centralizing—How are you going to process this private tuition? Who are going to be the beneficiaries of this private tuition? What criteria have you put in place? What mechanisms have you put in place? We know only too well from NEDCO how the abuse took place just prior to the last election.

Dr. Moonilal: Heather Jones!

Mr. G. Singh: What is going to prevent this abuse in the offerings in this grant? We must be assured of the integrity of the offerings. What was missing in the Minister's presentation: Where is the funding? What is the quantum of funding that this grant is going to provide? What is the ceiling? Is it going to be an open assault on the Treasury? Where is the funding going to come from? Dollar-for-dollar had dedicated funding from the Revenue Stabilization Fund. Where is it going to come from?

The Minister really did not deal with that issue. I understand that he said that it would evolve and things would be put in place, but where is the funding going to come from? What is the status of the Revenue Stabilization Fund and the allocations for tertiary level institution buildings? You need to do certain things. I understand your problem, Member for Diego Martin East: for two years a set of posers in the office; you now come to play catch up and you are a hardworking "fella"; you now have to do things, and the infrastructure support institutions to support the expansion in tertiary level did not take place. [*Interruption*] I know it is true.

Mr. Imbert: I would never say such a thing!

Mr. G. Singh: Why are scholarships not placed under this Minister's jurisdiction? Why are they in the hands of the Minister of Public Administration and Information?

Mr. Ramsaran: That is the power man!

Mr. G. Singh: In addition to the national scholarship on merit, the State controls over 300 scholarships on an annual basis. Why are they not integrated and the information made available to the public in this country? It ought to be properly located under your ministry. Is it because of the role of Minister Saith in the politics in this country? [*Crosstalk*] Are these national scholarships now going to be PNM scholarships?

Dr. Moonilal: PNM scholarships!

Mr. G. Singh: These are issues, and they all go back to deal with the question of the integrity of the offering of the 300 national scholarships. You would recall, Mr. Speaker, that the UNC moved the national scholarships from 35 to sixty something to 200. [*Desk thumping*] It was all part of the dollar-for-dollar plan. I am glad that the Minister is sustaining that, but I believe as part of the integration of the tertiary level education system, national scholarships should be placed in his ministry. I cannot understand it, unless there is political interference in the award of scholarships. [*Crosstalk*]

The one way for the PNM to bastardize institutions is to have direct political interference. We do not want that to happen to the higher education system. If we get this wrong then we can eliminate competitiveness in our society. Look how Guyana got it wrong. A degree from the University of Guyana is not worth internationally the paper it is printed on. It is only because of the Caribbean setting that it is recognized, but not internationally because of the lack of quality assurance at every level. We cannot afford to get this accreditation process wrong. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: The sitting of the house is suspended, and will resume at 5.05 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, prior to the tea break, I was making the point about the necessity of this Bill which the hon. Member for Diego Martin East calls a landmark legislation, a view which I share with him.

We were dealing with the question of the integrity, quality assurance, credibility, and the public trust and confidence placed in this institution which we are about to create and I pointed out the need to insulate it from political interference, and for the necessary amendments to be made to the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to us that when we reviewed the provision of tertiary level education in the country, I think that the Minister really made a fundamental error in not consulting with the private sector providers. I know that a committee has been established and it is now in the process of meeting with the public sector providers but, in a real sense, they are putting the cart before the horse.

If the hon. Minister had in fact consulted with the public sector providers, he would have received a letter from a private sector provider, which I intend to read into the record. It says:

“Some of my thoughts; hope they are helpful.

The proposal to establish an Accreditation Council is an excellent one. However, one has to carefully consider the role of this council or we may end up creating another piece of state machinery that impedes rather than facilitates access to tertiary level education.

I agree that all Tertiary Level Institutions (TLIs) should be registered with a national body and that no unregistered college should be allowed to offer courses. A registered school should pass the test with regard to staff, classroom et cetera. A provisional registration could be given to all schools currently in operation for a period of five years or more or let's say a period of one year, which, after full approval can be granted for a period of two or three years. Once the body is set up to monitor these institutions with the threat being that a school may be deregistered if all is not well then I believe this is good enough.

The foreign institutes must be wholly responsible for ensuring that a locally registered TLI meets its requirements to offer courses locally. The accreditation council can insist that before any local TLI can be validated or approved to offer a foreign qualification that TLI must be registered with the council.”

It is however with regard to courses that my concerns lie. According to this document, it says that:

“All courses offered must be accredited by the National Accreditation Council. This is not realistic, if we are hoping to evaluate each qualification from each university or professional association individually. This would

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[MR. SINGH]

Friday, April 02, 2004

require an enormous investment in staff which we do not have in the volume required locally.

We still have not attracted a suitable candidate to head COSTAATT. A better proposal is to simply ensure that the university or professional association awarding the qualifications is recognized by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The Accreditation Council can request of the foreign institutes documentation attesting to the fact that these are bona fide qualifications.

To not to go this route would be disastrous. Currently, we are offering over eight MSc., MBA programmes in areas such as management, finance, facilities, quality, and construction management. These courses are from major universities in the UK. Additionally, they are recognized by the professional associations in the UK.

To attempt to evaluate these qualifications would be a waste of resources. Courses that are locally designed with the intent being to award an associate degree or baccalaureate degree can be accredited by the local council and the relevant machinery can be set up for this.

Short courses, as well as professional development courses, should be totally exempt from any sort of accreditation e.g. courses in customer services, sales and marketing, et etcetera. Once a school is registered, then it should be allowed to create and offer these short courses. If Government intervenes here, then once again it would open up a floodgate that would deluge the council in trivial work for the next decade.

The private TLIs add much variety to the local tertiary education allowing our citizens to choose from a vast array of qualifications, universities and associations. A homogenous education from primary through tertiary is not in the best interest of our people.

I was on a committee with the principal of UWI where I presented a report showing that currently private TLI, as well as the UWI School of Continuing Studies, are already accommodating over 20,000 students. We are much closer to the 20 per cent than we think. Many of the students, who may wish to access tertiary level education, cannot satisfy the matriculation requirements hence we probably need a lot of remedial schools.

Thanks and kind regards.

Tertiary Education Provider.”

I will pass this letter to my good friend, the Member for Diego Martin East, because what this provider at the level of tertiary education is saying is that a pragmatic approach has to be taken to what is out there.

One does not want to reinvent the wheel—so to speak—where there are highly established universities offering in partnership with local private sector TLI's education providers. One does not want to go through the evaluation of those degrees and, therefore, it would be inappropriate. So that is a consideration which the hon. Minister must take in order to facilitate the process to ensure that there is not a backlog and the Accreditation Council does not become bogged down in trivial matters.

As I already indicated, the ministry has not taken the opportunity for institutional strengthening in order to deal with the coming into being of this Accreditation Council, and the lack of capacity exists at the level of the ministry in order to deal with it at the level of detailing what is required. So it is a consideration at a practical level that one must take into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I am urging the Minister to consult post-haste. The next point I want to make is that the hon. Minister, in presenting this legislation would have dealt with the relationship between the TLIs; both private and state sector and the university. What kind of articulated agreements are put in place? What would facilitate further expansion and seamless transfer into the University of the West Indies and utilize the absorptive capacity of it?

Mr. Speaker, in a study entitled *Report on the University of the West Indies Review UWI Centre Mona Campus and the impact of other Tertiary Level Institutions* prepared by a Trinidadian, former Minister, Gordon Draper...

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. G. Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker; thank you Members. I was making the point in this Gordon Draper report—and if the Minister does not have access to it, I would provide him with a copy—at page 1, Review of Parallel Tertiary Level Institutions in the Region, it says:

“In UWI's strategic plan 1997—2002 articulates the following vision for the relationship between UWI and the TLIs. UWI would deepen and enlarge its

relationship with the TLIs, assist them in training their staff and generally work as partners with them in a regional effort in human resource development.

UWI would devolve to TLIs some of the programmes it now delivers and assist them to deliver first and second year UWI courses in certain subjects with quality control and assessment coming from UWI.”

In particular, the plan outlines the following approach. UWI will:

1. Assist in upgrading the technical capability of the teaching staff, the TLIs by training them directly and by assigning its staff members to participate in special teaching programmes.
2. Provide advice on curricula development.
3. Transfer TLIs—many of the certificate and diploma courses which UWI now delivers at non-degree level.
4. Conclude arrangement with selected TLIs which would allow them to teach under UWI surveillance the first and second year syllabus of a UWI degree programme with the final year being taught at UWI.
5. Agree in selected cases that a TLI could teach UWI syllabus for the full UWI degree. UWI would maintain surveillance over the quality of teaching and the examination.
6. Work out with individual TLI the credits which it will give for courses which they teach.
7. Provide on request second examiners to TLI.
8. Admit students from the TLIs to its degree programme giving them adequate credit for their attainment, this could significantly reduce the cost of requiring a UWI degree.

Mr. Speaker, the report goes on to talk about UWI’s role in the establishment of the Association of Tertiary Level Institutions and UWI’s involvement in the institution dealing with accreditation regionally.

The point being made is, whilst we provide this kind of architectural legal framework for the regulation and monitoring of the offering of programmes and degrees, there is also the need to take recognition of the premier tertiary level institution in the region, the University of the West Indies. [*Desk thumping*] I know my colleague, Dr. Moonilal, is currently a lecturer there, and he also shares that point of view.

I hope in his winding up the Minister would tell us about the various articulation agreements. I know that under the COSTAATT programme one can do three years and get his/her associate degree and in the fourth year, there is an articulation agreement with UWI, St. Augustine where one can then get a bachelor's degree. So at the end of four years, one can have an associate degree and a bachelor's degree. That is the kind of articulated agreement that was put in place when we had responsibility for that sector.

Mr. Speaker, we must keep in mind that when one looks at the culture of the organization we want to create within this Accreditation Council, we want to have an organization that is at the cutting edge in every area. What is the role of online degrees being offered? Will the legislation currently being carved today in April 2004 include that? In many instances we tend to miss that technological link. I know that technology is there; it is not a cure for many of the ills of the society so I do not want to overplay the technology card, but we must give recognition to that reality. *[Interruption]* I know you are a poker player of some repute you know, Member for Diego Martin Central, but I am not a gambling man. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker, when we are dealing with the issue of online offering of degrees, what will be the role of the accreditation? Will it turn a blind eye and be ostrich-like and say it does not exist and, therefore, that is a lacuna in the law, and it neither recognizes nor prohibits it? What is going to happen to that? What is the role of distance education in the context of this council? *[Interruption]* Maybe in the regulations that would come, but I think in his winding up, the Minister will make reference to that and guide us accordingly.

The reason I make reference to UWI and its role in relation to the TLIs and the necessity for presenting the articulated agreements for the benefit of the public, we must recognize that it is part of this Government's agenda to establish a University of Trinidad and Tobago. In the budget presentation it was said that the university will open in September 2004 and that it will be located at Wallerfield.

Where is the current infrastructure at Wallerfield to meet this articulated demand to open the university by September 2004? Show it to me! Is it in the car racetrack? Is one going to drive like Frankie Boodram to get his/her degree? Where in Wallerfield is this located? The idea of a University of Trinidad and Tobago is an excellent one but, like many ideas, when you come with them the idea then has to be fleshed into a concept; you then do your pre-feasibility study and then you put your implementation plan, but you cannot move from idea into

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[MR. SINGH]

Friday, April 02, 2004

execution of an implementation plan when you do not go through the other stages, and that is the problem.

You move from idea to date for opening and that is why I am saying that September 2004 beckons. We are in April; September beckons, but there is no university. We cannot take a good idea like that and bastardize it like you are doing. I know about university without walls, but do not come with that kind of con. “Doh come with that.” That is not the concept which has been articulated. I know about a university without walls. Let us be serious about how we are going to educate our people for competitiveness in the world.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with this piece of legislation and it is that same kind of concept of university that Lloyd Best had this to say. I read from the *Trinidad and Tobago Review* of December 01, 2003 which deals with the reform of the tertiary sector presented to the third Sitting of the Permanent Alan Harris Conference. Mr. Best said:

“The University of Trinidad and Tobago is already a non-starter and the best hope for it is that it would amount to a polytechnic.”

[*Crosstalk*] You can treat Lloyd Best with the contempt and the scorn with which you have indicated, hon. Member, but you must recognize him as one of the foremost, innovative thinkers in the Third World.

Mr. Speaker, it is not Lloyd Best alone—[*Interruption*] You want three ideas from Lloyd Best? I can give you a very good one right now; the best plan for pan, the Lloyd Best plan for pan. “Yuh doh know about it, look at yuh.” I would tell you. The Lloyd Best plan for pan is that the pan theatre being a centre of excellence, a centre of invasion, we should build around it and, therefore, it becomes an area not only for innovation and entrepreneurship but academic discipline. We were implementing that, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] I would not be distracted, I know I would contribute to your learning.

In addition to Lloyd Best, in the *Newsday* of Thursday 07, 2002 it says:

“Economist questions the need for a University of Trinidad and Tobago. RBTT senior economist, Kelvin Sargeant questions whether a University of Trinidad and Tobago should be part of Government’s plan to improve the country’s education system.

Addressing a student’s forum at St. Mary’s College, Sargeant debated the wisdom of establishing the proposed institution. ‘Do we really need a University of Trinidad and Tobago or do we expand UWI?’ he asks.”

Mr. Speaker, it is Government's policy and I say to them implement it in consideration of a time line and the social contract which was entered into and that by September 2004, there will be a University of Trinidad and Tobago. This Government has a history of renegeing on its promises: Sectoral wages, they “back back” on that and caused a Minister to resign on principle; now it is “backing back” on the time line for the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, when one understands the role of the tertiary level institutions and where they are located in Trinidad and Tobago in the context of the competitiveness of this country; when one looks at the human resource development and what is required of us, one recognizes that there is need for expansion and the need for this legislation.

We are saying to insulate this from political interference. We know the smallness of this island's society and the culture of organizations that have emerged. We know of the enormous power of a Prime Minister in the current system. [Interruption] Look at what happened in the Statutory Authorities Service Commission (SASC) and look at the calibre of people who genuflected before prime ministerial power and it tells you of the culture of organizations. [Crosstalk] No, no, we are saying there exists a culture in the society where you genuflect before the political directorate of the day. We are saying let us insulate people from that kind of thing. [Interruption]

This is the second time today I have to educate my friend. The first time I had to tell him about Best. The President on advice of the Prime Minister appoints the SASC. Do you know what the newspaper report tells us? [Crosstalk] It is important because he may vote for the changes we are requesting.

Mr. Speaker, I make reference to the *Trinidad Guardian* of April 01, 2004 page 12. President on SASC appointments: I don't have the power to revoke.

“President George Maxwell Richards said yesterday he does not have the power to revoke the appointments of members of the Statutory Authorities Service Commission, since it was not established under the Constitution.

He said Cabinet is responsible for making that decision.”

So my friend, the power to appoint and revoke lies with the Cabinet of the country, and the members of the SASC genuflected before the Prime Minister and prime ministerial power in the Marlene Coudray matter. I am saying that in order to establish public trust and confidence, let us insulate them and give the President the power to appoint members of this council after consultation with the hon.

Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. That is the way it is done in the police service, public service and the teaching service. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Caroni East for giving way. The Member for Barataria/San Juan is quite right. There is talk in the public domain about constitutional reform and the possibility of an Executive President. How would you like it to work in that situation?

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, whilst there is talk, it is not my intention to enter into the realm of speculation as to whether constitutional reform will take place or not, but certainly it is something that we desire.

In this context where there is the need to insulate public servants from direct political interference, there is need for certain action to be taken and we are saying if you are going to appoint an Executive President, when the President comes and you are in that situation, then you deal with that. But in the Executive President's situation, which the hon. Prime Minister seems to prefer, I can understand that because in the American system they recognize that there is no insulation. They come with the President as some came with Bush and they go with Bush. If Bush goes, they will go with Bush. [*Interruption*] I am not going to give you a constitutional lesson today. I am part of the team to have discussions with you and I want to tell you how it operates in the Fijian model too.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the issue of insulation from political interference to maintain the integrity of the organization. It is common knowledge in this country that a senior Government Minister interfered with the judicial process allowing two Bajan fishermen to go free.

5.35 p.m.

To date, they tell you about the culture of organizations. To date, where is that report? Has it travelled from the hands of the Commissioner of Police into the hands of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)? We are dealing with political interference. If there is political interference in the appointments and transfers, then we would deal with that. We have to ensure that the DPP's office is not contaminated. We have a golden opportunity to ensure that the culture of this organization is right.

What is the fortunate reality? There is a confluence of subjective and objective conditions. You have a president who is a former principal of the University of the West Indies (UWI). He can understand the environment. If we give him the objective condition to appoint people to regulate and provide that kind of

regulation and monitoring, you will have a convergence of the subjective and objective condition leading to a revolution in the tertiary level sector.

It is clear to us on this side that the law cannot think as of itself. The law must be entrusted to human beings and they must take responsibility for their interpretation. The law as is currently structured in this Act—this council is a creature of the Minister. Having regard to the culture of organizations and institutions in the society, let us make this institution—very important as it is for the welfare of higher education—*independent, impartial and vest power in a settled way.*

With these few words, I thank you.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Members opposite for their contributions. The Member for Tabaquite was all over the place and became very confused during his contribution, but I still thank him for it. I need to take issue with a number of the points that he made. He made a nonsensical statement that in order to gain entry to the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute one must have a PNM party card. An absurdity, if I ever heard one. He then disclaimed all responsibility for the situation at John Donaldson. I think we need to talk about that and set the record straight.

Prior to the advent of the UNC, John Donaldson was one of the premier technical institutions in this country. The data need to go into the record of this House. In 1998, enrolment at John S. Donaldson Technical Institute was of the order of 2,500. By a process of a number of ill-conceived, ill-advised and foolish decisions of the previous administration, they introduced a fee system for an institute which served the working class of this country that drew its intake from a catchment of people in the lower income areas primarily in the East-West Corridor. For 40 years, there was a tradition at John S. Donaldson Technical Institute that tuition was free as part of the PNM's promise and vision of universal free education whether secondary or tertiary. The UNC came in and as part of some plot, some say it was a sinister plan to decimate the young people in the East-West Corridor and reduce them to being hewers of wood and drawers of water in perpetuity. It is believed that it was the intention of the former administration to reduce the young people in the East-West Corridor to the manual and menial classes by completely obliterating the system of education that had prevailed in Trinidad and Tobago for 40 years. The first thing that they did was to introduce a system of fees.

The Member for Tabaquite rambled all over the place not having the comprehension of what the National Examinations Council (NEC) was about. The NEC is a British examination system based on the block system where there is a terminal examination leading to a certificate. That had existed in Trinidad and Tobago for 40 years. The NEC qualification was well recognized in the industry, craft and technical areas for 40 years.

The second decision these hon. Members took after they introduced fees was that they scrapped the NEC examination and put the students into a state of limbo. They introduced the associate degree concept without a curriculum, faculty and any standards. For 40 years, the industries recognized what an NEC certificate meant. They knew what NEC graduates could do; where to place them in the system; how to compensate and train them for further advancement within the organization. This uncaring administration on the other side scrapped the NEC system and introduced this nebulous associate degree programme which means nothing. Right now the degree of a graduate coming out of the associate degree programme is not recognized; the industry does not understand it and the students are not getting employment.

The third thing they did was to starve the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute of funds. They deprived the institute of money and gave them pennies and crumbs. If you went to John Donaldson you would see cracks in the walls; all the air conditioning units have broken down; empty classrooms and antiquated equipment. While they drove John S. Donaldson Technical Institute into the ground and introduced a system of tuition fees for the poorer classes in Trinidad and Tobago and took away their NEC qualifications, they spent \$180 million on the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT). It was a twofold strategy to build a technical institute in Couva next to Brechin Castle in the middle of their constituencies. They spent \$180 million on TTIT while not giving John S. Donaldson Technical Institute \$180. It was a sinister plan.

After they executed their plan the student enrolment at John S. Donaldson Technical Institute was reduced from 2,500 to 500, in 1998, to 300 in 2000. In one and a half years 2,000 students dropped out of the technical education system in Trinidad and Tobago. When you take that over the period 1998 to date, there are over 5,000 young persons who have been deprived of technical education in the East-West Corridor because of a sinister plan on the part of the UNC. It is a fact! These are facts. You cannot deny that the enrolment dropped from 2,500 to 300. You cannot deny that you introduced tuition fees.

Mr. Singh: Would the Member give way?

Hon. C. Imbert: No! I am not giving way. You did not give way to me and I am not giving way to you. You cannot deny that you scrapped the NEC and you had a plan to ensure that children of the East-West Corridor did not have access to higher education. Thank God for the People's National Movement!

We are rebuilding John S. Donaldson Technical Institute. In 2004, the PNM Cabinet has approved almost \$20 million for the rehabilitation of John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and the reintroduction with immediate effect of the National Examinations Council system. We are going to rebuild John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, San Fernando Technical Institute and the Point Fortin Vocational Centre. All these places were abandoned and left derelict by the former administration. We are going to build a technical institute in south east Trinidad; one in south west Trinidad; one in central Trinidad; one in Tobago and in east Trinidad the University of Trinidad and Tobago would rise and become one of the premier institutions of higher education. Say Alleluia!

The level of illiteracy on that side bothers me. Time and time again Members on this side have made the point that the driving concept of the University of Trinidad and Tobago is that it would be a virtual university. It would be a multi campus institution; it would use primarily distance learning, video conferencing and electric roaming wireless network. That is the conceptual framework of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. It would be a virtual multi campus university using primarily distance education online learning. That is why having renamed the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology as the Point Lisas Campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago—I would like the Member for Caroni East to listen because he asked the question—at Wallerfield we shall have an administration office; business school and information technology school. At Galeota we would have an institute of marine studies as the College of Offshore Technology as part of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. At Chaguaramas we shall have the other component of maritime education, incorporating the fisheries institute and the other maritime educational institutions in that area.

There would be other centres for distance learning throughout the country that would be part of the wider University of Trinidad and Tobago. Having renamed TTIT the Point Lisas Campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, we can offer UTT degrees from September 2004. It is ABC! You are not supposed to have a postgraduate degree to understand that. We are at the cutting edge of technology. You do not need to tell us about online degrees and distance learning.

They had distance education languishing. My friend, the Member for Arouca North, used a quip. He was not the minister of distance learning; he was the

minister of distance learning. [*Laughter*] This was because of the circumstances in which he arrived on that side. That very important sector of our education system was languishing for six years under a totally unsuitable person, from 1995 to 2001.

This PNM administration would take distance learning through all its stages; establish wireless networks throughout Trinidad and Tobago and take advantage of all the modern technology in terms of video conferencing and Internet connectivity. If the Member for Caroni East had been more expansive in his comments about the University of the West Indies—assuming that he knows, I would give him the benefit of the doubt. I know some Members on the other side do not know very much and the Member for Tabaquite is a case in point. The Member for Caroni East gives the impression that he does a little homework. If he had studied the figures for the University of the West Indies, he would have seen that the increase in student intake over the last three or four years is primarily as a result of distance learning. That is how the University of the West Indies has been able to take its enrolment from 4,000 to 5,000 to 6,000, and 7,000. If you look in the newspapers you would see that courses at UWI are now being offered in Tobago. You can do your first year of a UWI degree in Tobago and then come to Trinidad to complete your degree. This is being done through distance learning.

I want to deal with some other issues that the Member for Tabaquite raised. He is worried that the PNM is seeking to take John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and San Fernando Technical Institute out of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT). It is the UNC that put them into COSTAATT! John Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes were working perfectly up to the point that the UNC decided to take a last minute decision to push the technical schools into COSTAATT. This was conceptualized as a community college primarily dealing with the liberal arts and other courses of study such as nursing instructions. It is only at the last minute they said, “Well leh we throw John D. and San Fernando Technical inside there”.

They did not do their homework. They left all the staff in John Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes as employees of the Ministry of Education, creating a dichotomy where the plant and equipment in John Donaldson is vested in COSTAATT; the employees belong to the Ministry of Education and their salaries are paid by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. That is the unholy mess we in the PNM have inherited. There are institutions like John Donaldson where the bodies are on the establishment of the Ministry of

Education; their pay slips come from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and the equipment belongs to COSTAATT. An absurdity! It would be irresponsible of this administration not to fix that. We are looking at it. We are thinking very seriously of removing San Fernando and John S. Donaldson Technical Institutes out of COSTAATT. It appears to be the correct thing to do. They should not have been there in the first place. That would be informed by a series of consultations and studies to determine the best fit and the best place for these technical institutions. In the meantime we would not allow them to languish in the way that they did.

The Member for Tabaquite griped about the committee for the recognition of degrees. Obviously, he does not know that over the last 15 years, the Committee for the Recognition of Degrees has recognized two degree programmes. That is because they do not have the resources, systems, personnel and legal framework. I heard the Member for Caroni East carrying on about what would happen to the private tertiary institutions when the Accreditation Council comes into being. At the present time there is no legal framework in Trinidad and Tobago for the recognition of tertiary education programmes. You see letters in the newspapers all the time; we get letters in the ministry and I am sure when the Member for Caroni East was in the ministry, he got letters too complaining about the quality of education that is offered in some of the private tertiary institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. There is absolutely nothing you can do about it because there is no legal framework or requirement for registration and accreditation.

Who gets the shaft at the end of the day? It is the poor students who have put out \$5,000 and \$10,000 to get a diploma or certificate, only to find at the end of the day that it is worthless and not even recognized in Trinidad and Tobago and definitely not recognized overseas, when they seek to work or further their studies. We have come to deal with that. I am very surprised by the approach taken by some of the Members opposite.

We were elected to govern this country in 2002. We put up 36 candidates; asked people to vote for us in 2002; we won the election; formed the government and we would run this country until there is another election and people decide that they no longer wish us to run this country. We have been elected to govern! This matter is all about governance. We would not give away the mandate that the people of Trinidad and Tobago gave us and place it elsewhere. We shall decide how this council functions and as the legislation indicates, give them broad policy directives in the national interest. *[Interruption]* You could say what you want. We have been elected to govern this country and we would run it. I would not get

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 02, 2004

“ketch” with that kite you throw out for me to hold. "This is a golden opportunity for the Government to give up the mandate that has been given by the people to run this country."

Let us deal with some of the more relevant points raised by the Member for Caroni East. The tuition grants would be eligible for everybody, just like the Dollar-for-Dollar Programme. I cannot see any possibility of abuse. It would be a fair and transparent system. The point I made is that we have to encourage all our people to get involved in higher education. We cannot discriminate and look at somebody and say because that person supports another political party he or she would not be eligible. Even the Member for Oropouche who asked me in the corridor if he would be eligible for tuition support would be eligible for it under the caring PNM administration. Even the Member for Chaguanas who is not sure about the credibility of his programme would qualify for tuition assistance. To deal with that I give hon. Members the assurance that it would be open and transparent and every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago would be eligible for tuition. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

With regard to the source of funding for the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Programme (GATE), there is a balance in the allocation of almost \$200 million. We have projected that this would carry us for a couple years as we develop and flesh out tuition support programmes. That is the initial funding for GATE and there is more than enough money. It would be supplemented by direct revenues or through the Revenue Stabilization Fund. That is a policy decision that the Government would take in due course. We have enough money to run our programme for two years. *[Interruption]* “Whether you leave it, that is the people’s money boy. At least yuh didn’t get yuh hand on dat. At least yuh didn’t put that in yuh pocket.” There was some money in at least one account that you left for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

In terms of provisional registration there would be transitional arrangements as the Accreditation Council comes in. I would ask the Council to look at this because the regulations would determine the categories of registration whether temporary, provisional or final registration. I go back to the composition of the Council. It is three persons nominated by tertiary institutions of which one would be from the Association of Tertiary Institutions; two persons with expertise in accreditation and two persons nominated by professional associations. We are not leaving them out. One of my disappointments is that unlike the Member for Caroni East who took at least two minutes to glance through the Bill, you did not even bother to read the Bill. The Council has representation from the professional

organizations in Trinidad and Tobago. It is very broad based. It includes private sector, public sector and professional bodies. One expects that as the council develops the regulations, rules and procedures, there would be a consensual approach. It cannot be any other way because of the composition of the council. Hon. Member for Tabaquite, read the legislation next time before you give us your random thoughts. We could do without your random thoughts.

The final point I want to make is about UWI and UTT. UWI is a regional institution. It is not Trinidad and Tobago. The Member for Tabaquite without understanding what he was saying spoke about the technical university in Jamaica which grew out of the College of Applied Science and Technology (CAST) of Jamaica. When I was at university both as a student and lecturer, the school was at the level of a polytechnic and called CAST. That grew into the technical university because Jamaica decided long ago, the headquarters of the University of the West Indies is in Mona; but for their development they must have their university. You spoke about the Marryshaw College in Barbados and the university in Belize. In addition to being part of the wider Caricom body and the system of the University of the West Indies, we must forge our identity and develop our institutions to deal with our special needs.

The Member for Caroni East made the point that we are deficient in science and technology. He read from a report which I am sure is credible that said we must invest in science and technology. That is what the UTT is about. It is about the process industry; information technology and engineering. That is the primary thrust of UTT because Trinidad and Tobago is unique in the Caribbean. Our economy is based on oil and gas; it is an energy-based economy. We have a highly developed manufacturing sector and industrial base. Our needs in terms of education and training are vastly different from Grenada, St. Lucia and Antigua which are tourism based economies with an agricultural base. We cannot wait for the University of the West Indies to develop programmes suited to our needs. We must complement what exists at UWI with our programme in the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Forget all the political "ol" talk and picong on that side, I know that Members opposite understand what I am talking about. They are vexed that the University of Trinidad and Tobago was a PNM innovation. They cannot take it. I know that as the UTT develops one of the first applications we would probably get is from the Member for Oropouche to do a postgraduate programme there. He would come here and bad talk it, but he would go there to apply and then come to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education to apply for tuition support. We would gladly receive the Member for Oropouche and give him the tuition support.

Accreditation Council of T & T Bill
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 02, 2004

The Member for Caroni East has recognized that this is landmark legislation. I wish to give him the assurance that there would be provisional arrangements that we would not disadvantage anybody. We would give institutions time to put their house in order. Registration is compulsory, but not accreditation. We have to make that distinction. It is optional to the institution to determine whether or not they wish to seek accreditation for all or one or two of their programmes.

Mr. Singh: I think that in the context of the grants, we ought not to provide grants to any institution that is not accredited.

Hon. C. Imbert: This is the policy that would be developed over time by the Accreditation Council. It is a very broad based council and contains private and public sector input. It is a consensual approach. The Member for Caroni East has nothing to fear. He would know that in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education there is a certain approach to training and education. We do not discriminate against people. We have an NTA headed by a member of the UNC. It is a fact. [*Interruption*] I am on my feet and I will speak until the Speaker tells me that my time has run out. That could never happen under a UNC administration. Do you think that the general secretary of the PNM could be a CEO of a training institution under a UNC administration? That cannot happen. It is necessary to say these things so that it puts paid to the lie that I always hear from the Members opposite about discrimination. In the area of education and training we need all hands on deck.

I ask Members opposite for their support and to vote for the Bill. I give them the assurance that the issues they have raised would be dealt with in the regulations, as we develop the policy for tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago.

I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

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

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, with respect to clause 4, I wonder if the Member is taking into consideration the point I made with respect to the President appointing after consultation. The content can remain the same but certainly, it would lend that degree of independence.

Mr. Imbert: With the greatest of respect to my hon. Colleague for Caroni East, I did take your point into consideration. That is why we said that we have been elected to run this country. We would respectfully like to leave this clause as is.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 5 to 24 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 25.

Question proposed, That clause 25 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 25 be amended by deleting subclauses (3), (4) and (5).

These issues in subsection (3), (4) and (5) are not offences, so they should not have been captured under this clause which has the marginal note offences.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the registers that would be kept would be open for public viewing. I guess the regulations would take care of that.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. I would give you that assurance. The regulations would take care of that. They would be open for the public.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, does clause 25(a) preclude the Freedom of Information Act? Under that Act a person would be an authorized person or body if he or she seeks information. Then an employee would be authorized to provide that information. I want to be clear on that issue.

Mr. Imbert: I give you the assurance that I would deal with this in the other place. If an amendment is required it would come back to the House.

Mr. Singh: I appreciate that.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 25, as amended, ordered to stand part of Bill.

New clause 26.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I propose a new clause 26 which reads as follows:

- “Prohibitions (1) A registered institution shall not—
- (a) alter its accredited programmes without prior approval of the Council;
 - (b) use the word ‘university’, ‘community college’, ‘technical college’ or ‘technical university’ in its title without having the authority to do so granted by the Ministry on the advice of the Council; or
 - (c) misrepresent to the public the recognition gained by it for its programmes or awards.
- (2) An institution in breach of subsection (1) shall be informed in writing of the nature of the breach and shall be requested to comply within a stipulated time period.
- (3) If the institution fails to comply within the stipulated time, the Minister may remove the name of the institution from the Register”.

New clause 26 read the first time

Question proposed, That the new clause be read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed, That the new clause be added to the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause 26 added to the Bill.

Clause 26.

Question proposed, That clause 26 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 26 be renumbered as clause 27.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 26, renumbered clause 27, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 27.

Question proposed, That clause 27 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 27 be renumbered as clause 28.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 27, renumbered clause 28, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Imbert: I beg to move that renumbered clause 28 be amended by substituting for the word “six” appearing in line two, the word “three”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 27, renumbered clause 28, as amended, ordered, to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 28.

Question proposed, That clause 28 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 28 be renumbered as clause 29(1).

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, why is the council for six years? The norm is for one year.

Mr. Imbert: It is just an appropriate period. They review every six years.

Mr. Sharma: This is a very important council.

Mr. Imbert: I have no objection to three years. Do you see how accommodating I am?

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 28, renumbered clause 29(1), ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 29.

Question proposed, That clause 29 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 29 be amended as follows:

- (a) Substitute for the word “one year” appearing in line three, the words “two years”.

(b) Insert a new subclause (2) which reads as follows:

- (2) “An institution deemed to be authorized under subsection (1), to continue to perform its functions within the period specified, shall cease to do so thereafter, unless it is registered in accordance with this Act.”

This is in recognition of some of the points made by the Member for Caroni East, that institutions currently and lawfully performing their functions can continue to do so for two years while the regulations are being sorted out. Institutions would have two years to get their house in order. Unless they are properly registered, they would cease to perform their functions.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 29, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Recommitted clause 28.

Question again proposed, That clause 28 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, since we are preparing our local graduates for the global workplace, more so the United States and Canada, why do we not consider removing the words “regional” before accredited and “Caribbean community” so it would appear more global.

Mr. Imbert: Is that the wish of Members opposite?

Mr. Sharma: When we speak here, we speak collectively.

Mr. Imbert: I did not get that impression. Could I ask the Chief Whip if that is the wish of Members opposite?

Mr. Sharma: Collectively means both sides of the House.

Mr. Singh: There is a Caribbean body in place. One must first harmonize the Caribbean region and also have the regional link. The clause allows that.

Mr. Imbert: Well spoken. We would leave it alone.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 28 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday April 16, 2004 at 1. 30 p.m.

I wish to inform the House that on that day the Government plans to do the motion on the Order Paper, then the Insurance (Amdt.) Bill followed by the Telecommunications (Amdt.) Bill.

Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the hon. Leader of Government Business that he should also take the opportunity to wish the Christian community a happy and holy Easter holiday. Having regard to the movie, *The Passion of The Christ*, he should really take the opportunity to look at it over the holidays and maybe, it would help in the redemption of his soul. [Laughter]

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I am so advised and I thank the Chief Whip.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before I put the question on the adjournment, there is a motion to be raised by the Member for Oropouche. I wish to inform Members that notwithstanding the fact that this motion standing in the name of the hon. Member for Oropouche was filed out of time, the hon. Minister is prepared to answer it. In these circumstances I call on the hon. Member for Oropouche.

Critical Policy Measures (Lack of Implementation)

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche): Mr. Speaker, I wish to get back later to that issue because I sent the motion on Monday.

I would like to raise under Standing Order 11 a motion on the Adjournment of the House, namely, the failure of the Government to implement adequate and critical policy measures and adhere to established and proper industrial relations principles that have led to the worsening and rapidly escalating incidence of industrial unrest in Trinidad and Tobago.

This situation has left thousands of workers claiming victimization, discrimination and unfair treatment at the hands of the Government. It is our considered opinion that the entire public service has reached a stage of collapse.

Critical Policy Measures
[DR. MOONILAL]

Friday, April 02, 2004

Firstly, it was the justice and security infrastructure, then health and later education. Today, the infrastructure for industrial and labour relation has also collapsed. This Government can easily find money and human resources to sponsor a weed-whacker programme, while the Ministry of Works and Transport writes to Members of Parliament indicating that they have given approval to construct road humps for the safety of children, but they request from Members of Parliament to provide material resources such as gravel, sand and cement. That is the state we have reached with public institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

At the heart of this matter that has come to the fore, the breakdown in industrial relations is the islandwide state of industrial unrest that has developed in this country over the recent past. This is related in no small measure to the political culture of the People's National Movement, as it relates to citizens and their grievances. It is not simply their use of battalions to wreck and demolish the houses of the poor, but it is their approach to the poor, oppressed and underprivileged. They believe that you either shut them up or lock them up.

Today there is an uncanny resemblance to the conditions that led to major working class protests in 1975, when the PNM moved with brutal force to suppress the legitimate expression of protests on that occasion from oil and sugar workers. It is very instructive and I would say very briefly that in a book entitled *The Politics of Labour* by Dr. Ray Kyley, he outlined six conditions that were present in March 1975, that led to Bloody Tuesday. They include the issue of the failure of the government to recognize trade unions. Today we have the failure of the Government to recognize the doctors in their trade union.

Another issue in 1975 was the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act which is still a demand today by the workers. Another issue was the breakdown of collective agreements and negotiations taking place in several State enterprises. Today, that is another issue which came back after so many decades. Another major issue was the alienation and marginalization of the labour movement. Today that issue has revisited us.

The point I am making is that is the objective reality—to use the scientific term introduced by the eloquent Member for Caroni East—that gave rise to March 18, 1975. We would like to put Parliament and the people on notice that those conditions are here today and may lead to another round of industrial unrest.

On the last occasion the PNM dealt with workers with brutal force. In his book entitled *Crisis*, Owen Baptiste outlined that the day after Bloody Tuesday as was stated quite clearly in the *Express* newspaper dated March 19, there was no

sensible strategy to deal with the process other than naked force. They introduced naked force to break up the march. What a cruel irony it is that on March 19, 1975, the PNM used brutal force to break up the march and today, Tuesday March 16, 2004, Achong slams Government, PNM brutal to workers. The more things change the more they get worse.

Hon. Member: The more things change the more they remain the same.

Dr. R. Moonilal: No, no, no. It gets worse in your case. Under the PNM it gets worse and we would amend that saying. It does not remain the same.

We would have dismissed this headline but it came from one of their own. The Member for Point Fortin and former Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development declared that the PNM is brutal to workers. This Member could not deal with them again. He snapped; left their government and indicated in an interview in the *Sunday Guardian* dated March 21, 2004, that he was upset and could not agree with the Government. Apart from dismissing the Member for San Fernando East as a potential minister of labour, he said that if the Member for San Fernando East became the Minister of Labour, we may have a strike every day. Speaking about his Cabinet colleagues, Mr. Achong said that a lot of them did not know what they were about and what they had to do in government. This is from one of their own, a former Cabinet colleague who had a view from inside. That is the former Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. Today, the conditions are dreadfully similar to those that existed in 1975.

Apart from the boiling rhetoric of industrial unrest the country faces a real threat. Their supporters are now howling at the door. They like to blame the Opposition. On the last occasion the Member for Arouca North said that the UNC administration put "gun in children hand". Interestingly, it is not the Abu Bakr administration, but the UNC administration. Workers at Atlantic LNG, WASA, T&TEC, NHA and NBN are on the move.

6.35 p.m.

The Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation admitted in the public domain that Atlantic LNG asked for the police and the coast guard to be on standby at Point Fortin. Mr. Speaker, it would have been better if he had said that the Government willingly did that to protect the public's interest. To say it was really Atlantic LNG in charge of our national security forces then we know that the next time we are faced with insecurity and crime we should not call Sen. Joseph, we should call Richard Cape because he has command of the coast guard and the police.

Critical Policy Measures
[DR. MOONILAL]

Friday, April 02, 2004

Mr. Speaker, while they were watching the workers at Atlantic LNG, our citizens were being killed on the coast. This is their priority, Mr. Speaker, no wonder the Member for Point Fortin referred to them in the press and I quote because I do not want to use unparliamentary language unduly:

“Colossal idiots”

Mr. Speaker, they promised the Atlantic LNG workers a minimum wage as part of a hoax to get into power. Today we read in the press that Bob Lindquist has a minimum wage of \$2,600 an hour, but the Atlantic LNG workers cannot get \$26 an hour. That is the priority with this Government; that is how they spend money.

Mr. Speaker, another development in the aftermath of the resignation of the Member for Point Fortin was that the Prime Minister was quoted on the front page of a *Guardian* headline as not being able to speak; he had lost his voice but then admitted “Duh...it’s a joke”. So that was a joke, but when the joke cleared, we got the Member for St. Ann's East’s appointment. Apparently no one else in the Cabinet wanted to accept that position. On the evening the Member for St. Ann's East was sworn into office, the Prime Minister declared on national television that he had noticed the Member’s capacity when he was making a spectacular contribution on prison reform, although the Prime Minister admitted on the television that the Member had no managerial experience of any kind. But TV6 later indicated that the Member for St. Ann's East was indeed a business administrator. Of course, we must believe TV6 and Natalie Williams.

At the same time this was happening in San Fernando, and this is the crux of the matter—there are public servants queuing up at the courts with the help of people like Anand Ramlogan, the Member for Siparia and other prominent attorneys to take this Government to task for discrimination, victimization, intimidation and maladministration, and they are winning. Mr. Speaker, when we got into our shirts and ties and went to the court waiting for the Member for San Fernando East to present himself to be cross-examined on those important matters, he fled to St. Kitts.

Mr. Speaker, Marlene Coudray made the most alarming revelations but they went unanswered and uncontested. The Member for San Fernando East did not make a move to clear his good name in that matter, so we are left to come to that painful conclusion that Marlene Coudray was correct. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, that is related to industrial relations because the Prime Minister was found guilty, effectively, of undermining the processes of industrial relations that relate to transferring and deploying labour and so on. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, that approach by the Government to undermine the institutions of industrial relations has now placed them squarely on their knees, at the hands of the trade union movement, which is now threatening a 48-hour general strike in Trinidad and Tobago. Trade union leaders are saying that this time, like the last time, if the Member for San Fernando East threatens to send them to Nelson Island, they are prepared for that.

Mr. Speaker, this is the hypocrisy we get in the Government, and the Prime Minister shocked me a few nights ago when he appeared at the opening of the Public Service Initiative Reform Plan and announced—it was in the newspaper, and I quote:

“PM to public servants: Have No Fear”

[*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, I have to wipe this smile off my face because Marlene Coudray dragged this Prime Minister’s name through the mud in San Fernando with accusations of undermining public service regulations. He said to public servants, of all people, to have no fear. Mr. Speaker, I would advise my friend from San Fernando East to write a note to Miss Marlene Coudray and say: “Please, fear not.” In fact, he could use the little piece of paper the Member for Point Fortin resigned on. He could write on the next side and send it back.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the matters at hand are as follows: It is contempt for labour by this Government and it is the undermining of industrial relations institutions by this Government. Never forget, Mr. Speaker, when they came into office, within days, they were in the courthouse where the court ruled that they appointed the Chairman of the Cipriani Labour College unlawfully. That is how they introduced themselves to the labour movement. They removed the representatives of labour from the state enterprise boards and brought in their own, so a man who was president of the cane farmers was suitably qualified to sit at the port, because they ship cane, I imagine. This is the undermining of the representatives of labour, the trade union movement and their deliberate arrogance in dealing with workers. Mr. Speaker, the deployment of the police, army and coast guard to Point Fortin would come back to haunt them.

We wish the new Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development well, but we take note that this new Minister is untutored in the area of industrial and labour relations. He has no known expertise in labour and industrial relations and he would have to learn, of course, and learn quickly. We advise him to meet and treat with the workers, as with the employers, fairly.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Anthony Roberts): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to some of the comments my colleague has made in his wild search for issues. In his Motion he talked about worsening and rapidly escalating incidents of industrial unrest in Trinidad and Tobago. But, Mr. Speaker, since the Members on the other side were fired from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago they have gone on a rampage, maligning and ridiculing Trinidad and Tobago in an attempt to destroy the credibility and the good name of our beautiful country. One would never believe that this is the same country they pretended to love at one time. But today, Mr. Speaker, I intend to set the record straight.

I wish to state, categorically, that there is absolutely no industrial unrest in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] The Members on the other side of this House must be made to understand that this Government emanated from a political party, which made its position very clear when it came to industrial relation practices. Article 2(8) of our party's constitution states that one of its objectives is to encourage proper industrial relations practices and effective democratic trade unionism, and that is what we are guided by.

They must be reminded as well of the PNM's rich history of working with the trade union movement, enacting the necessary legislation over the years, creating the framework for what my friend knows today. My friend must appreciate that the UNC recently appeared on the political stage of Trinidad and Tobago. So, when the Member talks about failure on the part of this Government to implement adequate and critical policy measures, what is he talking about? In fact, what has the UNC done during its tenure? They have spent six years and have contributed very little to industrial relations in this country. [*Desk thumping*] They spent half their time in government engaging the public purse, virtually raping the Treasury of this country.

Mr. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, a point of order, please?

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order?

Mr. Ramsaran: Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: No, I do not think so. Member, please continue.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, Standing Order 36(5), I was a member of UNC government and I am being accused of raping the Treasury—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, if you check May's you will see if you talk about a party that is okay, but you cannot single out an individual. *[Interruption]* No, no, May's is quite clear. If you wish I can show you the relevant part. *[Interruption]* Please continue, Member.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]* That is the effects of the truth, Mr. Speaker.

As a PNM Government we would be both insensitive and unrealistic if we pretended not to observe some degree of agitation and vociferous articulation occurring by some sectors of the labour movement, as they seek to establish improved terms and conditions including benefits and enhancement for workers. We on this side have absolutely no problem with that once this is being done free from violence.

What they cannot understand is that all this is occurring against a backdrop of sustained economic growth and a stable democracy that permits legitimate expression. Mr. Speaker, is the Member against such expressions? In this scenario, workers appear to be engaging in rather noisy picketing in furtherance and pursuance of what they consider to be legitimate disputes, which they may have with their employers, which includes the Government.

As a Government, we cannot agree with any statement that suggest failure on our part to implement adequate and critical policy measures and to adhere to established and proper industrial relation principles. Mr. Speaker, that is total nonsense! However, we would admit that there might be a perception that some of the collective bargaining activities we see today, both in the private and public sector, are not moving at a swift enough pace, or that proposals made are not to the satisfaction of the involved workers. But there are no situations where the government, as employer, is failing to meet and treat with workers and their representatives. So that any belief that there is an undue delay is not correct.

We must ensure that any agreement secured with the representative trade unions must be honoured and maintained. Therefore, as we proceed with negotiations we must do so with sound analyses. This clinical and analytical approach would have assisted tremendously in our ability to secure and execute agreements with the public sector trade unions and associations for approximately 75,000 employees.

May I advise this honourable House that a broad-based standing tripartite committee on labour matters involving the social partners has been mandated to, among other things, examine the industrial relations system in Trinidad and

Critical Policy Measures
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, April 02, 2004

Tobago in light of international economic trends, with a view to recommending ways of strengthening it. Also, to review contemporary trends and the practices in human resource management and industrial relations and their impact on the industrial relations in Trinidad and Tobago.

When consideration is given to our approaches and initiatives, if even there are some inadequacies, they could and must not be linked with any question regarding policy measures. Trade disputes that arise and are escalated from a bilateral stage are well managed by the secondary and tertiary institutions of the conciliation unit of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, as well as the Industrial Court.

Mr. Speaker, as the Government we will continue to strive and, hopefully, with the cooperation of everyone, would maintain industrial stability and foster meaningful investment in Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.51 p.m.