

*Leave of Absence**Friday, May 14, 2004***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, May 14, 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 San Fernando West (Hon. D. Seukeran) as well as the hon. Member for St. Joseph, (Mr. G. Yetming) asking for leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

**PETITION****High Court Action S/868/2004**

**Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition on behalf of the hon. Member for Siparia. I ask that the Clerk be allowed to read the petition.

*Petition read.*

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I want to know whether the Member of Parliament for Siparia was in fact acting as attorney or counsel for the petitioner, and if that is so, whether it is proper for the Member of Parliament to use the office as Member of Parliament to represent a client in this Parliament, according to May's.

**Mr. G. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, this matter is a matter for public interest and clearly in the context, the Member is merely asking by virtue of the petition that the Clerk sign an affidavit indicating that this is what transpired in this honourable House. Where does the question of conflict of interest arise?

**Mr. Speaker:** I am allowing it.*Question put.**The House divided:*      Ayes 10      Noes 16

AYES

Singh, G.

Dookeran, W.

*High Court Action*

*Friday, May 14, 2004*

Ramnath, K.

Rafeeq, Dr. H.

Sharma, C.

Partap, H.

Nanan, Dr. A.

Panday, S.

Baksh, N.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

NOES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Khan, Hon. F.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Williams, Hon. E.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Bereaux, H.

Roberts, Hon. A.

James, Hon. E.

Hart, Hon. E.

Callender, Hon. S.

Job-Davis, Hon. E.

Hinds, F.

Achong, L.

*Question negatived.*

**Mr. Ramnath:** Shame on you! Shame!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please! Order!

**Mr. Valley.** Mr. Speaker, I want to refer my colleagues to the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of May's at page 363. I want the honourable House to know that the Government would support the petition if any other Member of the Opposition were to bring it. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please! Hon. Members, I am not going to allow the sitting of this House to degenerate this afternoon. I am pleading with you, please behave yourselves.

#### PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Central Marketing Agency for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Central Marketing Agency for the period January 01, 1991 to August 16, 1991. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

1. Seventh Report of the Police Complaints Authority for the period May 01, 2002 to September 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
2. Second report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the non-receipt of financial statements of the Board of Industrial Training for the years ended December 31, 1995 to December 31, 1998. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. First report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the non-receipt of financial statements of the Board of Industrial Training for the years ended December 31, 1999 to December 31, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers 4 and 5 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

4. Financial statements of the Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

##### **Russel Latapy High School (Information on)**

- 68. Dr. Adesh Nanan** (*Tabaquite*) on behalf of Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

- A. Would the hon. Minister of Education state:
- (i) the estimated and the actual costs for constructing, equipping and furnishing the Russel Latapy High School;
  - (ii) the start up and completion dates of constructing, furnishing and equipping of this school;
  - (iii) the number of students the school was built to accommodate and the actual number presently accommodated?
- B. Could the Minister state:
- (i) the name/s of the persons/companies and directors of each company awarded contract/s for constructing, equipping and furnishing of the school;
  - (ii) whether tenders were invited for the contracts awarded and if so, the bids made by each tenderer;
  - (iii) the procedure and criteria used to award each contract?

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Mr. Speaker, I would like this honourable House to take note that the Minister who was responsible for the construction of the Ibis High School is not present.

The Russel Latapy Secondary School was constructed to provide a suitable school environment for the students and faculty of the former Port of Spain Model Secondary School or the Ibis High School, which after having been established in 2000, by the conversion of the buildings formerly housing the BH Rose furniture factory, warehouse and showroom at a cost of some \$30 million—and I want to repeat that figure—\$30 million—was finally closed after only one year of operation, in the wake of widespread criticism from the general public and prolonged protests from the parents and teachers centred around the following issues:

- Unsuitability of location
- Inappropriate teaching facilities
- Inadequate ventilation
- The possible presence of toxic gases
- Rodent and pigeon infestation
- General “sick building” syndrome

When the ill-fated Ibis High School was finally closed due to the air quality and other quite serious concerns referred to earlier, classes were resumed, as a short-term measure, on a shift basis, in minimally suitable rented premises at the Transport and Industrial Workers Union Hall, Eastern Main Road, Laventille.

In order to achieve a satisfactory permanent solution, the Ministry of Education initiated a number of carefully executed steps which involved:

- (a) the merger of the Morvant North Government Primary School and the Morvant Central Government Primary School into one 400-place primary school;
- (b) renovation, upgrading and extension of the Morvant North Government Primary School building to accommodate the increased student and teacher intake;
- (c) relocation of the Ibis High School to the site of the Morvant Central Government Primary School and its re-designation as Russel Latapy High School;
- (d) renovation, upgrading and extension of the Morvant Central Government Primary School (now re-designated the Russel Latapy High School) to facilitate its conversion to secondary school standard.

The estimated and actual costs for constructing, equipping and furnishing the Russel Latapy Secondary School are as follows:

	Construction	Furnishing/Equipment
Original Estimated Cost	\$8.7 million	\$1.0 million
Actual Cost	\$21.3 million	\$0.985 million

The original scope of works entailed the renovation, remodelling and upgrade of the Morvant Central Primary School to accommodate the Ibis High School facilities, which, owing to severe constraints imposed by the converted factory/warehouse site, had been criticized by the stakeholders as considerably below par. Although normally provided, the specialist rooms so essential for the development and enrichment of the students' cultural, creative and physical expression, had been tried during the year of operation and found wanting.

The increases over the original estimated cost occurred mainly because:

- (a) the original estimated cost was concerned principally with resiting the Ibis High School, as it was then, to the new location;

- (b) the original budgeted figure approved by Cabinet was an estimated figure at the conceptual stage of the project life cycle.

However, the year of operation allowed the staff of the Ibis High School and the Curriculum Division of the Ministry to reformulate and refine the range and scope of subjects and curriculum offerings to more adequately cater to the special abilities and needs of the students assigned to the school. This required upgraded facilities for technology education, science, visual and performing arts and the physical education curriculum, far more extensive than that which had been envisaged for the Ibis High School earlier. The other reasons for the variations for the construction costs were:

- (a) Additional excavation for improved foundations design;
- (b) Increase in refurbishment works because the Morvant Central site was more severely termite ridden than expected;
- (c) Increases in the gross floor areas of science laboratories, home economics and agricultural science laboratories to meet the curriculum needs;
- (d) Construction of four new two-storey blocks of approximately 17,083 square feet additional blocks;
- (e) Multi-purpose hall, cafeteria, male and female toilets and changing rooms;
- (f) Administrative building (including the principal's office);
- (g) Additional extra work, e.g. fencing, paving, ramps for physically challenged access;
- (h) Enhanced security, upgraded fencing and booths to conform with recently upgraded requirements;
- (i) Playing facilities.

The final cost of the school compares favourably with the final cost figures of similar secondary facilities commissioned recently which are \$25 million for secondary schools—and I want to repeat, that was the going price at that time, \$25 million for secondary schools—and \$7.5 million for primary schools of similar size under the recent World Bank Primary School projects.

The start up and completion dates for constructing, furnishing and equipping the Russel Latapy Secondary School were as follows:

	Start-up Date	Completion Date
Construction (8 months)	July 2002	March 2003
Furnishing/Equipping (two months – during the vacation period in accordance with the industry norm)	July 2003	September 2003

The school was constructed to accommodate 500 students. At present, the enrolment is 275. Over 200 students were transferred to other schools during the construction period and they have remained at those schools. As the annual Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) results are released, this capacity would be achieved.

With respect to part (b) of the question, regarding the name/s of the persons/companies and directors of each company awarded contract/s for constructing, equipping and furnishing of the school, I would like to state as follows:

SERVICE PROVIDED	COMPANY
For the provision of Construction Services	Bencon Limited
For the provision of Agricultural Science equipment	Signal Laboratory and Medical Supplies
For the provision of music equipment	Herman Guppy Trinidad and Tobago Instruments Limited
For the provision of equipment for beauty culture	Susan's 2000 Limited Island Beauty Equipment Company Limited
For the provision of equipment for physical education	Kenny's Sports Centre Limited Bajnath Sports and Sports and Games Limited
For the provision of equipment for food and nutrition	Aga Khan International Cost Plus Ten Lewis' Appliances Limited
For the provision of equipment and furniture for clothing and textiles	G. Paul Sewing Machines Bradford Trading and Fakoory's

SERVICE PROVIDED	COMPANY
For the provision of classrooms	Caribbean Sheet and Tabular Industries Limited (CASAT) Metal Designs Concepts–Universal Metal (MDC-UM) Lee's Manufacturing

In connection with the tendering procedures for the construction works, the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC) invited tenders according to their procedures and the contract was awarded to Bencon Limited. In the case of furniture and equipment, there is a list of approved bonded contractors issued by the Central Tenders Board and those were the persons/companies which were used, except in those cases where the items needed were not subject to those measures. Procurement on the open market through the ministerial tenders committee, as provided in the legislation, was therefore used in those instances.

With respect to the names of the directors of the companies, this information resides with the Registrar of Companies and is available for public scrutiny at their offices.

The procedure and criteria used to:

- (a) evaluate each tender; and
- (b) award each contract were as follows:
  - price
  - adherence to specifications
  - time for delivery
  - past performance of companies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am surprised there are no supplementals. I would like to ask a question on Ibis High School. Is that possible, Mr. Speaker? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

### **Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP)**

**73. Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (Siparia)** asked the hon. Minister of Education:



Would the Minister 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?

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I wish to explain to the Members of this honourable House that the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) is a process which involves a comprehensive system of assessments that employs a number of strategies and methods of observing, collecting and evaluating teaching and learning activities relevant to the delivery of the curriculum in our nation's schools. The Continuous Assessment Programme has been developed in response to the observation of the National Task Force on Education in the Education Policy Paper 1993—2003 that there was—

“a virtual absence of specified attainment benchmarks (especially in the early years of the primary school) which can guide teaching and learning, on the one hand and on the other, promote the necessary diagnostic, remedial and preventative interventions critical to the development of an effective and efficient education system.”

CAP was introduced as a pilot programme in September 1998 and Cabinet later approved the system wide phasing in of the programme from September, 2001. Since taking office, we have worked assiduously to revitalize the CAP as we had observed that many of the administrative and institutional arrangements which were necessary to sustain the programme, were not in place after some three years of its operation.

The CAP operates at the level of the classroom; assessment is literally linked to the curriculum and in the Continuous Assessment Programme, teachers set attainment benchmarks for the curriculum for each term and work with students towards meeting them. Teachers monitor by developing assessment activities that provide information on how the students are progressing towards the defined curriculum standards. CAP encourages the use of a cross-thematic approach to instruction and uses the portfolio to support project activities. It also aims to recognize students' efforts and participation as well as record performance of students, class and schools.

CAP is a system that formalizes and streamlines the activities that already take place in the school and therefore to speak of delays, as has been suggested by the

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Member for Siparia, is inaccurate. CAP results in a continuous improvement in education quality in schools. It is a process of continuous improvement. The process is being institutionalized in the primary school system. The essential features of this process are:

- (a) The conduct of auditory and visual screening of students in early primary school years.
- (b) Development and maintenance of a student profile through a cumulative record card system.
- (c) Continuous assessment of students by teachers using a menu of varied institutional and assessment strategies.
- (d) Documentation of this student performance data.
- (e) Conduct of rational tests to generate data to assess individual student performance so that early remediation interventions can be planned.

Primary schools have therefore been continuously engaged in undertaking the tasks of refining their processes and updating the skills through continuous training and this is being done on a phased basis, as the available resources will allow. The Ministry of Education has in place a CAP management committee and an administrative committee for the effective management of the entire process.

For the benefit of the Member for Siparia and the wider national community, I would now list the activities which the Continuous Assessment Programme has undertaken since January 2002:

<b>Step</b>	<b>Implementation Date January 2002 to March 2004</b>
Monitoring	March 19, 2002
CAP Administration Meetings	Monthly
CAP Management Meetings	Monthly
School Supervisors visits to schools	Ongoing
<b><u>Distribution of Resources</u></b>	
Provision of photocopiers to assist teachers in their preparation of material for classes	60 in 2002 40 in 2003

<b>Step</b>	<b>Implementation Date January 2002 to March 2004</b>
Review of student report books	Completed in December, 2003
Review and reprinting of Student Cumulative Record Card (CRC)	2003
Distribution of CRC to schools	September to December, 2003
<b><u>Introduction of Student Support Services</u></b>	
<p>To ensure the systematic provision of diagnostic/prescriptive support to address the psycho/social, emotional and material needs of students to maximize their learning potential. It will ensure that all students obtain the requisite assistance to enable them to do well at school and develop holistically.</p>	
Manage the delivery of guidance counselling and special needs support services	2004 – New division to be established in the Ministry of Education
Diagnostic Prescriptive Officers continue to work with schools	On-going
<p>Introduction of National Policy on School Health</p> <p>Process Owner – Ministry of Health – working in conjunction with the Ministry of Education</p>	<p>Approval given in December 2003 – by Cabinet. Work ongoing</p>

Step	Implementation Date January 2002 to March 2004
<p><b><u>Training Programmes</u></b></p> <p>Re-orientation programmes have been held in the North Eastern and St. Patrick Education Districts</p> <p>Workshops on Assessment Literacy held with School Supervisors and Schools</p>	<p>2003 and April 29, 2004</p> <p>2003 and 2004 as requested</p>
<p><b><u>National Tests</u></b></p> <p>Examination Dates</p>	<p>June 25, 2002</p> <p>June 24, 2003</p>

With respect to the date by which the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) would be fully implemented, I would like this honourable House to know that the Ministry of Education continues to work apace on completing the necessary infrastructural arrangements to support a full institutionalization of CAP by the academic year 2004—2005. Efficient record keeping is an integral part of CAP. Accordingly, there remain some 66 schools to be provided with photocopiers which will be procured by September, 2004. The Information Technology (IT) capability in primary schools will be strengthened to facilitate electronic storage and processing of data, and for this fiscal year 2004, the Ministry has received approval for the creation of 486 clerical officers to be placed in primary schools to lend clerical/secretarial support to the Principals.

The Ministries of Education and Health will continue their collaboration towards the implementation of the National Policy on School Health. By 2005, it is expected that auditory and visual screening for primary school entrants will be fully on stream.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Details of SEA Examination**

**76. Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar** (*Siparia*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Would the Minister list:

- (i) the total number of students who wrote the SEA examinations in 2002 and 2003 and the number expected to write in 2004;

- (ii) the number of students who scored less than 30 per cent and 50 per cent in the 2002 and 2003 SEA examinations according to education districts;
- (iii) the steps and date/s of each step taken, since January 2002 to address the educational needs of children who scored less than 50 per cent in the SEA examinations and entered into secondary schools;
- (iv) the steps and date/s of each step taken since January 2002 to reduce the number of children scoring less than 50 per cent in the SEA examinations?

**The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning):** Mr. Speaker, the details of the placement of students at the Secondary Entrance Assessment for 2002 and 2003 and the number of students registered for the SEA 2004 are as follows:

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS
2002	21,448
2003	20,669
2004	20,912

With respect to the number of students who scored less than 30 per cent in the 2002 and 2003 SEA by education district, the following are the figures:

YEAR	EDUCATION DISTRICT	NO. OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED LESS THAN 30% IN SEA
2002	CARONI	444
	NORTH EASTERN	350
	PORT OF SPAIN AND ENVIRONS	783
	ST. GEORGE EAST	765
	ST. PATRICK	376
	SOUTH EASTERN	401
	VICTORIA	336
	TOBAGO	177

For 2003, the following are the figures:

YEAR	EDUCATION DISTRICT	NO. OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED LESS THAN 30% IN SEA
2003	CARONI	344
	NORTH EASTERN	231

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<b>YEAR</b>	<b>EDUCATION DISTRICT</b>	<b>NO. OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED LESS THAN 30% IN SEA</b>
	PORT OF SPAIN AND ENVIRONS	410
	ST. GEORGE EAST	543
	ST. PATRICK	198
	SOUTH EASTERN	182
	VICTORIA	166
	TOBAGO	72

Students who scored less than 50 % for the year 2002:

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>EDUCATION DISTRICT</b>	<b>NO. OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED LESS THAN 50% IN SEA</b>
2002	CARONI	1,088
	NORTH EASTERN	781
	PORT OF SPAIN AND ENVIRONS	1,484
	ST. GEORGE EAST	2,011
	ST. PATRICK	894
	SOUTH EASTERN	879
	VICTORIA	840
	TOBAGO	458

Students who scored less than 50% for the year 2003:

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>EDUCATION DISTRICT</b>	<b>NO. OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED LESS THAN 50% IN SEA</b>
2003	CARONI	837
	NORTH EASTERN	503
	PORT OF SPAIN AND ENVIRONS	998
	ST. GEORGE EAST	1,381
	ST. PATRICK	597

YEAR	EDUCATION DISTRICT	NO. OF STUDENTS WHO SCORED LESS THAN 50% IN SEA
	SOUTH EASTERN	557
	VICTORIA	472
	TOBAGO	359

It is to be noted that the figures presented above would indicate some type of double counting since the students who scored less than 30 per cent would also have scored less than 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform this honourable House that the goal of the Ministry of Education is to provide quality education for all. The steps and date/s of each step taken since January 2002 to address the educational needs of children who scored less than 50% in the SEA examinations and entered into secondary schools are as follows:

- (a) Previously these children were simply placed in Form I to follow the regular school curriculum or placed in Form I Special classes where they were taught remedial English and Mathematics alongside the normal curriculum. From 2002, however, the remedial education programme was intensified and 402 remedial teachers were hired, on contract, to provide the necessary support in schools to meet the needs of children in these special classes.
- (b) Numeracy and literacy camps have been conducted in secondary schools for students necessary remediation. These programmes were initiated during the 2002 July—August vacation and are ongoing in order to cater for individual difference of students.
- (c) An Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) has been introduced to assist students with emotional and attitudinal problems. This has been facilitated through the provision of training to three batches of teachers from a cross-section of schools. SERVOL has assisted the Ministry of Education in the delivery of this training.
- (d) The Ministry also obtained Cabinet's approval for a unique Alternative Programme of Study (APS) for under-achieving and low-achieving students. The APS provided a comprehensive approach to meeting the varying needs, challenges and interests of these special students with the aim of providing them with the necessary life skills to ensure productive

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living. Through these APS programmes, students are provided with options which would:

1. motivate them to further learning;
2. develop positive self-esteem;
3. enhance feelings of self-worth;
4. enable them to experience success as learners; and
5. position them on a path to make substantive contributions to society as responsible and caring citizens.

**2.15 p.m.**

A critical element of all these programmes is monitoring and evaluation. This exercise is conducted by the Division of Educational Research and Evaluation in the ministry.

With respect to the steps taken since January 2002 to address the educational needs of children who scored less than 50 per cent in the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) examination, the ministry moved swiftly to reassess the approach that was taken to meet the special learning needs of this category of students. The steps taken were as follows:

- (1) Staff of the diagnostic and prescriptive services of the Ministry of Education have been conducting basic auditory and visual screening of students at the primary level.
- (2) A major boost for our efforts was obtained recently with the inauguration of the Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CCETT). This centre targets primary schools and will provide intensive programmes in the teaching of reading and the professional development and retraining of teachers in curriculum delivery and remedial strategies.
- (3) The Ministry of Education has also embarked on the analysis of SEA results by sex, school and district and dissemination of reports to principals and teachers. The Ministry of Education is encouraging the use of assessment and examination data in making decisions about the teaching/learning processes in the nation's schools. Research has indicated that data-driven decision-making leads to improved student learning and performance, as well as to teachers adopting best practices in their teaching.



- (4) With our focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), from birth to eight years, the unit has been expanded from eight curriculum facilitators to 17 curriculum facilitators, as well as the unit is expected to have assigned new school supervisors and clerical staff for enlarged programme delivery.

In September 2002, a pilot transition project began in primary schools in the various education districts. This programme is ongoing and seeks to make diagnosis of the educational needs of pupils in infant years one and two. To date, selected schools in Port of Spain and environs, North Eastern and Victoria education districts have benefited. The Ministry of Education is currently conducting a survey of ECCE providers and has hired 27 data collectors to administer and complete the survey. Survey data will allow the ministry to further enhance and broaden programme delivery to our young children and better prepare them for lifelong learning.

- (5) Continuous assessment continues to be a critical form of evaluation of student learning at the primary level. Through the CAP, teachers are encouraged to implement various methods of assessment to implement various modes of curriculum delivery to meet the varying learning styles and pace of students to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and to remediate learning deficiencies of students.
- (6) The Ministry of Education had been awarding scholarships and promoting and providing professional development programmes for school staff to enhance their knowledge and skills and to update the tools required for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To date, approximately 600 staff members from the primary school level have received their Bachelor of Education Degree at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. These graduates are expected to be the principals and vice principals of our primary schools.
- (7) Provision of funds and the utilization of these funds under the School Improvement Programme have allowed some primary schools to establish computer rooms, libraries, music rooms and resource centres with the aim of improving students' achievement.
- (8) Curriculum facilitators in the various subject areas at the primary school level have been working with teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in the teaching of the various subjects. This work includes sharing remedial strategies with teachers who have students with learning challenges in their classes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, questions Nos. 77, 82, 83, 86, 88 and 99 would be answered in accordance with Standing Order 19(7).

Questions for written responses are on the Order Paper. These responses should be passed to the Clerk for circulation.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, there are several questions on the Order Paper since December. I ask that you use your good office to prevail upon the Government to answer these questions.

*Question time having expired, questions Nos. 77, 82, 83, 86, 88 and 99 were not dealt with.*

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

#### **Details of CXC**

77. Would the hon. Minister of Education state:
- (i) the number of students who wrote each of the subjects offered by CXC in 2002 and 2003 and the number expected to write in 2004;
  - (ii) the number of students who failed each subject at CXC in 2002 and 2003 according to education districts;
  - (iii) the steps taken, including the date/s of each step since January 2002 to reduce the number of CXC failures?

#### **Shiva Boys and Parvati Girls Colleges**

82. Would the hon. Minister of Education state:
- (i) the steps and dates of each step taken since January 2002 to construct the Shiva Boys and Parvati Girls Colleges;
  - (ii) the reasons for the delay in construction of the Shiva Boys and Parvati Girls Colleges;
  - (iii) the estimated cost for construction of each;
  - (iv) the start up date of construction and completion date of each?

#### **Pre-Service Training Programme**

83. Would the hon. Minister of Education state:
- (i) the reasons for the termination of the pre-service training programme for teachers and the date when this was done;

- (ii) the steps and dates of each step taken to put a system in place for pre-service training for teachers and what system is being put in place and when will it commence;
- (iii) the procedure and criteria which will be utilized to select persons for the pre-service training;
- (iv) the interim measures being taken between the termination of the pre-service programme and the start up of any new system?

**Vacancies  
(School Librarian)**

**86.** Would the hon. Minister of Education state:

- (i) the number of school librarian vacancies and the schools where such vacancies exist as well as the date since each vacancy first arose;
- (ii) the steps and date/s of each step taken, since January 2002 to fill vacancies for school librarians in the nation's schools;
- (iii) the expected date when each vacancy would be filled?

**Biche High School  
(Deterioration of)**

**88.** Would the hon. Minister of Education state:

- (a) whether any steps have been taken since January 2002 to ascertain the safety of the Biche High School and if in the affirmative, what are those steps and the date/s of each step;
- (b) whether any steps have been taken to prevent deterioration of the Biche High School which may result from abandonment of same and if in the affirmative, what are those steps and the date/s of each step?

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Dr. Adesh Nanan (Tabaquite):*

**Certificate of Environmental Clearance Issue  
(Crown Point International Airport)**

- 99.** (a) Would the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment inform this House if a Certificate of Environmental Clearance was issued for the expansion of the Crown Point International Airport?
- (b) If the answer to part (a) is in the affirmative, would the Minister indicate the date the application was made and also the date the said certificate was issued?

- (c) If the answer to part (a) is in the negative, would the Minister state the reason(s) why the said certificate was not issued?

*Vide end of sitting for written answers.*

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTERS  
(LEAVE)**

**Failure of Police Authority**

**Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East):** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter as a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the failure of the police authorities to diligently investigate and bring to closure the finding of illicit drugs, cocaine and missiles at the home of Sen. Sadiq Baksh, a sitting Member of Parliament.

The matter is definite since it relates to the specific finding by the police authority of cocaine and missiles in a water tank at the home of Sen. Sadiq Baksh on July 17, 2002.

The matter is urgent since from then to now, the police has not been able to conclude its investigation and report finally on this matter.

The matter is of public importance since speculation exists surrounding the circumstances in which the cocaine and missiles were found in the water tank of the hon. Member. Until the investigations are concluded and a final report made, the public image and reputation of the Senator and the country continue to be affected.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please. Hon. Members, the leave for which the hon. Member for Caroni East seeks is denied.

**Mr. Ramnath:** It is all right to ship cocaine to Toronto and London. That is my problem. It is a waste of time. I could listen to the rulings in this House? I could say more outside than inside.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Couva South, you are disrupting the proceedings of this House.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Your rulings are questionable.

**Mr. Speaker:** You have a way of dealing with that.

**Mr. Ramnath:** I would move the motion myself.

**Diplomatic Pouch**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche):** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to

move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter as a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the shocking and unprecedented discovery and seizure of cocaine in a diplomatic pouch from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Port of Spain, bound for a diplomatic mission in the United States.

The matter is definite since it refers to the specific and extraordinary find of narcotics in the sealed and officially secured property of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

The matter is urgent since it suggests a breakdown of supervision in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The matter is of public importance since this revelation has the potential to bring dishonour to Trinidad and Tobago in the eyes of the international community.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the leave for which the hon. Member for Oropouche seeks is denied. [*Interruption*]

I would direct that you do not record that in Hansard and I am directing the press not to record or publish the comment made by the Member for Couva South.

#### **VENTURE CAPITAL (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Venture Capital Act, 1994 to remove certain restrictions and to provide for the further development of the venture capital regime and industry, [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance*]; read the first time.

#### **FOOD AND DRUGS (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend Part II of the Third Schedule of the Food and Drugs Act, Chap. 30:01 to provide for controls on the distribution of certain chemical substances used in the manufacture of illicit drugs, [*The Minister of Health*]; read the first time.

#### **PESTICIDES AND TOXIC CHEMICALS (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act, 1979 to strengthen the regulatory framework as it relates to pesticides and toxic chemicals, [*The Minister of Health*]; read the first time.

#### **AGRICULTURAL CENSUS ORDER**

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Jarrette Narine):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following motion standing in the name of the Minister of Planning and Development:

*Agricultural Census Order*  
[HON. J. NARINE]

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*Whereas* it is provided by section 5 of the Statistics Act that the Minister may by Order direct that a census shall be taken in Trinidad and Tobago, or any part thereof of any class of inhabitant and that the Order may specify—

- (a) the dates on or before which the census is to be taken; and
- (b) the matters in respect of which information is to be obtained in the census:

*And whereas* it is provided by the section that the Order be subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament:

*And whereas* the Minister has on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2004 made the Agricultural Census Order, 2004 directing that an agricultural census be held between the 1<sup>st</sup> day of May, 2004 and the 30<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2004:

*Be it resolved* That the Agricultural Census Order, 2004 be approved.

By definition from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), I would like to read into the record, the definition of an agricultural census as written by the FAO Statistical Development Series 6 conducting agricultural census and surveys. An agricultural census is a large scaled periodic statistical operation for the collection of quantitative information on the structure of agriculture.

The last agricultural census was done in 1982. Most countries usually do an agricultural census as recommended by the FAO every 10 years. However, these censuses are not compulsory and it depends on the affordability of the developing country or any country. Therefore, I am not here to make excuses for anyone between 1982 and 2004, but to ask this House by affirmative resolution, that we do an agricultural census in 2004, which is critical and important to the future of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is necessary to have this agricultural census approved by both Houses. The census regulations deal with the particulars of items to be collected in the census; the duties of the staff engaged in the census exercise and the confidential provisions of the Statistics Act which means that everyone who has to be involved in this exercise would be given an oath of secrecy. This means that the questionnaire would be submitted to the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and persons are bound by the oath of secrecy, that information given would not be divulged to the general public because it is a collective thing. As I said, in most countries agricultural censuses are done once every 10 years. In the absence of that, it goes for longer periods and during that period the CSO's department would continue to monitor. This meant that from 1982 to 1992 and beyond, the Central

Statistical Office in Trinidad and Tobago has been doing censuses for different areas in agriculture, but not a total agricultural census. It simply means that since the last agricultural census many changes have occurred in the domestic agricultural sector. Over the years we have seen, not based on statistics, but observation, that there was a decline in agricultural production and productivity.

We have found recently that the average age of our farmers is 60 years. Hence the reason the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has introduced a pilot programme called Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA) which was started last year or late the year before, where we are encouraging young persons between the ages of 17 to 25 years, to have a two-month training programme. Those persons who come on board for the two-month training programme would then have the opportunity to move on to a nine-month training programme where they would be trained in the various aspects of managing farms. Persons coming out of that programme—for those who do not have—would have Phase 3 to apply for agricultural lands. We have found that a number of young persons whose parents are the owners of agricultural land are entering YAPA, so that they can take from their parents and grandparents and carry on the agricultural activities on their private property.

The reason for having this agricultural census is based on what I have said, that is a decline in the productivity of agriculture. The FAO has also asked countries to do an agricultural census between 2000 and 2010. We are fulfilling our commitment to the FAO by doing this agricultural census. In 1997, there was an attempt to have an agricultural census but it was aborted, probably because of funding. In 1998, a livestock census was started in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. I was given that information when I went to the ministry in November of last year. While we need to conduct this agricultural census, it means that it is an important means of measuring food and agricultural statistics. The census is also intended to give basic quantitative information on the nature, structure and function of the agricultural food system. It is important not only to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources but also the entire population. The information of the census would tell us about agricultural production, the characteristics of the operation and the kind of agricultural activities in the various regions of this country. You would realize that agriculture is mostly rural.

We need to know the number of farms in Trinidad and the kinds of farms. For instance there are pig farms and other types of farms. We need to know where they are located. There are farms located in areas in Trinidad that may interfere with the environment. We need to know the nature of those businesses, whether

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they are food crops, cocoa, coffee, or livestock such as bees or poultry. We need to know the age and gender of the people involved in farming and whether there are family plots. I grew up in a family where everyone, including my grandparents, was involved in agriculture. We need to know if there are joint ventures. There are areas with joint ventures for agricultural projects. We need to know whether corporations are doing agriculture and what type. We also need to know what the government farms are doing. There are livestock farms in Aripo. That did not come overnight. That took long years. I worked in agriculture since 1963. Representing the workers there, I can tell you the type of farming they did and the standard of the agricultural projects. Today, it is sad, but we need to have this census in order to find out what is taking place.

We need to know the levels and kind of output generated by these farms. As a matter of fact, the exercise is simply about counting and getting information about what is happening in the agricultural sector. Although from time to time CSO has done small projects to give us information in the ministry, we need to have this done totally. It is very costly to do so. It cannot be done on a regular basis. The point is that you need to put money in the budget to do these things. In this year's budget, the Government has provided \$5.5 million to do so. I was sitting on that side when you were sitting on this side and I had never seen a budget for an agricultural census. I assure you that our expenditure this year would include that \$5.5 million. It would cost more but I would come to that.

We need to know the size of these farms and the production system being used. In the 22 years there have been changes. Where more persons were employed on farms in those days, modern methods and technology have proven—for example, because of the mechanism, some of the people in the poultry industry employ less people and they are more productive and efficient. There are many poultry farmers all over the country. It is very labour intensive. Today, there are modern facilities and we have increased production and efficiency in that sector.

We also need to know what kind of tenancy arrangements have been involved in agriculture. People rent lands for agriculture; there are leased lands both in the private and public sector; there are freehold and squatting lands and State lands. During the last two years of this Government's tenure in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, I checked the land administration office this morning and 230 new leases were given during this short period. The amount of land given out was approximately 450 hectares; approximately two hectares or five acres of land per person are recommended by the University of the West



Indies. We are pushing ahead trying to get new persons involved in agriculture. The Government has accelerated its land distribution policy, so that I can report to you this afternoon that 230 persons actually received leases and 200 applications have gone to Cabinet and very soon the leases would be given to them.

I am not speaking about transfer of land or persons whose parents died long before and the ministry had a commitment to them. Recently, you would have seen a gentleman who waited 28 years to get a lease. This is unacceptable. This Government is moving very fast to get new land leased to persons. Some of them have been squatting on the land for years and they are now receiving their benefits. This does not include lands of Caroni (1975) Limited. This is state-owned land under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

This information would help us make the relevant decisions and enable us to move the agricultural sector forward. At this point in time, I have heard many persons speaking about agriculture. In the Upper House, one person said that nothing was done for agriculture so we should not have a census. That is exactly the reason we should have a census. We need to have information in order to make decisions and policy decisions need to be made by that.

What are the benefits to be obtained from the agricultural census exercise? We need to ask that question. The information from the agricultural census would facilitate the agricultural planning and policy decision-making process. Once you have that information, you would be able to do proper planning and make decisions that would be acceptable to everyone. The census would also allow the academic institutions such as the University of the West Indies, Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry (ECIAF) at Centeno to do research and development activity. Many students come from the Caricom region to do a two-year diploma course at Centeno. Over the years—the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education would tell you that—the Government has put money to upgrade that facility in Centeno.

**Hon. Member:** That was part of our plan.

**Hon. J. Narine:** You can only plan. You cannot take any action. That is your problem. You planned and they had nothing in ECIAF. We have to spend money now to upgrade those facilities, just as John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, San Fernando Technical Institute and those youth camps that we spoke about the last time. We are spending money to elevate ECIAF to what it was when persons from Jamaica and other areas in the Caribbean were proud to come here and stay indoors.

**Mr. Singh:** John Humphrey.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Who is he? Whom are you talking about?

**Mr. Singh:** James Humphrey.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I am appealing to you all. The Hansard reporter is directly between you. Continue, Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I heard that name in Parliament before.

**Mr. Singh:** James Humphrey.

**Hon. J. Narine:** I thought you said John Humphrey.

This census would also assist IEKER, FAO and other organizations in planning their development and technical assistance programmes because they help countries throughout the world. In our situation in the Caribbean they need to have this data to plan their projects for the areas. It would also help in completing comprehensive information that would facilitate the ministry in determining the role of agriculture in the national economy. We keep speaking about agriculture in the national economy, but we do not have information. This census would help us do so.

It would also help us in estimating the demand for agricultural commodities in relation to our nutritional requirements. More and more people are becoming health conscious. I would draw an example. If every agriculturist in Trinidad plants pumpkin, then we would be in a bad situation. That information would tell the agricultural sector what types of markets are available and the pricing situation would be more on a level playing field, so that the risk in agriculture would be minimized. The situation would determine the production required for national food security. The census would also identify and access the strengths and weaknesses of the domestic agricultural sector. This is why it is critical to have this agricultural census.

It is also conducting analysis for agricultural households in Trinidad and Tobago. In the rural community land is available and people can plant, but still they live under the poverty line because they are not well guided. Dissemination of information to these areas is critical. If you do not have the census we would not know where we are and where we should go. It would also establish the statistical framework that would facilitate ongoing surveys and special studies within the domestic agricultural sector for the CSO. From time to time, the CSO would do a study in a particular area; for instance, beekeeping or the hatcheries for egg

production or beef production and this would help them. They would be able to monitor the changes. This base we are going to put down would allow the CSO to monitor the changes taking place in the sector. It would be more informative.

The CSO has developed a modernized comprehensive national agricultural statistical information system. It is critical that the Government establish an accurate, reliable, up-to-date, comprehensive and national information system for the agricultural sector. Such an information system would help in monitoring and evaluating all development plans and projects relating to food and rural development within the country. The CSO has been doing its work very quietly and effectively. This census would help enhance that.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Registrar General's Department have developed a programme for land identification, by which we would be able to locate parcels of land using the latest geographic information system. We are in a better position today, than we were 22 years ago.

What are we measuring during this agricultural census? *[Interruption]* You would have to do that. You know where they are hidden in tanks. This would mean that we would have a complete count of the farmers who are engaged in agricultural production. That is at the level of commercial agriculture. More than that, we have argued over the years that the only statistics that we have on our gross domestic product (GDP) is where we have commercial agriculture. We do not have statistics of home-grown products. There are persons who have a small plot of land; do agriculture and sell the produce to the neighbours. While meeting with the CSO this morning, they have indicated that within one month of the completion of this agricultural census, they would be able to survey houses. Where I live I have eight mango trees in my yard and they would be able to put that on record. *[Interruption]* Ask Sadiq. "It in de tank." I have no tanks in my yard. I only have mango trees. "Yuh understand." This would help to put us in a better situation.

I think that the questionnaire has been circulated to everyone in Parliament. There are 23 sections and I do not want to go through this document to identify them. We had some of them before and others are enhanced questions, such as identification, general characteristics, demographics, employment and holdings and so on. We have included some new areas and expanded on some of the traditional ones. Some of the new areas include beekeeping which was not part of the last agricultural census. We have always said that we have some of the finest honey in the world. We have won a number of international competitions in

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London. The history is there. We have some of the best beekeeping people in Trinidad and Tobago and they are well educated. Mr. Solomon from Tobago came to me. The beekeepers hope to have a large convention tomorrow.

In this questionnaire we have also included a section on praedial larceny. If the Member for Nariva had gone through the questionnaire he would not have asked me whether we were going to deal with that. I was in Parliament when we got together and tried to formulate laws to get praedial larceny out. We were very enthusiastic about that. Offices and vehicles were sent out and it still continued to be a problem. That means we have to review it and look at other ways and means of handling this.

In that debate I made a contribution and I also spoke about logging. When logs are leaving the forested areas at 1.00 a.m. and 2.00 a.m. it is difficult to handle that. I said that there should be a time factor for transport. I do not mind if you cut, but you must transport in the day when people can see you and the police would be able to monitor the movement of logs from the forest to the sawmill. As a matter of fact, they are now doing the sawmilling in the forest. Praedial larceny has always been a bugbear for us. I think we need to amend the legislation so it could have some teeth.

Marketing information was not part of the last census. A new area is production problems and there are many issues to deal with. Since I started to work in agriculture in 1963, I found there were problems for bridges; agricultural access roads and irrigation and there are still problems. Another reason for still having problems is that additional land has been opened for agriculture in Trinidad.

There is also a part in this questionnaire for aquaculture. For years we tried to have this going. I do not feel it is off the ground. There are smallholdings doing aquaculture and the marketing is part of that. Years ago when the Japanese came here and we went to the Nariva Swamp, one Japanese asked me: Why do you not import rice at a cheap cost; produce fish and sell it at US \$5.00 per pound? It made some sense. At that time I was not in a position as a decision maker. I was a worker in the ministry that accompanied them. I remember that was a problem and they were actually telling the people in Trinidad that they have little land and they should not extend it for production that is not in keeping with the area that they have. You can produce in smaller areas and get more value for what is produced. Aquaculture is very interesting; it could take off and benefit everybody in Trinidad and Tobago.

I turn to gender information. All these years we have been saying that more women are involved in agriculture. We do not know that for a fact. This census would tell us how many women and single parents maintain their families off the little agricultural plot they have. During the last six months I have met people

from all over Trinidad that came to the agricultural office at St. Clair. Some of them were crying because they are single parents who have been utilizing state land and now they have notices to quit. We have been handling that. If you have been there for a number of years, you would have spent money to develop this land and you have a family to support, obviously, the ministry must respond to you by giving you some tenure for that land. You can find yourself in agriculture squatting on land and you cannot register as a farmer. You cannot get the incentives that are given by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources because you are not a bona fide farmer.

Another issue is that 97 per cent of the agricultural loans that we provide for the year come from the Agricultural Development Bank. The other banks in the country are not interested in loans for agriculture because of the risks. Yesterday, I heard that the ceiling for one bank is \$500,000, but the land must be valued for more than that. They would take your land and lend you up to \$500,000 and when you cannot pay back, you would be landless. The Agricultural Development Bank needs to restructure itself and make loans available for bona fide farmers, so that we can get people on board to be productive agricultural farmers. If we are to stop the people from migrating from the rural areas to the urban areas, we need to keep them there productively. They must be able to take care of their families otherwise they would leave and come to the towns.

In planning next year's budget, we are taking all these things into consideration to ensure that the amenities are given to these people in priority. Instead of buying a vehicle it is better to build an agricultural access road, so that the poor people can get out their produce and they would not have to carry it for long distances. This discourages people in agriculture. Gender information is most important.

We have also expanded education and training in agriculture in the questionnaire. Religiously every month the ministry has six areas in the country where it does training. We advertise the training and it is free. Those areas are Penal, Centeno and Sangre Grande. You name it, we do training. That has been going on and on. You need to market that training. People must understand that when they do a short course, they must move to the next level to educate themselves.

We also have location, size, tenure and land use in the questionnaire. That was not there 22 years ago. Drainage and disposal of farm waste are also there. We have an environmental problem creeping into the country. We must be able to manage that. When I was a councillor the people who did the poultry at the Tunapuna market had the vehicles and just a short distance to get to the dump site in Arima; they went up St. Michael Road and dropped everything on the side of

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the road. That created a hazard. When they did that in Mausica, vultures came to get at the carcasses of the birds. The aircraft were having problems. If a couple of birds got inside that engine there would have been a problem and there could have been a crash. We have to clear that area.

We also have water supply and irrigation which are very critical. We have flooding in the rainy season and in the dry season there is no water for agriculture. The Oropouche project which was completed by my colleague last year created an expansion of 100 acres of land, that are being given to other farmers and those who were not farming before. This year we have extended that. The duck pond project with the sluice gate is a continuation of that Oropouche project.

We have another project that would start at Moruga. Within our planning for next year, we would be creating a situation where the ministry would be providing about 35 ponds in South Trinidad and another 35 in North Trinidad, that would not only provide water for agriculture in the dry season, but also encourage aquaculture and stop some of the flooding in the areas where they plant. Because of those ponds, damming and irrigation systems, we would minimize that.

The institutions that are participating in this exercise, apart from the CSO that is responsible for conducting the agricultural census, are the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Tobago House of Assembly. You would realize that the ministry has workers who worked on censuses before; they have already been trained and therefore have the knowledge. The officers in the ministry are concerned about getting this exercise done. The support of the FAO is technical cooperation. The technical cooperation agreement and agricultural census and statistics was signed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in August 2002. We have an understanding with the FAO. Under that agreement, they have provided consultancies in training for this census and staff in the following areas: the planning and implementation activities of the census; image scanning technology with one scanner and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has bought another. This fast tracking technology would help us to facilitate the provision of preliminary data.

In 1982, when a census was done it took two years to get information because it was done manually. With this new system, in six months we would have information that we can use, not only for the agricultural sector, but also for other areas that hinge on agriculture. We hope that these scanners would go a long way. Our people have been trained to use this technology. The FAO and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago have conducted a pilot census which is a survey. The training of the staff; the questionnaire design; the development sampling methodology and what is consistent with best practices have already

been done. The integration of a gender and development approach in the design of the census has been done. The FAO has provided technical assistance for us to the tune of US \$232 million which is part of the entire project.

What has been done so far? In this year's budget we have \$5.5 million. The entire exercise would cost \$16.8 million. At the end of this fiscal year the Ministry of Planning and Development would have to find funding to pay for the other part of it. It is not only \$5.5 million as somebody asked just now.

We have the advisory committee in place and the census steering committee. CSO has had workshops in Trinidad and Tobago. It was rapping with the people in agriculture asking them what they thought. The officers with CSO have brought on board some of what the farmers wanted. It was a collective situation where the CSO did not only go out and ask a question, but they also asked farmers, some of them very educated, what was affecting them and what should be asked in the questionnaire.

**Hon. Member:** What about marijuana farming?

**Hon. J. Narine:** Ask Nariva. He would tell "yuh". The agricultural census questions have already been prepared. The Ministry of Labour had recommended 1,000 field enumerators; CSO did the interviews and based on their qualification and knowledge of the areas they were chosen. Everything that anybody does has problems with you because it is only when you have done something bad you have the experience. You would understand. [*Interruption*] I did not advertise. The CSO advertised.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please hon. Members, you are disturbing the Hansard reporter. I am again appealing to you to be quiet while the Member is making his presentation so that it can be recorded properly. Continue.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point is that there are complications in choosing people. You have to choose people from various parts in Trinidad. The people who went to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development to register for employment were screened by CSO. They were comfortable with those persons based on their qualifications and they would be employed for six weeks. They have been already trained. I need not repeat the importance of the census.

In closing, I am sincerely asking for the support of the entire House. Because of the affirmative resolution, this census is important to the people of Trinidad and Tobago; the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources; the farmers and business entrepreneurs in this country.

I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**3.15 p.m.**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take the opportunity to contribute to this debate on this measure of the Agricultural Census Order, 2004, made by the Minister under section 5 of the Statistics Act.

I propose to respond to a few matters raised by the Member for Arouca North, after he made general comments about the agricultural sector and development in that sector in the context of our national development.

I also intend to raise matters concerning my own constituency, a constituency that is actively involved in agricultural production and farming. This is how I intend to proceed.

I sat and listened attentively to the Member for Arouca North. It is difficult to be anywhere near Port of Spain and not hear this Member when he is on his feet. The Member spent a very long time informing this House of the necessity for this census at this time in our development. The Member was at pains to point out the importance of the census and explained in some detail the areas that constitute the actual census they are conducting. There were several important points raised by the Member including the need for information on all aspects of the agricultural sector and persons involved in farming at different levels and the gender composition, of course, of the farming community and locality and so forth. About 70 per cent of the time our friend from Arouca North spent telling us about the importance of this census.

An interesting question comes to the fore. The census is important now so that we can take stock of what is happening in the agricultural sector but the census was not important before they closed down Caroni (1975) Limited. [*Desk thumping*] You would think that one conducts a census before taking a rapid and dramatic action in the agricultural sector, where 70 per cent of the earnings in the agricultural sector would have come from the sugar industry. You would think that they would conduct the census and based upon the findings then take action to introduce new policy measures within the sector. But it did not happen that way. They embarked upon an action that was driven by malice and vindictiveness to close the sugar industry to one of conducting an agricultural census.

Mr. Speaker, it is really gross hypocrisy for this Government to come to the Parliament to introduce a motion to undertake an agricultural census in the aftermath of the malice shown by the Government in closing down the sugar industry and putting over 10,000 workers on the breadline. This matter comes to the Parliament at a time when persons in the agricultural sector are facing the



most challenging period in their history in the evolution of agriculture in this country. It comes at a time when persons involved in agriculture and those in agribusiness find it difficult to access funds for agriculture; it comes at a time when persons involved in agriculture find it almost impossible to get the type of infrastructural support in agricultural areas to promote marketing of their produce; it comes at a time when rural crime is also on the rise. I am happy that the Member for Arouca North raised the matter of law and order, of praedial larceny and other matters relating to law and order in a rural context, because the crime wave from the city has now hit the rural areas and you have enormous crime in the rural areas. Those are important matters, which I will deal with in detail in a while.

The other matter I intend to deal with involves the labour force in agriculture and I suggest to this House that the Government has embarked upon a policy and programme to remove people from the agricultural sector rather than to enhance labour output and productivity in the agricultural sector. They have done that by what I call the “Cepepization” of the labour market. So these are the areas to pronounce on.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill comes to the House at the end of a week that has been plagued by murder, kidnapping and by extraordinary events. During this week no less a person than the Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago, has gone on record according to the *Trinidad Guardian*, Thursday, May 13, 2004, page 7 saying Trinidad and Tobago is on the road to self-destruction. The Chief Justice is saying this; not the Opposition UNC. I do not know if they would now conduct an enquiry and send somebody around the world for damage control to deal with the Chief Justice who has now declared that Trinidad and Tobago is on the road to self-destruction. It has been a grim week. It has been a depressing week for many, and at the end of the week you marvel at the conmanship of this Government to come with a measure, to appear to the national community as if they are serious about agriculture.

To make matters worse, they laid two Bills dealing with drugs in the House. I thought it was particularly funny that at the end of this week there would be in the House Bills dealing with drugs and food. That would have been funny but it is also tragic. We on this side of the House call for the immediate removal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the aftermath of the discovery and seizure of cocaine in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at diplomatic missions of Trinidad and Tobago and abroad. Today, Members of Government and others are ashamed to carry a diplomatic passport representing Trinidad and Tobago after the events of this week.

I am laying the groundwork to discuss Vision 2020 of which their agricultural policy must be an integral part. Part of Vision 2020 is better governance. And

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better governance means that this Government is now formally and officially involved in drug trafficking. And while we call for the removal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, we also call for the immediate removal of the locally-based ambassadors of plenipotentiary who are also executive members of the PNM. [Desk thumping] One ambassador is the PRO of the PNM at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an ambassador who is at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and must now preside over an enquiry into the seizure of cocaine. When those of us on this side heard about this matter we could not believe it. The issue is governance. The issue is Vision 2020, an agricultural policy. How shameless it is today we are discussing agricultural policy when one agricultural product is being traded, exported; the Government is involved in trafficking—and really an agricultural produce. It might be illegal but it is an agricultural produce. And you would think that the Minister of Foreign Affairs should have presented this Motion because his Ministry is involved in trading in agricultural produce because this is shameless and the foreign—it must be a minimum condition for this country to repair the damage done to its image and the disgrace suffered by our citizens in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad and they have the gall to accuse the Member of Parliament for Oropouche of seeking to bring this country's reputation into disrepute when he wrote to Scotland Yard on another matter. The Minister of Foreign Affairs accused me of seeking to bring the country's name into disrepute hours before cocaine was found in a diplomatic pouch.

The matter before us deals with our national development. It is widely known and we all believe and we tout that all the time; everybody talks about agriculture being—I imagine agricultural products that are legal being an integral part of our national development strategy. Everybody says this but while all the talk, the *Central Bank Quarterly Monetary Report* tells us from March 2004, that the value of the agricultural commodities for the country's gross domestic product fell rapidly by 15 per cent over the last year. This is remarkable, that a contraction of 15 per cent in the value of agricultural commodities to our GDP in a report from the monetary policy of the Central Bank. It is very interesting. The Central Bank explains that this dramatic contraction was a result of unusually low sugar and citrus production. This is over the last year.

It is fascinating that the Government is presiding over the collapse of the agricultural sector but talks about the importance of aquaculture farming, fish and duck pond and so on. This, after they presided over the decline of the sector.

The Member for Arouca North indicated that the last time a census was conducted in Trinidad and Tobago would have been a generation ago but, of

course, skipped nicely away from that in 1982. In 1992 no census, in 2002 there was no Parliament. That was when they hijacked the Government. They came without a majority in 2002. In 2003, no sign of this. We are now in 2004. So for 30 years or more, no data upon which to plan but Caroni is closed down. Somewhere they got data that you need to close down the industry. That data came to Balisier House. It did not come from an agricultural census. No data at all but grand plans. I ask the question now: to what extent is an agricultural policy an integral part of Vision 2020? Is it important in Vision 2020 or not? Is the agricultural sector discussed, outlined, prescribed for in the grand Vision 2020? If not, then that suggests that the Government does not care about agriculture because agriculture is not part of Vision 2020. But if it is, then it suggests that you put it there without any data, information because there was no census. So agriculture is part of Vision 2020 but without any data, there is no agricultural census and on what basis they put agriculture in Vision 2020 is another hoax as Vision 2020 is in any case—we would get to the NHA and their business just now. So this hoax of Vision 2020 includes the agricultural sector where there is no census and data and we now have to find out how many men and women are working and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, our friend from Arouca North, spoke about agricultural access roads and the importance of rural development so that farmers will have the roads to transport their produce. I sat listening to this Minister and again I marvel more than I admire.

In November 2003, as the Member of Parliament for Oropouche I wrote the Hon. Minister seeking assistance from the Ministry concerning repairing agricultural access roads in the constituency of Oropouche. I have the letter on file. To this day, March 14, 2004 I have not had the courtesy of a response from the Ministry. Of course, I do not wish a personal response from the Minister. The Minister, is of course, extremely busy and would not have time to write the Member of Parliament for Oropouche. He may not have time to write at all to anyone. On November 02, 2003 I wrote the hon. Minister indicating that farmers in the Oropouche and San Francique areas have been complaining about the state of the agricultural access roads in that important part of the constituency. I called on the Minister to refer my letter to his staff so that I may meet with his staff in collaboration with the San Francique Improvement Committee. And to this day, no reply. This is not a Government that is serious about agricultural access roads.

It is quite interesting that the Government also set up an institution call NEDCO. An institution to make entrepreneurs, to assist the small man and woman

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who have not been traditionally involved in business so they can create entrepreneurs. Incidentally, while they are creating entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs are also migrating so there is no net gain in entrepreneurs. You create entrepreneurs with NEDCO and the real entrepreneurs migrate because of crime, kidnapping and murder. But among the entrepreneurs that NEDCO created is one dress designer or maker—and we believe that Cabinet Ministers are also clients who have been taken to court by NEDCO—that person is owing NEDCO \$.25 million and cannot pay back NEDCO. *[Interruption]* Yes, you are correct, Heather Jones, the Member said the name. I did not want to call the name. This designer owes \$.25 million to Government for NEDCO—this is an entrepreneur—but this designer is now the poster girl for the Caricom Single Market and Economy. There is a big ad in the Newspaper with the Caricom Single Market and Economy through which this designer is now highlighted as one of the successful business persons in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the courts may move in and seize all the dresses from this designer and may actually seize the dresses from the Ministers. I hope they are not wearing them at the time. That would be worse, that would be abuse of another order.

NEDCO was established for this purpose and interestingly when one reads the brochure from NEDCO—because I have been dealing with NEDCO over the last few weeks. I have been asking NEDCO to provide loans to the people in Oropouche. *[Interruption]* You bought a dress from Heather Jones too? Mr. Speaker, if you would focus on me. NEDCO has guidelines that it would provide loans for persons involved in vending, sewing, and dressmaking, of course, and so forth. But interestingly, NEDCO provides no loans to persons who are involved in agriculture or agribusiness. Very interesting.

When I first met the NEDCO officials they made it clear to me that they would love to provide loans to people in Oropouche but they do not provide loans for agriculture and agribusiness and so forth. I said if you want you could ask an applicant to move from making “doubles” to making “toolum” and then maybe you could provide a burger cart or something like that. No loans from NEDCO for agriculture or agribusiness. Very interesting! But you could get loans to make dress and then owe the Government a \$.25 million and then be promoted to the poster girl for the Caricom Single Market and Economy. That is the hypocrisy I am speaking about and while Ministers may point out there is an Agricultural Development Bank, there is a fundamental difference between the requirements and guidelines of the Agricultural Development Bank and the guidelines and

requirements for NEDCO. There is a big difference in accessing and the amount of money and who NEDCO is supposed to be targeting.

I have said before in this Parliament that this Government has a habit of taking good ideas and destroying them. NEDCO is not a brainchild of the PNM government. Institutions like NEDCO have been around the world for two, three decades now. In an employment report in 1994, the ILO in collaboration with the then government suggested that governments get involved in this type of activity. But they took a good idea, polluted it and corrupted it. [*Interruption*] There is where NEDCO has gone, so we will clarify that NEDCO must also bring those small farmers and entrepreneurs in the agriculture communities within its fold.

Mr. Speaker, another element of hypocrisy on the part of the Government is when the Government highlights with much fanfare the introduction of this Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture, YAPA where they pay young people \$50 a day to go to look at milking cows out in farms; machine shops and so forth. What they are doing there is destroying the work ethic in the labour force. Today you cannot get young people to go into farming, to go into the poultry industry, to work from 4.00 a.m. in agriculture, to go in the garden on a public holiday, on Saturday and Sunday because the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) has now destroyed that labour force. There was a time in rural areas when people would go in the garden on a public holiday, and on Saturdays and Sundays take their children to do farming and so forth. Today, when CEPEP and URP are available and being distributed by way of PNM party cards and so forth, nobody really wants to go in a garden on a public holiday when they could be getting \$120 per day from CEPEP. I notice the executive chairman of CEPEP is now pronouncing that the work ethic and productivity are so high among CEPEP workers. I took note of that.

There is no reference to any study on this matter with CEPEP but the CEPEP productivity is high. And for all intents and purposes as far as the PNM is concerned, it might well be high. But we have no study. We have no research, no data, which is what the Member for Arouca North suggested. The only data we have right now is cocaine found in diplomatic pouch. That is what we have. And what is scandalous about it that they are trying to blame an MTS security officer, a janitor and a gardener for that, as if somebody in the garden outside the Ministry put cocaine in the diplomatic pouch. But it might be more frightening if that really happened, if the diplomatic pouch was by the MTS security and the receptionist.

This points to top level officials in the Government connected to the PNM and you cannot have an independent and impartial enquiry while the PNM deputy-

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chairman and PRO sit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, they must call in the United States Drug Enforcement Agency and other agencies to collaborate on such an enquiry. Who is enquiring? The same police that is inquiring into the cocaine in Sadiq Baksh's tank. This is the hypocrisy. We are convinced that in this country the agricultural sector would go nowhere.

It means no offence to our friend from Arouca North. I think our friend from Arouca North, as Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources would be equally competent as he was at the Ministry of Local Government. It means no disrespect to our friend from Arouca North. He would be fully competent. I am convinced of that one.

At a time when we just got news this week that in Barbados, very interesting, they are now considering there, persons who are involved in their national council for science and technology. It was announced this week—in fact, just yesterday—in Barbados they are now considering generating electricity from a special breed of sugar cane known as fuel cane. That was in the news yesterday. So that Barbados that has kept its sugar industry is now thinking of generating electricity and fuel from sugar cane. While, in Trinidad and Tobago, in a recent study done by the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, in the Penal/Debe area, there are 3,000 former Caroni (1975) Limited workers on the breadline. A few weeks ago, you may recall, a former Caroni worker killed himself. He committed suicide out of frustration at being unemployed. And you know what is the growing hypocrisy here? You see this big one page ad with Sen. The Hon. Sahadeo, they are calling Caroni workers together for training; to sew—I imagine for Heather Jones—training to make “toolum” and currant rolls and sweat bread and so on, and giving them a certificate of participation that they photocopied in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and they signed it. To this day, not one former Caroni (1975) Limited worker has gained sustainable employment by this Government. Let me rephrase. Not one daily-paid worker of Caroni (1975) Limited has received a job by this Government.

This Government closed down Caroni (1975) Limited when it should have established an employment bureau to assist the ex-Caroni workers in getting jobs, a placement agency to assist workers—they keep them every three months and call them to receive a certificate of participation signed by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry. That is their way of helping these workers. I challenge the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to bring the data to this Parliament and to outline the names of daily-paid ex-Caroni workers, from the factories and fields who have received a job in agriculture or otherwise in the

aftermath of the closure of Caroni. That is the scandal. Caroni workers are now lining up and begging for work and there is nothing. And that is the next hoax.

When they wanted the Caroni workers to sign the Voluntary Separation of Employee Programme (VSEP) to break the sugar union they were told that they would get first preference for land. The Minister with responsibility for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's told us in the other place that Caroni workers would be treated favourably as far as to receive land. The Caroni workers are now before the courthouse on this matter with their coalition partner. They are before the courthouse to receive land.

There is a gentleman they moved quickly to appoint as the head of the Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited. Every time PNM want to con and distract they create a mega institution with a big name so you would focus on this institution. They put a gentleman and then outline the grand plan for land distribution. Many of us wrote this gentleman indicating to him we have constituents who are desirous of getting a piece of land for business and so forth. The poor gentleman wrote back saying: Thank you very much. We appreciate your interest but just to let you know the law has not been passed yet. I cannot give out any land. That is the hoax! Three years now, no land because no law was passed, so Mr. Rao in this case, cannot give out lands. But we understand that they may be encouraging some supporters of the PNM to backdate their applications for land to Caroni (1975) Limited and use that as a pretext for distributing land. That is the hoax. In fact, we may call on our very good friend from Diego Martin West, who has now developed an inclination to sniff out allegations of corruptions and so forth, all around, to look at that Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited. That is a hoax established by this Government where they appointed someone who worked for 10 companies in Trinidad and got fired from 11; fired from every company, they appointed him. They do not have the law and are promising people land and they cannot give any land.

That is the corruption and we need to get the corruption buster on the other side involved. We may have to ask the corruption buster to look at Point Fortin where the Point Fortin Borough Corporation has literally given away prime property on Clifton Hill Beach owned by the corporation and the taxpayer to a businessman to operate and rent it to the private sector. The borough and the government and the taxpayers cannot collect one cent at the Point Fortin Borough Corporation; Clifton Hill Beach Facility owned by the Point Fortin Borough Corporation. The gentleman is renting office facility owned by the people of

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Trinidad and Tobago to British Petroleum and the people of Trinidad and Tobago are not receiving a cent. There is a corruption buster on board on the other side and we believe he must go down to Point Fortin and sniff it out. Go down on the beach down there and look at that, or sniff out cocaine in the diplomatic pouch. In fact, if that Member were the Minister of Foreign Affairs we would not have had that crisis, I am sure.

The former mayor of Point Fortin signed the contract that gives away the prime beachfront facility. It was not signed by the CEO who is authorized under the law to sign. It was signed by the former PNM Point Fortin mayor the day before he demitted office. He signed a contract with a businessman in Point Fortin and gave away taxpayers property and a private businessman is now renting to BP, collected money from BP and the taxpayer, this poor taxpayer that the Member for Diego Martin West is very concerned about, the taxpayer has not a cent, collecting from Point Fortin, Clifton Hill Beach Facility owned by the Point Fortin Borough Corporation. Take that!

You just waiting for the hon. Prime Minister to tell us they would leave no stone unturned. This is a government, when we told them about corruption at the National Insurance Board, (NIB), they said they were investigating, they would leave no stone unturned. When we told them about corruption at the ADB, they said they would investigate, they would leave no stone unturned. When we told them of corruption at the Water and Sewerage Authority, they said they did not know that but they would investigate and they would leave no stone unturned. When we told them of corruption at the URP, the Member for Arouca North said they would investigate that, no stone unturned. This is a government that itself has to be unturned [*Desk thumping*] by the people of Trinidad and Tobago, a government without anything unturned. This is how they gave lip service to allegations of corruption. There is now this scandal involving the same Minister who could not present his credentials in Jamaica; this scandal of this Minister and his Ministry involved in the release of the fishermen in Tobago; and as if that was not bad enough, the DPP is on the trail now. Cocaine found at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The entire Government should have resigned in shame under the principle of ministerial responsibility. All of them are now implicated. Once you are on that side of the House or once you were edging on that side of the House, you can now be implicated with marketing, trafficking cocaine through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But that is the lip service they give to these allegations.

In my constituency—and I want to raise a couple constituency matters before I close, with your leave—we have had a history of agriculture production. The



people of Oropouche and other constituencies are hardworking, principled, honest and so on. A history of contributing to the agricultural sector.

When the UNC was in office all of us were proud to hold diplomatic passports. They have to be careful Brian Lara and Jack Warner do not return their diplomatic passports that are now stained with cocaine. Under the UNC government when one was proud to use a diplomatic passport, Oropouche, Siparia and Naparima were identified as areas to concentrate on, not just for agricultural production but also for the marketing of agribusiness and products generated from agribusiness. So much so that under Tidco it was the intention of the UNC government to establish an export centre at Debe Junction in the heart of Oropouche. The building is there, but do you know for the last three years or so, part of that building is empty. It is not being occupied. A government building not being occupied because they never established the export centre at Debe that would help the farmers and entrepreneurs to market their products to other countries in the region, in North America and Europe. Imagine, you will not help farmers to market their produce but you will market produce from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That is the only marketing you do. When the farmers down there are crying out for help to get their produce to markets in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad, this Government did nothing to open the export centre at Debe Junction. That is their commitment to the development of agriculture.

The Member for Arouca North is waiting for statistics and when we get those statistics then everything else would happen. I do not know—maybe you would get back the 10,000 workers from Caroni who are now killing themselves. You do not need statistics to tell you that farmers need markets both locally and abroad, you do not need statistics to tell you that people need agricultural access roads to get their produce to market both locally and abroad. You do not need statistics for that. You do not need the agricultural census to tell you that. This is the hypocrisy!

We make a call to this Government that they must open the export centres in the rural districts where they would be in close proximity to the farmers and entrepreneurs. Open the export centres! The export centre is empty like the Biche High School. What shame it is today that you have the Biche High School empty and you have children in Palo Seco under a tent. Have you seen the cruel irony of having a school empty in one part of the island and on the other part of the island you put children under a tent, where the wind blew a blackboard on a teacher? Look at that, because of malice, a circus tent, they established a tent in Palo Seco. Because of their malice and their hate for the people of Nariva, they will not open the Biche High School. In Palo Seco they prefer to put up a tent to put the children of this country for their education.

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In the school system as well, the Government must indicate to us what steps they are taking in the education sector as far as agriculture is concerned. There is, of course, a direct link between agriculture and education. There was a time at the university of the West Indies when the faculty of agriculture was a beehive of activity, the student intake was multiplying, increasing year after year. Now, at the university, you have seen this relative decline of the agricultural faculty. At schools what is the policy, what are the initiatives of the Government to promote agriculture as a career for young people looking on? What attracts a school leaver, someone in Form 5 and so on, or even A'level to get involved in agriculture?

To the delinquent they might be attracted to the drug trade and the crime, which the Chief Justice alluded to. But what attracts young people to get into agriculture? What? Is it the money? Is it the elegance, the flamboyance? No! Not at all. Because those young people coming out of school would either want to go in the heavy construction sector where the wages, of course, would be much higher so there is no interest there. Many of them would want to go into services pedalling and so on. Many of them would actually end up on the unemployment rubbish heap begging for a ten-days here and there. The vision of the Government is that all the young people of this country would be pushing a broom at the Queen's Park Savannah between one performance and another. That really is where the young people of this country are going. This is their vision for young people, that they push a broom on the savannah stage; that they do their CEPEP and URP and get enough money to buy sneakers and basketball outfits, rather than promote education dealing with agriculture in the secondary schools and at the university. This is their vision.

This is the tragedy, that when other countries are now embarking upon policies to develop agriculture and the sugar industry—Do you know Guyana has now expanded rapidly its sugar industry? They are building and would complete in a couple years a large refinery plant near Berbice and we are now going to import and buy sugar from Guyana. So the people are retrenched, laid off from the sugar industry and the Government takes the taxpayers' money and buys the sugar from Guyana. That is the PNM way of doing things. That is their operation. That is how they know it. Then we saw a scandalous headline in the *Guardian* yesterday where a minister of finance said we have another windfall but this time we would not spend—no wild spending. I found that one laughable. And in the same article the Minister of Education said they would spend \$2 million to put up a tent at Palo Seco, but no wild spending. They were not going to spend money wild, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, we are calling upon this Government now, and this is another important point. We want to challenge the Government yet again, as we did with the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West to come to the House and bring the plan for Caroni (1975) Limited to the House. Let us debate their plan for Caroni (1975) Limited. We may actually ask them to bring their plan for the agricultural sector so that we may debate that. This Government has been described even by its supporters as a do-nothing Government. One of their own, the distinguished former Minister, the Member for Point Fortin, described them as chugging along. He said many of them really do not know what they are doing, the former Minister, the Member for Point Fortin, who resigned incidentally, on principle concerning the minimum wage in the energy heavy construction sector. In fact, the Minister of Foreign Affairs should really reflect on the Member for Point Fortin who had the courage to put his principles in front and resign rather than go along and just stumble from one standard to another, from one low point to another, from one point of disgrace to another. The Minister of Foreign Affairs should really consider the actions taken by the Member for Point Fortin when he resigned and the Minister of Foreign Affairs should not wait for the Prime Minister to fire him, which we believe the Prime Minister should do himself. The Minister of Foreign Affairs should take it upon himself to resign. In his first incarnation he lasted 10 days before the government of Jamaica said they did not want to see him.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, the salient points we are making are that they must bring the plan for Caroni to the House; they must bring a plan for agriculture to the House; the Minister must outline a clear policy and programme for the development and repair of agricultural access roads. They must now tell us their policy with agricultural access roads and loan from NEDCO. In fact, as I am reminded of that, there is something else with NEDCO as well. But before I get to that the Minister must also tell us, clearly, the policy as it relates to both agricultural access roads and the loans and fixing those roads particularly in the rural constituencies. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources must tell us whether he has the responsibility or not for the sugar manufacturing company. Is sugar agriculture or is sugar industry and trade? He must tell us

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whether he has responsibility for that bogus operation called the Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited that is run by very dubious personalities; he must tell us if he has responsibility for that. He must tell us all of this and not give us a speech as to the importance of the agricultural census because we would find out how many persons are selling ‘toolum’ and how many are selling gulabjamun. That is what he must come to the House and tell us.

Mr. Speaker, there are others on this side who would like to speak on this matter and with those few points, I thank you very much.

**Mr. Nizam Baksh** (*Naparima*): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to address a few items on this Agricultural Census Order, 2004.

It is an established fact that we form opinion of people by their words, deeds and actions and similarly governments are judged by their words and actions. As we reflect on this Government’s track record, it is replete with examples of their propensity and penchant for destroying agriculture and if one looks at the recent examples of the destruction of fertile agricultural lands for housing, this is one good example where they are destroying agriculture.

This agricultural census is being undertaken at a time when chaos and uncertainty reign in the industry and it is at its lowest ebb. Still fresh in our memory is the unconscionable, draconian measures taken by this Government that affect the lives of a vast majority of people involved in agriculture. They have ravaged, devastated, emaciated, traumatized and trampled on those workers with a vengeance, as if to remove from our history any traces of slavery and indentureship.

This Government has deluded sugar workers into believing that as part of their VSEP package they would receive agricultural lands from Caroni (1975) Limited and be counted among the entrepreneurs of this country; entrepreneurs with experience and expertise in their particular field.

I am not convinced that this Agricultural Census Order, 2004 would obtain substantial data under the headings listed in the schedule:

- The characteristic of the holder
- The characteristic of the holdingCrops
- Livestock, including poultry, and beehives
- Fertilizers
- Chemical, excluding fertilizers
- Irrigation

Drainage and Waste Disposal

Farm machinery, equipment and buildings

Aquaculture

Finance and Marketing

General Problems.

I feel that this honourable House should have been provided with a copy of that Census Order schedule itself. I heard the Minister say that Members were provided with this information but this was not provided and, therefore, we should have been given an opportunity to see the kind of questions that would come out and the information that would be deduced from this census.

Before I proceed to a specific commentary on the motion before this honourable House, I take the opportunity to provide an overview of the current happenings in the agricultural sector for the mere reason that the overall objective of the Order is linked to the performance of the sector. I read in a recent study by a group of agricultural professionals titled *The Agricultural Sector—Global Issues, June 2003*:

“For the period 2000 to 2002, the agricultural sector contributed an average of TT\$744.6 million ... or 3.3 % of national GDP. This contribution of the sector to national GDP is significantly less than in other sectors such as the services, manufacturing and petroleum sectors.

While the agricultural sector’s contribution to economic activity is relatively small, the sector plays an important part in providing employment opportunities for large numbers of the population. The sector is capable of absorbing large numbers of persons since many aspects of agricultural production are still labour-intensive. In 2002, there were an estimated 39,833 persons employed in agriculture. This number of persons accounted for fewer than 8 % of the work force.

The country is a net importer of food. For the past three years, an average of \$1.6 billion was expended on imported food. Food exports, on the other hand, average TT \$95.2 million.”

Mr. Speaker, there is a gross imbalance here. I looked at the policy of this statement.

“Over the years several policy documents were prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture Land and Marine Resources with the common purpose of:

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Increasing farm output and efficiency.

Increasing foreign exchange earnings.

Improving the food security.”

There has not been any substantial improvement in this.

“Increasing farm income.

—with the intent of cutting the food import bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to continue with the quotation and it speaks of:

“The Current Sector Policy for Food Production (2001—2005) also outlines several measures for improving the productivity and growth of the Agricultural Sector. Specifically, the document articulated policies to:

Increase agricultural production while sustaining renewable natural resources.

Increase agricultural incomes.

Promote development of agro-industries.

Enhance food security.

Reduce the imbalance in the balance of payment.

Provide incentives as targeted, transitional instruments to assist in agricultural development.

Enhance efficiency and effectiveness of agricultural marketing.

Enhance the efficient functioning of sale, lease and rental markets for agricultural land.”

It also gives here a list of the support systems.

“The Ministry of Food Production Land and Marine Resources undertook several initiatives over the years, in support of its policy goals. The major instruments of support for the sector included:

An agricultural incentive programme.

An infrastructural development programme.

Research and development,

Credit and marketing.

A state land distribution programme.

Education and training.”

Mr. Speaker, will this new census tell us anything different from the plans that are already in place? It is a fact that the PNM produced lots of reports but have not been able to implement and deliver on those reports. The mood in this country is one of uncertainty, doom, fear, skepticism, a lack of trust, which is attributed to the escalating and uncontrollable crime rate. Ninety-plus murders so far and 20-plus kidnappings in the country. Where there is now no secrecy and confidentiality with your financial status, where business is transacted looking over your shoulders. Where the labour sector is being strangled and sophisticated by Government's inactions with the resultant financial strangulation of the labour sector and the economic turmoil of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in this context, I fear that the information deduced from the agricultural census and the enumerators in most categories of the schedule will be inaccurate and misleading with regard to the fear we have in this country. In fact, they may be met with closed doors and ferocious dogs. I have another concern that those enumerators wherever they may be, if they do not have an agricultural background, they are going to have difficulty in getting this information from the respondents.

I have a strong feeling too, that many of the forms would be completed at home and without going out into the field. I understand, too, that in this age of automation and technology, the forms still carry a section like the old census papers with regard to horses that are still on the farms and mules and donkeys. I am not sure we are going to have any of those ourselves. We might find those around this building and in it.

Mr. Speaker, when the Minister spoke about the census I wanted to know the background to which we are going to take this census. Is it that we are going to every household in this country or is it that we are going only to the agriculturists? In the previous surveys, they used the visitation records of the population on housing census and also the records of the farmer registration programmes in the Ministry of Agriculture, but the Minister said nothing about these in his presentation. I am wondering, are we going to collect this information? The information in the Order says that a perusal of the Agricultural Census Order reveals that the information collected would be utilized for statistical purposes. It may not be used for taxation, administrative investigation or regulation. The term "statistical purpose" is vague and should be defined for the ordinary citizens and in particular, for the farmer to understand. Since we have said the purposes for which the figures may not be used, the Minister should tell us exactly for what information this may be used.

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I will take the opportunity to outline some of that information that he should be telling us here this afternoon. The information gleaned from the census would be used to review and plan macroeconomic agricultural policies. The figures would project our agricultural supply and demand functions and the extent to which choice may be an option, and the extent to which our citizens have demonstrated an inclination to engage in agricultural activities as entrepreneurs committed to self-sustained growth.

**4.15 p.m.**

We need to say that the figures will enable us to determine how efficient use could be made of our land resources. The figures will tell us where the Government needs to focus its attention. I could go on and on. The matter of concern is the perception of the term “statistical purposes”. There is always the reluctance to provide accurate and reliable information because the citizens have no confidence in this Government. They have lied to the sugar workers. They have lied to cane farmers. They have lied to the ALNG workers. They have lied to the nation. They have now become addicted to lying. *[Interruption]* I have not attributed it to any particular individual. It is a general statement attributed to the PNM.

I would like to read some information with regard to food imports and employment from the document I read earlier—a recent study by a group of agricultural professionals entitled “*The Agricultural Sector—Global Issues*”. The source for this information is the CSO Overseas Trade Reports, 2002:

Year	Food Import Bill (TT\$000)
1990	850,365
1991	895,143
1993	938,901
1995	1,343,965
1997	1,559,140
2000	1,519,907
2001	1,681,300

Mr. Speaker, you can see the extent to which we are importing food and only giving lip service to agriculture. I am giving information where we can do a lot



more to encourage our local farmers to cut down on this food import bill. When we encourage our farmers, we enhance food security and we increase our food reserves. We have to build food tanks and warehouses in this country in an effort to cushion against the volatile commodity market and prices. We must do with food what the Americas do with oil—stock pile.

I would also like to read from the CSO Labour Force Reports, 2002, with regard to employment in the agricultural sector.

Year	Agriculture Employment
1986	46,800
1989	51,000
1994	51,800
2001	42,000

In June 2003, this was reduced by approximately \$16,000. Today, this is under \$30,000. What we are seeing today is that in the agricultural sector we have sluggish growth, while in the non-agricultural sectors, there is no significant or sustained growth. The net effect is our inability to create significant numbers of new permanent jobs and, therefore, the conclusion to which I can come is that there is an increase in the national unemployment rate.

I would like to make some comments and suggestions about certain provisions in this Order. I would like to start with section 3 of the Order, subparagraph (2), page two, where it speaks of a flock of at least 12 heads of poultry, which are reared for commercial purposes. What about rural homes where chickens—we know them as common fowls—ducks and turkeys are reared for domestic use? Do we not need statistical data from these citizens who are self-sufficient or who supplement their food supply by rearing poultry? More importantly, what happens when disasters strike—floods, diseases, et cetera, and these citizens seek some form of compensation? If they are not recorded now, are we going to say that they are fabricating their reports? Should we not be aware of this group of committed citizens who are prepared to help themselves? We firmly believe that Government should have access to this type of information and use it to inspire other citizens to be self-sustaining.

We are insisting, therefore, that poultry reared for domestic purposes should be included. There is also a possibility that poultry diseases could originate at these places. How do they intend to monitor these? I will give an example in a

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while. [*Interruption*] I am saying these to make a point later on. If he had supplied us with the forms, we would have known they were in the forms.

Where it speaks about the characteristics of the holder, it speaks only of gross income from farming. Why have they left out expenses related to labour? As a matter of fact, they have not recognized, in the Order, the cost of labour. Without the cost of labour, information on gross income could be rather misleading. Labour is likely to absorb a large chunk of expenses relating to farming and it has been deliberately left out.

Labour has two components. One is the hired or paid labour; and two, family labour, which is not usually costed. We are of the view that this provision to obtain the gross income must be replaced with the net income indicator, since net income is the chief determinant of disposal income and spending power. Disposal income determines spending power. In turn, disposable income determines our standard of living.

I want to relate this provision to certain misconceptions as obtained in the chicken industry today. My information is drawn from a number of documents, which have been produced recently by the Caribbean Poultry Association. This association has reported invariably that the poultry industry employs more than 30,000 persons in the region and its growth is more rapid than any other meat product. Is this Government aware of the total investment involved at present in this industry? Is the Government aware that because of high investment the company's gross income for a period in years could project a loss position? Are we aware that this type of investment is made on the basis of a profit in the future and a sacrifice is made to reap benefits later on?

Mr. Speaker, as I speak on the subject of poultry, which is critical in these times, let me provide some information that will inform this honourable House on the status of the poultry industry, which the Order must capture:

- The value of assets of the chicken industry is estimated to be in the region of \$1 billion. Of this the local equity is in excess of 90 per cent;
- Trinidad and Tobago is self sufficient in the supply of poultry and poultry products;
- Over 45,000 metric tons of chicken are produced annually;
- Annual returns in excess of TT \$415 million;
- More than 10,000 citizens are employed in the poultry industry—3,000 on farms, 3,500 in cottage industries and 3,500 in spin-off industries;

- 80 per cent of all meats consumed in Trinidad and Tobago come from chicken.

This is information obtained from the Poultry Association.

- The figures show that the poultry sector is extremely important to foreign exchange, to agricultural GDP and the generation of employment and perhaps, more importantly, food security, in particular for protein sources.
- All Caribbean countries purchase raw material from the world market at the same price.
- Chicken produced in Trinidad and Tobago is sold cheaper than all Caribbean countries because we consume more than the other countries.
- Over the last 10 years, the poultry industry grew to over 35 per cent.
- The chicken industry in Trinidad and Tobago operates more than 7,100 vehicles.

I am giving this background because it is necessary for us to seek this kind of information in the Census Order.

- We must become aware of the effect that price fluctuations in equipment and raw material for the world market have on the domestic retail prices.

Only recently we would have seen the uproar with regard to the movement of chicken prices.

- With regard to all of this, it is my firm conviction that we need to organize an Agricultural Food Health and Safety Agency in this country. Other countries in the Caribbean have this type of organization.
- We need to ensure that local mechanisms are in place to monitor chicken, which is heavily subsidized in the American market, and that they are not dumped in Trinidad and Tobago under the guise that importation is cheaper.

This is a song we usually hear from the other side—that whatever they do, they are doing it cheaper and they are killing it in Trinidad and Tobago.

- One is aware of the American practice where chests and wings are considered premium and legs, for which there is little use, are offered at prices under production cost in our local market.

Mr. Speaker, I know we Trinidadians like legs and breasts.

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We are providing this House with this information about the chicken industry because, if it is to be evaluated properly for planning purposes, we need to open the net of enquiry to include the net income and not the gross income.

I look at another section—livestock, including poultry. Farmers are asked to indicate the value of sales and no request for value of expenses, for example, hired hands, transport, vehicles, maintenance, marketing costs, advertisement, et cetera. Information on return of sales should not be sought without expenses.

I want to reinforce this point about the chicken industry, when I spoke about compensation. Recently, we had a flu outbreak. I read from page 3 of the *Express* of Wednesday, February 25, 2003,

“Flu Outbreak shuts down poultry farm

18,000 chickens, 250 ducks to be gassed.

Noonoo, who operates Noo Foods Farm Ltd, one of the largest in the country, said although he has agreed to the killing of his birds the question of who would compensate him for his losses, has not been addressed...

Noonoo said that about three weeks ago he noticed an unusually high mortality rate among his “layers” and called the Agriculture Ministry bird veterinarians...

Noonoo said that he was disappointed that the Ministry had not issued a statement on the problem earlier so that “people would not guess and speculate about a poultry business already in shambles.”

I will read another section from the *Guardian* of Tuesday March 23, 2004.

“He said, ‘we don’t have an income because we don’t have eggs; all the birds have been gassed. After 36 years of farming, where we grew from very small to our position earlier this year when the birds were performing at their peak, we are now back to square one. We do not have an egg to collect; before the farm was depopulated we would collect 1,050 dozens of eggs daily. This is what we do for a living; we are without a farm, and we are without money at the present time...’

For one thing, he’s hoping for compensation from the Ministry, although, he says, ‘We don’t know how much is coming.’”

The point I am making in reading all of this is that I feel the time is opportune for Government to consider the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive agricultural insurance programme for all categories of farmers in the country as now obtains in countries like India, Mexico and the Philippines.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the sitting of the Senate is suspended for tea and will be resumed at 5.05 p.m.

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

**5.05 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Mr. N. Baksh:** Mr. Speaker, just before we broke for tea, I was at the point that Government needs to consider the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive agricultural insurance programme for all categories of farmers in the country. I believe this is a very important point in that from time to time we have disasters which destroy the entire holding of farmers and there is no form of assistance coming to these farmers. This is the opportune time for Government to take some action in this regard.

I move on to the other aspect, which are fertilizers. I have noted that the Order has excluded organic fertilizers. This data should not be excluded. This House must be aware that organic fertilizers, that is, manure from farms, for example, chicken, dairy and horse manure, is now a thriving business. Are we aware that more than 5,000 metric tons of chicken manure are produced annually? This House must be aware that organic farming is healthier. We should try to widen the net to have this data. There are backyard gardens where citizens are self-sufficient in a number of vegetables and no inorganic fertilizers are used. Chicken manure is now used to spread over acres of land in order to rehabilitate the soil to grow vegetables. We must promote these healthy practices. We feel that information on organic fertilizers must be included in the Order. Similarly, the local manufacture, distribution and utilization of inorganic fertilizer should also be captured in the survey, since this reflects a cost item on the production side, for example, fertilizers produced by PCS Nitrogen and the importation of mixed fertilizers.

I look now at the general problems. Losses through larceny should be caught in the questionnaire. What about annual losses through floods? What about compensation for flood losses? Should we not capture this as well? Definitely we would want to know losses from natural disasters and epidemics. Have we made provision for dreaded diseases, for example, the bird flu and the ILT virus? We need a provision to capture disasters and epidemics.

We must recognize the fact that an agricultural census is intended in part to evaluate what we have in practice to determine effectiveness and efficiency. We have a range of professional services employed in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. These services are retained to advise and to co-ordinate; to offer and render technical knowledge and expertise; to identify

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strengths and weaknesses and to detect and remedy problems, especially in their budding stages. To what extent are these services functional and effective? To what extent can the farmers provide information for the Government to evaluate the performance of these professionals? What percentage of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources' annual budget is spent on wages and salaries and what percentage is spent on direct investment to facilitate production activities at the farm level?

Mr. Speaker, we support the view that an evaluation of services is necessary because we have a case in point. Recently the farm of Mr. Harry Noonoo of Soogrim Trace, Chin Chin Road, Cunupia was infested with ILT, a viral disease. Do we have professionals in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources whose responsibility it is to visit and check these farms and to recognize these problems? I believe that they have not been doing that because it was Mr. Noonoo who reported this to the Ministry. If the Poultry Surveillance Unit were active enough, they would have identified this long before Mr. Noonoo reported it. This is something we need to capture in the Order—the effectiveness of the services the Ministry provides.

Are these services appropriate and relevant in modern-day farming techniques and technology? To put it in Mr. Noonoo's words, "one day you are considered rich and the next day you are a pauper." Mr. Speaker, we must, therefore, make provision for our farmers to evaluate our professional functionaries who are retained at the expense of the taxpayer. My own view is that the country needs early diagnostic and warning systems, not only in the poultry industry, but also in the agricultural sector as a whole to provide the basis for proactive programming and control mechanisms. For example, if we take the case of the motor car when the oil light flashes, it tells you that the oil in the engine is low—similarly with the gas indicator. When this comes on, it signals that you need to get to the first gas station.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on subsidies. There is no provision in the Order for subsidies, which government offers to agriculturists. The agricultural statistics should include the different services for which subsidies are provided and the extent to which they are sourced by the citizens who are engaged in agriculture. We need to know if the subsidies are creating the desired impact and to what extent incentives are utilized.

Let me use one example here, which is the higher cost in the agricultural sector—machines and vehicles. In the present situation, it takes someone about five years to get about \$15,000 to \$20,000 as a subsidy for machines. My view is

that to become very effective, this should be made available at the point of purchase. There must be a system in place so that the farmer could benefit at the point of purchase. This would be a cost reduction factor with regard to loans. This would help the farmer. If someone has to borrow \$100,000 and he is getting a subsidy of, say, \$20,000 and this takes place at the point of purchase, it means that that farmer would only have to take \$80,000 as a loan, so that the cost reduction on a monthly payment would be reduced. Similarly, the interest rate on that low amount will facilitate the farmer. Therefore, it is necessary for us to take these factors into consideration.

My own information with regard to the present system is that there are tremendous administrative delays in the release of funds from the Ministry of Finance. This is a further delay to the implementation of the subsidy system and we need to review that as early as possible if we want to promote agriculture. In fact, we should also widen the net with regards to subsidy.

There is no provision for agricultural exports. Apart from pineapple, which is exported to Barbados, we have several companies that are engaged in the exportation of a range of vegetables, provisions, seasoning products and fruits. We must make provision to include the middlemen who are involved in agriculture. These people perform a very useful service in respect of seeking and obtaining foreign markets, especially for our fresh products

The Integrated Farming System, known as the IFS, is an aspect of farming, which should be encouraged at all levels and in all farming communities in Trinidad and Tobago. This type of farming is necessary because of our smallness in size and scarcity of land space and allows for maximum use of available land space. The concept provides for several crops to be developed and integrated within the same land space, for example, rice, corn, coconuts, ruminants, et cetera.

I recall as a young boy that our lagoons did not only produce rice, but lots of cascadura, conch and crabs. Our cane fields, as well, had integrated farming. We planted cane, cassava, corn and bodi. This is something we need to reintroduce. To some extent we have the integrated farming system still practised in rural areas, but on a very small scale as there is no provision in the Census Order to capture this information.

Cut flowers and foliage is a very thriving business in Trinidad and Tobago. There are plant shops, which specialize in ornamental and decorative plants. Business places now rent plants. Cut flowers are exported. We must identify and help these citizens.

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The aqua culture industry in Trinidad and Tobago, though in its adolescent shape of development, offers tremendous potential for rapid growth and expansion. The important species in this regard are tilapia, prawns and cascadura. Again, the structure of the data collection exercise should be appropriately structured to capture all the pertinent data in this sub-sector to assist policy makers to make optimal decision for future investment. This is all the more important when one considers over-exploitation of marine resources and demarcation of territorial boundaries as in the case of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, on November 14, 1999, the hon. Patrick Manning in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition, in a speech entitled, “Preserving the Legacy—Building a Nation—the Making of a People, delivered at the PNM’s 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre, provided the PNM’s vision for Caroni (1975) Ltd. I now wish to quote the salient issues as expressed by the Member for San Fernando East. I re-emphasize this as the PNM’s position just prior to coming into government.

- “(1) In 1992, my Government wrote off \$2.4 billion of Caroni’s debt to the state and initiated the Tripartite Agreement to which Government, the company and the trade unions were signatories. Four years later, it was clear that the Tripartite Agreement was, in fact, the blueprint for transforming Caroni into a vibrant and profitable state enterprise. Today,...the state is again being called upon to finance the operations of Caroni to the tune of some \$415 million, in fiscal 1999/2000.
- (2) The present government is now proposing to get rid of Caroni (1975) Limited altogether. Their proposals is to sell the most profitable assets of the company (comprising) the rum distillery and the lands on which cane and rice are cultivated, and the cane and rice divisions, all by December 31, 1999. Let me remind you that some 60,000 citizens depend on the sugar industry for their survival. The social implications of the demise of this industry are far too horrendous to contemplate.
- (3) An industry that is technology driven...
  - (i) Only lands that lend themselves to mechanical harvesting will be retained in sugar cane production;
  - (ii) idle lands that can be mechanically harvested will be put into sugar production

Lands not amenable to mechanical harvesting will be taken out of sugar cane and transferred to the state for redistribution of a programme of agrarian reform.



- (4) Two brand new and automated factories will be constructed at Usine Ste. Madeline and Brechin Castle.
- (5) Cane farmers, who own lands (not amenable to mechanical harvesting) will have the option of selling such lands to the state. The state will be prepared to pay a premium for such lands.
- (6) The state will also be prepared to enter into a programme of small and medium enterprise development to assist farmers in receipt of such monies in investing in this area of national development.
- (7) Caroni Ltd. will now enhance its revenues by commercializing the successful field experiment of the seventies of intercropping short crops with sugar cane in the sugar cane growing season. Such production will be targeted entirely for processing and export in order to protect the local farmers involved in this area of agricultural production.
- (8) For the purpose of processing this produce, a new automated agro-processing plant will be constructed at Usine Ste. Madeline.
- (9) Such an approach, as I have just outlined, promises to make the industry efficient and economically viable, able to stand on its own two legs, depending neither on state subvention, nor preferential market access at concessionary prices, as is now the case...
- (10) Beneficiaries of these plans can also participate in the small and medium size enterprise development programme, which will be put in place for the cane farmers...
- (11) Cane farmers and sugar workers of the future will enjoy job security and a proper standard of living based on a sugar industry that is able to compete on price in any market in the world.
- (12) This approach to the use of technology, efficiency in the production process and financial viability also dominates the People's National Movement's thinking in relation to agricultural development. We must produce food efficiently for domestic consumption and for export. We must identify new crops similar to the aniseed production on 450 acres of Orange Grove estate now being efficiently produced by a French company. We must utilize new technologies as part of our commitment to efficiency of operation.
- (13) Our Agrarian Reform Programme, in addition to encouraging existing successful farmers, also targets new farmers who are able to use new

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methods and understand new approaches. This is our strategy by which we hope to revolutionize agricultural production in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Mr. Speaker, that is plenty talk.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Naparima for giving way. I would just like to let him know that subsequent to that statement being made, several things happened. *[Laughter]* One is that we got into government and we discovered that the liabilities of Caroni (1975) Ltd., notwithstanding the write-offs that had been made earlier by the PNM government, had increased to the point that they had been prior to the write off. *[Interruption]* That is the first thing.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Princes Town, you cannot shout across, “Lie!” You cannot stay there and say, “Lie”.

**Mr. Manning:** Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the international marketing arrangements involving the preferential access that sugar enjoyed in various markets, especially in Europe, began to disappear in the context of globalization and in the context of the special arrangement that existed between the ACP and the ECC countries, EU countries now, as a consequence of which it was a completely new set of circumstances that faced the new government as we came into office in 2002, which left us having to pursue a different approach.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. N. Baksh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and thank you very much Members. I thought that a position paper like this would have had a lot of energy put in to arrive at a decision like this. Certainly, this is a good plan. To come just a few months after the presentation *[Interruption]* Three years is a short time in the history of this industry. *[Interruption]* Let me make my point. Is it that this same Member for San Fernando East who, as Leader of the Opposition, took one position and when he became Prime Minister took the opposite position? This is why I am saying that they are doing this agricultural census because of their track record in governance, particularly in the agricultural sector. People cannot take their word. This is why today there are so many people suffering in that sector.

I ask the question: Is there someone else in control of the Government? If that same person as Prime Minister is taking another position, then perhaps someone

else is in control. This is a political position with disastrous psychological and economic trauma to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and this is the Government that carries the label “caring government”.

The PNM Government disregarded the Project Management Team’s (PMT) advice and went ahead to perform the final rights to an industry that was centuries old and which made strategic contributions to the socio-economic development of Trinidad and Tobago. Further, one morning in June 2003, 9,600 sugar workers, 6,000 cane farmers, 500 small contractors and suppliers and an estimated 30,000 dependants found themselves under the gloomy clouds of an uncertain and frightening future. To date, no workable and satisfactory solutions have been found despite repeated assurances from my friends on the other side. As is customary they seem to be carefree and clueless in the face of the new company Sugar Manufacturing Co. Ltd. (SMCL) that seems to be doomed, at least for the 2004 crop.

There is no clear policy for the sugar sector. The sugar company has targeted originally 60,000 tons from 750,000 tons of cane. They will not achieve this target. I understand that there is a revised target of 50,000 tons. They will not achieve this as well, not because of the farmers, but because of Government’s action and inaction. What they have actually done is that they have placed the hangman’s noose around the necks of the farmers and they are telling them that they must die, and die at whatever pace they want as they tighten it. This is what is happening to the cane farming industry.

I call on the Government now to distribute the lands to farmers. Mr. Prime Minister, now is the time to prepare for the 2005 crop. It is not like the short-term crop. Now is the time to replant, to cultivate and clean the land so that there will be a crop to reap in 2005. We have given 8,450 acres to four contractors to reap Caroni (1975) Limited’s sugar cane. I am saying that that is an average of over 2,000 acres per contractor. Let us distribute this to farmers so that there will be a sustainable sugar industry. It is the only way to go and we should do it now. We cannot wait until next year or some other time to do it. Now is the time to give these people the hope, so that they would have it in 2005.

I remember the biblical story where Cain killed Abel. Now my Prime Minister Manning is killing cane.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the proposed changes which, in my view, would make this exercise more sensible and meaningful and in the context of Government’s 2020 agenda for agriculture, I would like to propose a more comprehensive approach involving—and I am making some recommendations here:

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- (1) A review and update of the land capability exercise undertaken in 1971. Quite simply, these reports are now obsolete and bear no correction to current land utilization realities.
- (2) Similarly, the 1982 Agricultural land use exercise should also be reviewed and updated to provide a better picture for policy makers in the agricultural sector.
- (3) What we really need is a new approach, a new growth and development paradigm for the agricultural sector where the farmer is at centre stage of the development process. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that the Government and the officers at St. Clair can only produce paper. Food production takes place elsewhere.
- (4) For this experience to be meaningful, government needs to address a multiplicity of interconnected issues—credit, irrigation, marketing, drainage, prices, input supply, support services, et cetera—and a response cannot be postponed given a food import bill of TT\$1.6 billion in 2002. At the same time 79,000 acres of former Caroni lands are now idle and Government seems to have no solution on its optimal utilization even with the establishment of the Estate Management Company, which is yet to determine east from west and north from south.

**5.35 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the details of the food import bill for the year 2002, just to make the point that if we put the correct emphasis on agriculture, we can cut down on our food import bill.

Commodity/Food Group	\$TT (M)
Live Animals	5.2
Meat and Meat Products	136.0
Milk and Milk Products	248.1
Eggs and Birds	340.0
Fish and Fish Products	72.7
Wheat	90.6
Rice	45.3
Maize	75.7

Commodity/Food Group	\$TT (M)
Vegetables (Fresh and Processed)	320.3
Sugar, Molasses, Honey and Sugar-based Products	90.2
Coffee, Chocolate, Cocoa, Tea and Spices	67.5
Animal Feeds Stuff	144.6
Margarine and Shortening	12.6
Other Edible Food Products	211.9
TOTAL	1.68 Billion

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of food groups. If we put emphasis and encourage our local farmers, we could cut this food importation bill by half. We could plant maize, vegetables, coffee and chocolate. Do you know at one time we had the best coffee and chocolate in the country? We are killing the industry. This is why we need to bring back these commodities, so that we can cut the food importation bill. We should encourage our farmers to grow food locally. Mr. Speaker, this is a golden opportunity to make good, government's promise of lands to the former workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. They are workers with agricultural expertise, the know-how and the propensity for tough and long hours of work. They are workers who can produce food for the nation.

I am worried and concerned, when I look in retrospect at this Government's track record in supporting and promoting agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. I am worried whether the information obtained in the Agricultural Census Order 2004, will not be used to search, find and destroy whatever is left of agriculture in this country. I thank you very much.

**Mr. Chandresh Sharma** (*Fyzabad*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is said where people use drugs and illegal substances, they perish. You could imagine what happens when the Government is seen as the promoter of the use of drugs; the entire country perishes. This leads to a government without vision. What we have witnessed here today is the Government's contempt for a large section of the national community. It is a display of its policy and how it intends to treat with people.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The presenter of this Bill indicated that the census should be taken every 10 years. The last time it was taken was 22 years ago. Since the Member for Tobago

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East has become a Minister, she has regained her voice. Her question is why we did not take it. If it should be taken every 10 years, the PNM was in government during the period 1991—1995, why did they not take it? It was simply because they treated the people involved in agriculture with contempt. I will show more evidence of that later on.

More than that, the presenter of the Bill in the other place—whom I understand is in Tobago at this time, wearing clothes identified earlier—indicated that the Government would be spending \$5.5 million for this census. The Minister indicated that 1,000 persons would be involved. When one looks at how the \$5.5 million would be spent, CEPEP is a good example. They have to buy tall boots and raincoats. The Member for Diego Martin East is asking what is wrong with that. I would make the point, listen. They have to buy uniforms, umbrellas, et cetera. More than half of the money would be spent equipping them for six weeks. *[Interruption]* I would give you the statistics after. I will speak to you at all times, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is really intended, like CEPEP, to give out work. The Minister indicated earlier that they have already chosen the persons who are going to work. There were no public advertisements. How were these persons identified? One claimed that he went to an exchange and registered. There are no exchanges in the rural communities. If this census is to treat with agricultural statistics, then bring workers from there as well. It should be across the board. Again, it is the PNM's way of doing things. This is CEPEP, URP and YAPA all over. The project costs \$5.5 million, but they are spending \$4 million on CEPEP. Food security is the most important area of the country and the Government is spending \$5.5 million.

It does not stop there. Page 16 of the *Guardian* of Wednesday, May 12 states that the Cabinet okayed \$600 million for the Trinidad and Tobago University and that ECIAF would get a \$1.8 million facelift. What is that saying? ECIAF is the premium institution that prepares persons for the agricultural industry and they are spending \$1.8 million on facelift. That is cosmetic because they want to satisfy the national community. Again, those people have to work in the rural communities. It is contempt by this Government. They are spending \$600 million on a university that is way down the road and ECIAF that is feeding the nation, is getting a \$1.8 million facelift. Again, this is cosmetic. This is how the Government treats with people. They are prepared to spend \$2 million in Palo Seco to erect some tents. That is your constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It does not stop there. When you look at what is going to happen in the census itself—before I go there, today question No. 77 was asked with respect to CXC

performance during the period 2002 and 2003 in Agricultural Science. In Port of Spain: 19 students wrote the examination and 18 passed; North East Regional Education Division: 150 wrote, 126 passed; St. George: none wrote, how many passed? St. Patrick: 113 wrote, approximately 100 passed; Tobago: 25 wrote, all passed; South East Regional Division: 42 wrote, 41 passed; Caroni: 39 wrote, 38 passed; Victoria Regional Education Division: 0. That was in the area of crop and soil. In the area of Animal Science: Port of Spain, no student; North East, 1 student; St. George: 12 wrote, 10 passed; St. Patrick: 78 wrote, 50 passed; Tobago: 0; South East: 67 wrote, 61 passed; Caroni: 27 wrote, 21 passed; Victoria: 100 wrote, 25 failed. The point I am making is, the areas where students are achieving success in agriculture are the areas where they are not being considered for employment.

More than that, my colleague from Oropouche made the point, moneys are not available from NEDCO for persons to go into agriculture. Again, that is how the Government treats with people. It is contempt again, in the rural communities. One does not have to argue, who lives in the rural communities. The policy of discrimination and racism is very well established by the PNM. The Government is spending hundreds of millions of taxpayers' money to keep down people.

When you look in another area such as dress making, fewer students wrote the CXC examination. Of course, fewer passed. In some cases there were 17, 31 and 24 who wrote the examination, but moneys are available for them to go into business. In the same CXC examination, students from the rural communities are writing the agriculture examination because it is important that they learn to feed the nation, but they do not get money to go into business. In the PNM constituencies, more so, the East-West Corridor, they are taking the Textiles and Garment Construction Examination and are getting funding. This PNM has to wake up. They cannot continue in this way. They continue to fool the people. They have no plan. The Minister said they would use this to arrive at a policy. He claims that during the period 1986—1991 they were preparing for government. The PNM came into government in 1991 and had nothing to offer. They were untrue to the people.

Let me tell you how they treat with agriculture, further. There was an advertisement in the newspaper stating that this would be starting from May into June, for six weeks. We are still debating it in the Parliament. They control the agenda of the Parliament. They decide when this would come to the Parliament. Again, that is contempt. They did it in such a way that they have to rush it through to hide the 1,000 PNM people that they employed. They are hoodwinking through the different exchanges.

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It does not stop there. On March 12, 2004 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, a programme was held to talk about this. Let me tell you how they treat with the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It started at 9.30 a.m. with the National Anthem. There was the welcome remarks by the Chairman who spoke for five or six minutes. There were remarks by the FAO representative, who spoke for 10 minutes. What a shame! Our distinguished colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, was invited to speak for five minutes. Another Minister, who has no relevance to agriculture, spoke for 45 minutes. What a shame! Is this what this country has reached to? They are hoodwinking the national community. [*Interruption*] Do not pretend; you do not know, you are out of it. They fooled you with a jacket and a tie. You have sold your soul, for what? “Heh, heh, heh.” He does not know about it. The Government does not know. He is a tool there. He is only told do this. He cannot ask a question. This is some of the crap. They would be sending out persons who have no relevance and training in agriculture. One thousand persons were chosen by the PNM party groups. There are no persons from the agricultural communities or persons with CXC qualifications in agriculture. It is jobs for the PNM children and the PNM boys and girls. They would ask what obtains in the agricultural community.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The part I want to treat with is processing, preserving of fruits and vegetables, jams and jellies, pepper sauce, mixed seasoning, cheese and ghee. What ghee, they have reached far. I also want to deal with other dairy products, hams, sausages and smoked salt fish. They do not need a survey to say that they are not funding agriculture. NEDCO is not funding any of these things. You want to enquire from the people whether they are involved in this and the Government policy is not to fund the promotion of it. Here are some of the products they are going to treat with: black eye peas, bodi, corn, dried corn, dried and green pigeon peas, red kidney beans, rice, salad beans “saeme”, which is wrongly spelt, sesame beans—

**Mr. Valley:** How do you spell it?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** You do not eat it, so you do not want to know. Continuing, soya beans, mixed vegetables.

Mr. Speaker, you would have recalled, in this Parliament that the Opposition, on numerous occasions, had to beg the Government on its knees to treat with the question of flooding. They refused to treat with it. More than that, when farmers’ crops are destroyed by flooding, no compensation obtains. When the compensation is paid, after many months of negotiation, it is very slow and very small. You would



recall that it was under the PNM that the Oil and Water Board was removed. If I remember correctly, that matter went to court. Up to this date, the PNM has not seen it fit to reinstate the Oil and Water Board, simply because that is how they treat with agriculture. When the Minister comes here and says that he wants this information about agriculture, something is wrong. He went further, he says he now wants to find out what obtains. The Minister must know what the country had at some point in time, because the information is public information.

The *Draft White Paper on Food and Agriculture Policy of 1995—1997* would have indicated what we had in this country. What did we have? There were more than 1,000 farmers involved in food crop. There were more than 60 farmers involved in pig farming, more than 100 involved in dairy and 68 in citrus. What has happened since then? The PNM continues to treat agriculture with contempt. There is absolutely no support.

Earlier today, an attempt was made to raise a matter of urgent public importance. This was with respect to the discovery of cocaine through the diplomatic bags. How does that affect us? We have to export goods such as hot peppers, pumpkin, curry, ghee, et cetera, to the United States. We also have to export “bhandania” to Europe and Canada. How would they be looking at us now? This Government is involved in cocaine and we have to treat with them very carefully. This is now going to further affect the rural farmers from exporting their crops. Immediately, they are going to be saying: “What is Trinidad doing in recent times?” [*Words expunged*] Where is this exported? Is it from the farmers? No, no!” [*Words expunged*] The discovery of that cocaine is going to further cause tremendous losses to our farmers. I am calling on the Government to make resources available to those farmers who are going to be affected.

More than that, the Minister of Trade and Industry has been working very hard at trying to get the headquarters of the FTAA in Trinidad. The discovery of cocaine, exported by the Government, again will affect us winning the bid to build the headquarters here. How will that affect the farmers? It will affect the farmers. What were we negotiating the FTAA headquarters here for? It was to promote goods and services from Trinidad and Tobago. Again, we are seeing that the Government, by its policies of expenditure of state resources and funds, does everything to keep down agriculture. This is largely because they are of the opinion that the farmers in the rural communities are supporters of the Opposition party. That is the main reason.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall, in 1962 when they established the Wallerfield farms, they were given out to PNM supporters. This happened at both Wallerfield

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and Carlsen Field. Millions of dollars were spent behind the PNM supporters and all went down the drain. The farmers in Fyzabad, Oropouche, Caroni and Naparima obtained no such assistance. With respect to Nariva, the global authorities indicated that poverty was the highest in those areas and assistance should be given to them. Again, if you look at all the policies of the Government, it is always to keep down the Opposition's constituencies. Agriculture is critical and important.

World leaders are very concerned about food security. What does the PNM do? It has closed down Caroni (1975) Limited. Again, this is an act of discrimination. You would recall a PNM manifestation, when they were in government during the period 1981—1986, of the four refineries, they closed down two. They have been attacking the rural farmers. They have been targeting Caroni (1975) Limited. They said that they wrote off the bills of Caroni (1975) Limited. It was under their administration that Ministers benefited tremendously by way of contracts, friends getting jobs and party kickbacks. All those years the PNM government managed Caroni (1975) Limited and they had to write off debts. Where were these moneys going? They were spending hundreds of thousands of dollars for goods and services that were worth a few thousand dollars. That is typical PNM style.

Come 2004, the world is concerned about food security, and what does the PNM do? They gave their friends at NEDCO and the PNM supporters money. Every one of the NEDCO offices are in the PNM constituencies: Moruga, Point Fortin, Mayaro, San Fernando and Port of Spain. Look at the projects they have funded under NEDCO. They are projects that do not benefit persons in the rural communities. This level of racism and discrimination has to be treated with. Imagine the Minister presented the Bill and does not know what obtains in the forms. What a disgrace and a waste of time.

Mr. Speaker, if you are going to do a census, it is only fair that you bring the questions you are going to ask, if you want the support of the Opposition. The Minister must indicate to us some of the areas he wants to address. Here are some of the questions they would be asking: to which ethnic group the holder belongs? This is PNM. Wake up Trinidad and Tobago. It continues: African, Indian, Chinese, Syrian/Lebanese, Mixed, Other, not stated. This is racism. Are you going to ask a farmer if he is Chinese, Indian or Creole? What a shame? What are you trying to prove? Do you know why they are asking this? Mr. Speaker, you were being disturbed when I was raising this very important matter. One of the questions being asked is the identification of holder. They want your name, address and the number of your polling division. What does that have to do with agricultural census?

**Mr. Narine:** To brand you.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** To brand you, the Minister said. It is to brand you PNM or UNC. They are going further, they want to know if you are African, Indian, Chinese, Indian or Syrian. I would live to see a Syrian farmer. I hope they are not doing cocaine. The form also states: Mixed, Other and not stated. They want the address of the holder and also the address of the holder if it is different. How could you ask a farmer in Barrackpore all these hard questions? It continues: Do you live on your holdings? Who runs the day-to-day business of the holding? They are asking these questions for tax purposes. I want to warn the national community that this form is a means of getting information in order to come and tax you after. It continues: holder, spouse, other household member, hired manager. Would you go to a farmer in Barrackpore who is planting two acres of bodi, to ask him if he has a manager? Of God! What a shame! Great is the PNM and it shall prevail. "Dey taking we down de road." Today the PNM is exporting cocaine. I never thought I would sit in the Parliament one day—It continues: Please indicate whether you are a male or a female. Name of hired manager, if any.

Something very interesting happened earlier today. My colleague, the Chief Whip, moved a petition and it was opposed by Members opposite. This is the highest court in the land and a Member of Parliament, who is permitted under May's and Standing Order—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** If I may correct you. I have just indicated to the Leader of the House and the Opposition Chief Whip that what the Leader of Government Business alluded to earlier on is correct. It is in the Standing Orders. It is Standing Order 85. That matter that I allowed to go through was, in fact, an error on my part. The Leader of Government Business was correct in raising that objection.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** I want to congratulate the Member for Diego Martin Central. It is the first time that he has done something correct. Regardless of what took place then, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, farmers looking at the conduct of the Parliament and seeing this would not know and they would treat with the census in the same way. The same man they cannot ask a question in the Parliament, what is he coming to ask me. It continues: Are you a registered farmer or holder? Why must a farmer register? The farmer is not getting any benefits. More than that, the PNM government has put stipulations to be a registered farmer. More than 15 per cent of the farmers are not permitted. If a family is into agriculture, only one person, the head of the family, is permitted to register as a farmer. The reason being, as my colleague from Naparima indicated, they would not get the subsidies. If there are three independent farmers in that same home,

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only one is allowed to register. What is wrong with that? If they are three independent farmers they should be allowed to register. If you and your spouse are in a home, you are two separate individuals who are permitted to have two passports and pass through the airport with luggage and bring in anything you want. The form speaks of the year of registration. It does not talk about the parcel of land. The Government does not know what is on the form. They are guessing their way. [*Interruption*] Pass it for me. It continues: type of organization or holdings. Which of the following best describes the type of organization?

If you are bringing something to the Parliament, you should have the courtesy and circulate the forms to the Members of Parliament opposite so that we can become conversant with them and if there are any questions that can be raised. I cannot be given this at the last moment. People have concerns and the Government does not make it available. It continues: individual, household provider, joint partnership, corporative society, private company, state enterprise, type of organization holding. You can keep saying that this is the wrong form. This is the form. Continuing: Is there any processing of your agricultural produce on the holding? This is a very interesting question. Is there any processing of your agricultural produce on the holding, for example, the canning of fruits or vegetables, the making of jams and jellies or preserves, the making of ghee. Do you know what ghee is? NEDCO is not funding any of these things. The question should be: Have you gotten any NEDCO funding or are you going to qualify for NEDCO funding? What are they after? They are asking you to indicate whether you have this process going on, but the Government's policy is not to fund or promote it. It continues: If yes, name of livestock and main product. This is a non-question. The Government must demonstrate support for the questions they are asking. You cannot ask if you are processing fruits. It continues: Is the holder part of an enterprise which is also engaged in other economic activities? This is a question for the taxpayer. They want the taxman to come after you. What is the main economic activity of the enterprise: agricultural services, forestry or logging?

On the question of forestry, Mr. Speaker, are you aware that under the PNM, the teak fields of this country are destroyed? The PNM has given out all the teak fields to its friends and supporters. They destroyed them. Teak is one of the most sought after wood in the world. In some countries they use one-sixtieth of an inch to get tabletops. The PNM gave all out to their friends and families. There was a big fight in the PNM over who should get. I understand that the Member for Diego Martin Central was very annoyed when someone close to him did not get one.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, could I ask the Member to explain clearly what he means by that statement?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Under the PNM, you have given out the teak fields and they are being destroyed. I understand there was a big quarrel in the PNM camp over who should get and some of your associates did not get.

**Mr. Valley:** Some of my associates? Mr. Speaker, since the Member has privilege in the House, would he please indicate the names of my associates who did not get?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Sure, when we meet in the tea room. Do not try that. You know who I am talking about.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, the Member is implicating me in something that I know nothing of.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I think you need to stay clear of that. It could be interpreted as imputing improper motive.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** I mean no such thing. The truth shall set us free. Great is the PNM. The form asks for the age groups of the household members. Mr. Speaker, why are they asking if you are under 10 years old and if you are male or female? What is the purpose for this? Could you tell us, Mr. Minister? The poor fellow does not know. It continues: Name of household members and relationship to holder, age. These questions are designed by the PNM to have more than the statistics of the census. They are going after persons. They would be sending tax persons. They also want to look at the voting pattern. They want to find how they will develop more systems to keep the persons in the rural community down. Nothing in this, thus far, was identified to promote agriculture in any way. Nothing in this states the policies that we are going to introduce. Nothing in this says what funding would be made available. The sum of \$400 million would be spent in CEPEP. Not one acre of agricultural land is outlashed. The sum of \$135 million is allocated to URP and not one cocoa field is attended to.

Mr. Speaker, this document has 30 pages. The persons would be working for six weeks. That is one page per day. This is just work for the PNM boys. They are not interested in all this information. They are a set of technical forms. You do not see this in the A'level examinations or at the university. This is a difficult form. It continues: What is the total area of your holding excluding lands rented/leased to others, land rented or land leased from others? I was going to say that you are a lawyer and you cannot understand this question but I withdraw that. The Minister said that the farmers are 60 years and over. He may not be able to hear good: "Way yuh say, eh" repeat the question? What is the total area of your holding, exclude land rented, leased to others, include land owned, rented or leased from

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others? You could imagine asking Sonnylal Maraj from Barrackpore that? Could you imagine his reply? Make sure you give them some sticks to walk up the road. You should also have a van.

Mr. Speaker, I read in the newspaper a few days ago that a T&TEC crew was attending to its business. If you can remember, the T&TEC trucks are yellow. They are equipped with bolt cutters. *[Interruption]* Shut up and listen. I will withdraw that. Do not disturb me, please. The T&TEC crew was going about its business. There were five workers on the truck with bolt cutters. They were big strong men, like you and I and they were held up. The Government wants to carry young persons who knows nothing about agriculture, in the area by themselves, young girls and boys, to conduct an exercise such as this. What security and protection! Make the comparison with the T&TEC truck, five big men, bolt cutters, big pieces of iron, forks, shovels and torchlights. They all had cell phones and they were held up. When the “fellas dust it”, the whole area was without electricity that night. This census is really to “mamaguy” people in the country. The PNM has to stop “mamaguying” people, especially those in the rural communities. We in Fyzabad will not treat with this too nicely. The Government cannot take people for granted all the time. The Government cannot practise its discrimination and racism. It is evident in everything it does.

The Member for Diego Martin West said they are building houses for two-thirds of the Afro-Trinidadians. Every practice is aimed at dividing the country. You know what the media would report?

While I am on that, I want to make sure that the media reports accurately. It is very important, when information is circulated, more so by state organizations. In this census people must be certain that the information they give will be reported accurately. We have seen that the Government does not report information accurately. The Member for Diego Martin West indicated: “As of now, \$325 million worth of sales, no profit.” He was referring to a contractor. The Mathematics is very simple. This census has many maths. The total sale of this project is nowhere close to that figure. That figure would mean that more than 1,500 houses would have to be sold on this project. It is public information the number of houses. While deposits have been received for 500 homes, payments have been received for approximately 350 homes. Are you seeing the link? It is government-to-government. People would be concerned. People would come to this Member of Parliament with concerns about the census. If I ask them to indicate their concerns, they would report wrongly. They would indicate that they have two acres instead of 22 acres. If they are making \$2,000 they would say that

they are making \$40,000. The taxman would come after. All sales are paid directly to the National Housing Authority (NHA), as all cheques are made out to the NHA and not to the contractor. The newspapers have carried a number of statements from homeowners who have indicated that they have written their cheques to the National Housing Authority. All payments are made for works completed and certified by the NHA's quantity surveyors. When they are doing the census and a person says he has two acres of bodi and after the first picking he made \$600 and the census taker asks: how many more pickings would there be? The farmer says: three more. He is going to calculate \$600 by three. You and I have planted bodi and we know that the second, third and fourth crop is less. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro knows that.

Initially, no profits were given, either to the contractor or the NHA. This is an agreement. When a Minister of Government misleads, what do you expect to obtain from this census? He sits in the highest forum. Do you know what is very interesting? It would be interesting to see how the media treats with these matters.

In response to this development, the Leader of the Opposition spoke at a public meeting on Monday night. It was a very large meeting. There were 1,000 persons at the meeting in Princes Town. On Thursday, a full-page advertisement appears in all the daily newspapers and the weekly that obtained after. It meant that they had to meet on Tuesday. It has to be sent to the newspapers because they need 48 hours before they can print. I understand that the Minister was very annoyed because one newspaper was unable to carry his paragraph. We are paying thousands of dollars. Only \$5.5 million are available for this census. We are paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to mislead the national community. They are going to be worried whether the information they would be giving is going to find itself in the newspapers, or whether someone would charge them for misleading the public.

There was the question of Caroni (1975) Limited lands. When the PNM government closed down Caroni (1975) Limited—it must be put in the record because I have been elected by 50,000 persons over the last 5 years. I would be failing in my duty if I do not say that this was an act of racism and discrimination when the Government closed down Caroni (1975) Limited. This is crystal clear. That is the global view by more qualified minds than my own.

Over the years, the Government has been using Caroni (1975) Limited's lands for housing and very little for agriculture. In the early days, less land was used and more products were obtained because there was a vested interest by all the players. As soon as the PNM government came into being, they started to treat the

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agricultural sector in a very terrible way. Today, the import bill is in excess of \$1.6 billion. We were exporting our agricultural produce. Our sugar was among the best in the world. The PNM does not say that. They say that it is costly to produce. Our sugar was used to make the chocolates of the world. I wish I could tell that Member something. Our cocoa beans were the best in the world. Our cocoa beans were used to flavour the chocolates of the world. Do you know what has happened? The PNM has made a calculated survey. Who are the ones involved in agriculture? The persons who support Ganga Singh and Subhas Panday are getting no support. It is worse for the ones who support Chandresh Sharma year after year. How is it that the Minister could say that this is influenced agricultural policies? Does he know what he is talking about?

Let me remind this House what obtained in the 2002/2003 budget. The Minister of Finance promised the enhancement of the physical infrastructure; namely, marketing facilities, zero. Do you know what is meant by water management? There would be more floods in the rural communities, no compensation. Flood control, zero; irrigation, zero; agricultural access roads—Mr. Speaker, a \$12 million agricultural access road was built on the lands owned by the Member for Diego Martin East. This was built for him to go to his private lands. Not a single farmer was allowed to drive on that. You could drive with a Benz, you do not need a four wheel drive. That is how the PNM treats people. There is no agricultural access road in Fyzabad.

Did you see what they did to the persons living in Union Village? I am glad my friend, the Member for Diego Martin East, is coming. He would confirm what I just said. I was there. The poor people do farming to survive. They broke down their homes and sent for dinner for them. I want the PNM and the media to listen to this. Although the media would not report, it would be in the *Hansard*. Our children will see it. They sent for dinner. They bought 24 boxes of vegetarian food. They told the people that there was no meat in the restaurant. While they did that, a Government Minister sat in a car and ate steak. There was no meat for those persons, but the Minister sat there and ate. The boxes of food cost \$7 each.

The Member should focus on the shortcomings of the ADB. Did you see what they did at the ADB? A senior worker stood up for what is right and he was suspended. That matter is in court so I would not say more. The matter concerns Seebalack Singh. They must ensure that the ADB becomes an effective supply of credit and financial products. The Minister said that the banks are not treating with the farmers. They are taking taxpayers' money and giving it to NEDCO for the PNM supporters.



The ADB loans are not going to the farmers. Two or three farmers are getting the loans and the majority is going to other persons who are not largely involved in agriculture. They have ways of getting around it.

They spoke of the quality of infrastructure of the fishing industry. We have seen what has happened in Cedros. Fishermen were killed and the PNM says nothing in order to spite the Member for Point Fortin. When the fisherman in Cedros was shot, I was in that area. During the period in which I was in the opposition, 1991—1995, it was the first time a Member of the Opposition went to a foreign country to negotiate on behalf of nationals. That Member of Parliament happens to be me. It was the first time in history.

### **6.20 p.m**

Mr. Speaker, the Government did nothing then for fishermen, and they continue to do nothing for fishermen. Visas have gone up and the cost of fishing has gone up. Fishermen are not getting any assistance; there is no infrastructure for fishermen. They have promised fish markets here, there and everywhere. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro went down on his knees and told the people in Moruga to vote for him, and he would build a fishing port for them. Since then the Member never went back to Moruga except the time when he went by helicopter. *[Laughter]*

The Government said that it would ensure that the various fishing landing sites throughout the country are upgraded. To date not a single one has been upgraded. Shame on the PNM! “The PNM is great and it shall prevail”. How long is the PNM going to fool people? Are Members not ashamed to be Members of this Parliament? I am ashamed because it is lie after lie and untruths after untruths. It cannot be allowed to continue.

The Government also said that it would put measures in place to re-establish fishing grounds through an enhanced protection including the control of trawling: Not a single thing has been done to date. With respect to the upgrading of the Port of Spain Wholesale Fish Market and the Orange Valley Wholesale Market—do you know why they said the Orange Valley Wholesale Market? They said the Orange Valley Wholesale Market because that is in the constituency of the Leader of the Opposition. They were trying to show some degree of balance. Nothing was done! With respect to the refurbishment of San Fernando and Claxton Bay Fish Markets, nothing was done. In Moruga there were plans to build a major fishing port. They cannot get Moruga again, “it gone”. The Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) cannot help you brother.

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So that was the agricultural budget promises for the year 2002/2003. One could see the history of untruths. At the end of the day, we have to face our families and members of the national community. The PNM cannot be allowed to fool people like this. People are migrating—murders.

Mr. Speaker, what has been obtained under the PNM? The Agricultural Census should ask: How many murders have taken place in an area? How many times did people steal from the farmer's garden? Did you get your subsidy on your motor car? The answer would be no. If you see someone stealing your crops and you call the police, do they come? The answer would be no. Why do the police not come? The police do not have any vehicles; they are short of manpower; and the telephones are not working. And CEPEP got \$400 million! Fooling people!

The PNM took agricultural lands and built houses. This is the only country in the world where low-cost subsidized housing is so expensive. [*Desk thumping*]

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Speaker, on Monday night when we spoke to the national community, we spoke to 185,000 people through the airwaves. How could we tell the people in Fyzabad and elsewhere that the PNM told us in the Parliament that they would undertake a review of the existing marketing structure of the cocoa sub-sector in order to identify specific actions to improve the market, returns to farmers and to promote investment to the sector. Not a single thing was done!

More than that, we have advanced on numerous occasions that it is time we start adding value to the produce that are obtained in this country. For instance, we could export some of the cocoa, but also let us make chocolates here. But the government agency that is using taxpayers' money—the PNM think that it is their money and they could do anything that they want with the money—discriminate. They are spending about \$5 billion to discriminate against half of the population in this country. Did you see what happened in Petrotrin? Hundreds of millions of dollars went to a contractor who was not even qualified. We saw in the National Housing Authority (NHA) where PNM supporters who do not even own a fork, a shovel or a hammer are getting millions of dollars in contracts.

With respect to the question of cocoa, no subsidy was made available to persons. The process one has to go through to apply for that subsidy is very

frustrating. It was calculated to be so, because they do not want to discourage farmers from applying for the subsidy. The Government has no interest in promoting agriculture, based on the 2003/2004 budget promises.

Develop the agricultural information systems and inventory of state lands. This is a very important area because when the Government closed down Caroni (1975) Limited, during its negotiations they indicated that Caroni lands would be given out to farmers, and to this day not a single farmer has obtained any land. I hope when my colleague returns to his seat I would be able to say congratulations. [Laughter]

The idea of the University of Trinidad and Tobago is really a reflection of the Government's thinking. Under the PNM administration, more children are failing to obtain five or more O'Levels. They are not encouraging the children to pass their examinations and they are not helping the children to pass their examinations, but they are preparing them to enter the University of Trinidad and Tobago. So they are spending \$600 million on the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

When one looks at the statistics, in Port of Spain, 3,000 students wrote the English examination, and more than 25 per cent failed the examination. The students failed outright. In the north, 1,409 students wrote the English examination and 535 students failed, that is 35 per cent. In St. George, 3,122 students wrote the examination and 984 students failed; in another place, 1,926 students wrote the English examination and 717 failed; and 783 students wrote the examination in Tobago and 326 students passed.

Mr. Speaker, the link that I want to make is that if you are establishing education—and the purpose of education is to make sure that people obtain a higher quality of life so that they would have food, clothing and shelter—you would need to invest money in agriculture. Research has shown that one of the reasons why so many students are failing their examinations is that they are leaving their homes without a meal—very poor families, approximately 30 per cent under the poverty line. The cost of the food basket is going up every day.

Mr. Speaker, it is more frightening for Mathematics. In the County of Victoria, 3,051 students wrote the Mathematics examination and 1,407 students failed; in the County of Caroni, 2,300 students wrote the examination and 1,100 failed; in South-east 1,600 students wrote the examination and 978 students failed; in Tobago 765 students wrote the examination and 435 students failed; in North-east 1,359 students wrote the examination and 769 students failed. Mr. Speaker, I cannot make this point any stronger. We need to invest more into agriculture; we need to invest more so that people would be able to have a proper

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meal. Do you know the cost of a glass of milk that every child should drink before he or she goes to school on mornings? More than 50 per cent of the population cannot afford a glass of milk under this PNM government. Is this not a sad thing in the year 2004?

Now, the University of the West Indies proposed that the Government should move immediately to prepare and publish a comprehensive plan detailing how it intends to restructure Caroni (1975) Limited. The Member for Diego Martin Central came and misled this House and told many untruths. He said that there was a plan. To date he has not produced any plan. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, my words were that there is a plan, and when the Government comes to the Parliament with the Vesting Bill—the Bill that is going to vest the land into the AMBD—the Government would outline the plan. That continues to be the situation.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Speaker, that again is a lame duck—excuse. It is another demonstration of the PNM's contempt and discrimination. They have fired 10,000 workers. Based on this census that the Government is doing—this questionnaire is designed for a household with seven persons. So 10,000 multiplied by seven is 70,000 and that is the number of persons that they have sent on the breadline. The Member is now saying that they are going to come with the plan next year or five years from today. Some persons who were sent home by the PNM have committed suicide. Is that how the PNM treats citizens of this country?

The Government should take urgent steps to convene the national consultation on the Caroni (1975) Limited resources on a published plan. Now, is the Government waiting to establish the University of Trinidad and Tobago under the principalship of Prof. Cudjoe for him to come up with these same proposals? Is the Government refusing these proposals because they came from the University of the West Indies?

With respect to the use of Caroni (1975) Limited lands any departure from the national physical development plan, the legal document framed to govern land use in Trinidad and Tobago must be done through the legally stipulated process which includes bringing amendments of this plan before the Parliament. We have said on numerous occasions that the Government is without a vision. The Government guesses its way every Friday here. More than half the time they have no legislation to bring forward. In fact, very little of the legislation that they bring adds value to anyone's life. In this country, half of the population feels discriminated against. Persons were hoping to obtain some relief from the Equal Opportunity Bill.

**Mr. Hinds:** Which half of the population?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Congratulations to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. I understand that he has been appointed. The Member has asked which half.

**Hon. Member:** He begged enough.

**Mr. S. Panday:** You have humbled yourself.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** The half not of Caroni. So you are seeing it. With respect to the question of Caroni (1975) Limited, it was an act to discriminate against the workers. [*Interruption*] I understand that it was further delayed. All conditions for the lease of Caroni (1975) Limited lands should be detailed to the public in a published document to meet the requirements of transparency.

In the presentation of the Member for Arouca North, you would recall that he said there were lines of people coming to him and begging for notices because they have to quit the lands. Do you know that these notices were sent by the PNM? The PNM are sending these notices to persons and, on the other hand, they are telling them to come and beg—just how they broke down the squatters' homes. One PNM hand breaks them down and the other PNM hand is building them back—20 houses in Thompson Lane. There is no equality.

The Government should immediately establish a system for consultation and information gathering with Caroni (1975) Limited workers in order to determine their skills. To date no such thing has taken place. So they have not determined the workers skills but they are sending them to train. They are fooling them. They are spending less than \$10 on a Caroni (1975) Limited worker. All this thing about training and retraining Caroni (1975) Limited workers; they are only spending \$10 on a worker, after these workers gave 30 and 40 years of their lives to Caroni (1975) Limited and to the country, but they are spending \$2,400 on a CEPEP worker.

Experiences and Intentions: A detailed skills bank should be created. To date not a single Caroni (1975) Limited worker has obtained employment anywhere. Their determination should be taken into account in the transformational process so that they may have choices of how they may be involved in the future. Caroni (1975) Limited workers have no choices under the PNM—go home and die. Their homes are broken, and alcoholism is creeping into their homes because of the frustration of the PNM.

The State should establish an independent screening committee to screen potential investors who seek Caroni (1975) Limited lands as a location of business.

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It is public information that land grabbing is taking place at Caroni (1975) Limited with PNM investors getting choice lands. The university's thinking is that there should be a screening process, but it is land for PNM friends and big boys who funded the election.

This cocaine that went to New York and elsewhere is not by accident. Cocaine is big business and you and I are not involved in it. Right. [*Laughter*]

The question that begs today is who in the Government is involved? I want to tell you who is involved. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I want the Government to say who are the five Ministers that asked for 100 copies of the telephone directory. Who are the five Ministers who requested 100 copies of the telephone directory? [*Words expunged*] Let us not fool ourselves and think this is an isolated situation. Do not let the PNM try to fool this national community! I want to say to all my colleagues on both sides of the House that when a Member of Parliament makes these statements of facts, let me tell you what happens.

[*Mr. Manning stands*]

Mr. Prime Minister, one minute.

**Mr. Manning:** Would the hon. Member give way?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Okay.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I really have great difficulty sitting in the Parliament and hearing a Member of Parliament say the things that are being said by the Member for Fyzabad and offering not a shred of evidence. In other words, it is just a question of getting up and saying what you like merely because you have the authority to say it in the Parliament, and then when the standard of Parliament falls they are the first to talk nonsense about it. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is asking the Opposition for evidence. Well, the Opposition does not have investigating powers. We have said this hundreds of times, and we have produced information and they have taken no action.

**Hon. Member:** Exactly.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** The fact of the matter is that this country is involved in the distribution of cocaine. Many who are qualified said this. Their websites are directing information that the Government is involved. The Opposition does not

have the responsibility to point fingers. If I point a finger and I call one name I would be dead tonight! [*Desk thumping*] Would you protect me? Would you protect any Member of this Parliament? Thirty billion dollars are being laundered in this country and the Government is involved. Should I call a name?

Mr. Speaker, do you remember when a young lady called a name she was killed? What was her name?

**Hon. Member:** Gene Miles.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Gene Miles. When a PNM member's name was called he ran to Toronto; when another PNM member's name was called he went to Canada—John O'Halloran; and when another PNM Member's name was called, Francis something, he went to Panama.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think you have belaboured that point and you should get back to the Motion before us.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Speaker, I was talking about UWI's recommendations based on the Caroni (1975) Limited lands that say there should be no land grabbing. These qualified minds thought of the process and they have looked at what obtains in the Government. Some of the best agricultural lands in this country were taken by the PNM—Aranguez and Trincity—and some of the best sugar came from there, and also cocoa in the earlier days. They built houses to secure PNM votes. They must not forget that the East-West Corridor—stretching from Chaguanas to Arima—has 14 seats, which the PNM hopes to control all the time. The seats that they do not control are the ones involved in agriculture like Barataria/San Juan, St. Augustine, St. Joseph, and Tunapuna would return to us soon. So they took the best agricultural lands and built houses on them. The thinkers saw the PNM at work.

Again, I understand that the distribution and negotiation for lands took place in Florida. They jumped on an aircraft and went and negotiated there. Mr. Speaker, the time would come when Members of Parliament would not have to produce evidence unless they are given the resources to do so. Members of Parliament must be given the resources so that they could get the information.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke at a public meeting on Monday night and on Tuesday, Government Members met and they decided to do a press release. On Thursday there were full-page advertisements in all the daily newspapers. We do not have the resources. So, the Leader of the Opposition goes and makes a statement of fact, and what did they do? They did the same thing they did with NHA contracts. They have singled out one builder who has delivered. Under the

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PNM hundreds of builders have not delivered and there was not a single press release, no front-page coverage.

I have made the point—the Prime Minister is very much aware of that—that low-cost houses cost the most in Trinidad and Tobago than anywhere else in the world. And then the Member is saying to get up and say anything that we want. Give us the resources and let us work together. The country has a drug problem. Do not hide it!

The Government should establish a comprehensive system of water control on Caroni (1975) Limited lands. Why do we need UWI to tell us this? The Opposition has been saying this for a long time. This is in order to facilitate irrigation as an essential pre-condition for the establishment of agricultural enterprise for Caroni (1975) Limited lands.

The Government should also establish a lease income funding enterprise system and embark upon a comprehensive joint venture with companies in the heavy industrial sector in order to fund national platforms for development such as the one proposed by this position paper—the botanical garden. I can see the agricultural communities benefiting from such a thing, because a lot of research would take place.

Some of the crops that they have identified are some that you are seeing very little of, for example, cashews, cherries, guava—many kids who are in school do not know what a guava looks like—pommerac, pomme cythere, sapodilla, beet root and cassava. Well, we know the Government knows about cassava. A botanical garden could lend to that in addition to all the flowering plants and so forth.

There should be a technological and vocational institute with the concentration on agriculture; a buffalo reconstruction programme. Do you know that at one time Caroni (1975) Limited was big in that area?

There should be a model programme for farmers without land tenancy. There should be a food path plan in research and development mandated for UWI and other research institutes in order to support agro industrial development.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is very clear. I have just identified some of the thinking from the University Position Paper which is *A Framework for National Development Caroni Transformation Process* produced by UWI in July 2003. It is instructive to note that to date the Government has not responded to any of the proposals obtained in this document. This is another clear demonstration of how they intend to treat with agriculture and those who are involved in agriculture.



Mr. Speaker, the census went on to ask questions about seeds, fertilizers and chemicals: "Have you the holder used any seedlings during the last 12 months?" How do they expect the farmers to plant? The question should be: Did you find the cost of the seeds reasonable? Did you find it easy to access the seeds? Did you get good produce from the seeds? But no such questions were asked. "Have you the holder ever had a soil test done on your holding?" Mr. Speaker, do you know the cost of a soil test?

**Mr. Narine:** It is free.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Many farmers cannot afford a soil test. The Minister wants to suggest that it is free, but that is not so. More than that, when one looks at the ministry's ability to do a soil test, it is almost zero. One day they do not have transport; one day they do not have the chemicals and another day they do have the tools. Very little resources go there. "Have you the farmer used any fertilizers including manure during the last 12 months?" Again, the answer to that question has to be, yes. They must use some kind of fertilizer. The follow-up questions should be: How did you find the cost of the fertilizer? How did you find transport for the fertilizer? Have you been able to reap more crops? Did you have any fallout from the use of fertilizers? Did the fertilizers affect the crops in any way? Did anyone who bought fertilizers report any illness? Please state the type of fertilizers and the area fertilized, the average amount used and the frequency for use. Now, these are rather technical questions for farmers who are struggling to make ends meet, and who get no assistance from the State. This is a 30-page document. Who is going to compensate the farmer? One page a day is equivalent to 30 days. So for six weeks a farmer has to sit and wait for the census takers to come.

Mr. Speaker, there is a global concern about the use of insecticide. "Have you the holder used any insecticide, weedicide or other agriculture chemicals during the past 12 months? Yes/No. Skip to section 22." There is no sense in this question. The question should be: How has it promoted your crops? What was the cost? What exactly is the Government trying to find out? The Minister says that what they are trying to find out would assist in developing a policy; what this is going to tell them policy wise. Is it going to tell them that the cost of agriculture is too expensive; that subsidies are not available; that assistance from the ministry takes long in coming; and in order to get subsidies on vehicles it is very difficult? Do you know how difficult it is for a farmer to buy a vehicle? "Please state the type of chemicals used, the area treated and the number of animals treated."

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you are aware of this, but if you go to an agricultural shop, oftentimes you would buy mixed chemicals or mixed weedicides

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so the farmers would not have that information. Again, the question here should be: Can you identify the shop where you bought the chemicals? This would allow for some follow-up action to take place. The takers of the census would then be able to go to the chemical shops and ask about the chemical that was sold to the farmers and what was the composition of the mixture, et cetera.

Section 22 talks about financing. This is a very interesting matter. Again, with respect to farmers this information is for the kidnappers or some other source. "Did you the holder obtain financing for your agriculture operations during the past 12 months?" Yes or no. Well, the Minister has just told us that the banks are not lending money. The Member for Oropouche said the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO) is not giving loans to persons involved in agriculture. Why are they asking this question? They want to know the farmers' private business now. This question is not related to farming.

**Hon. Member:** That is to tell the kidnappers.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** It is to send the taxman the next day. "Please state the source of financing for your agricultural operations?" So what if the farmer refuses to do this. "The Agricultural Development Bank or Commercial Bank." The Minister has said that banks are not giving loans. "The credit union, family, relatives or other institutions." It should be NEDCO or the Small Business Development Company Limited (SBDC)? The question here should be: Has NEDCO lent you any money? Has the Agricultural Extension Officer told you that you could go to one of the government agencies for funding? Have you obtained any assistance from any government agency such as CEPEP, YTEPP and YAPA? Those questions do not appear here. "Were there problems in acquiring agricultural financing?" Well, the obvious answer has to be, yes because 90 per cent of the time funding is not available.

Mr. Speaker, and it goes on, "Please state the problems. More than one circle can be shaded?" So they would have to buy two HB pencils. "Are interest rates too high? Too long in processing loans?" The answers to these questions are obviously, yes. Interest rates are too high. They do not have to put that in a questionnaire. The Government does not know how long it takes to process a loan! Sometimes it takes up to years. "Lack of land title." Is the Government aware that the majority of farmers are not owners of their land? "Lack of collateral and security." Is the Government not aware that farmers do not have collateral in many cases? "Inadequate farmers contribution to direct cost?" Do you know what this question means? But the question before that asked about the lack of collateral.

**Mr. Speaker:** You have one more minute.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Speaker, I would have to pass the remaining notes to another colleague, because this is a very serious matter—the contempt with which the Government treats with farmers. You would notice that no Member on that side would get up and say anything about agriculture, because no PNM Member represents any agricultural interest except to give away Caroni (1975) Limited lands; except to destroy the teak fields; and except to destroy the fishing industry. No Member would get up and make a contribution. The Minister would get up and beg to move that the debate close.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, earlier on in the contribution of the Member for Fyzabad, he made reference to five government Ministers—or words to that effect—being involved in the drug trade. Having reflected on it, I am directing that all references to that matter be expunged from the *Hansard* and not be reported in the press.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** I did not say that! It is unfair to say that I said that.

**Mr. Manning:** You said that.

**Mr. Sharma:** It is unfair to say that I said that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Do you want to correct yourself?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Yes. Let us get the *Hansard* record and make sure that we do it accurately, because it is very unfair.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no, if you wish to correct yourself—

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Of course, but I want the *Hansard* to say exactly what I said. I should not be asked to correct myself.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am saying that any reference that you may have made to five government Ministers being involved in the drug trade or drug trafficking—words to that effect—should be expunged from the *Hansard* and not be reported in the press. That is all I am saying.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** But it would only be correct to say exactly what I said and the *Hansard* would say that. I said that the Government must identify the five government Members who requested 100 copies. Let us get the *Hansard* and prove it.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will check the *Hansard* but, in the meantime, I am directing the press not to report on that matter. I will check the *Hansard* and if I find that

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my interpretation of what you said is correct, then it would be expunged from the *Hansard*, but I will check the *Hansard*, okay. I am directing the press not to report on this matter.

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Jarrette Narine):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the three Members on the Opposition side who made contributions today—even those who have reported wrongfully to this House by giving false information. I would deal with that matter as I wind up this debate.

The Member for Oropouche spoke about crime. I do not think that I need to answer anything in this debate with respect to crime, labour, Caroni (1975) Limited workers, CEPEP, cocaine, Scotland Yard and other matters that I do not think relevant to this debate. The Member asked if in our Vision 2020 we had any vision for agriculture. Of course, and if the Member is acquainted with the Vision 2020 document he would see that it spoke about alleviating poverty in the rural communities through agriculture. Vision 2020 also talks about a healthy supply of nutritional food to the country's population and the sustainable use of our natural resources in agriculture. I need not say anymore, but Vision 2020 covers that aspect of our vision for agriculture in the year 2020.

With respect to the agricultural access road that the Member wrote to me about, that road was not included in this fiscal year, but there were other roads in his constituency that were included. I am surprised to hear that he did not receive an acknowledgement, because that is normal in the ministry for us to send out acknowledgements. I am certain that an officer from the Penal Regional Office must have visited those areas that he indicated. We are going to try to include some of them in the 2004/2005 budget since agricultural access roads, repairs, and so forth is a continuous programme.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that NEDCO has the clear understanding. What I did say about the banking system with respect to agriculture is that the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) provides 97 per cent of the loans that are available to agricultural farmers, and the bank takes up the next 3 per cent. Because agriculture is a high-risk profession, it is difficult to get more than \$500,000 in loans. That is the ceiling. I checked yesterday with a certain bank and the bank said that they do not give loans, but if the farmer has collateral, they would give up to \$500,000. So one would understand how important it is to have the ADB.

With respect to the Debe/Penal Export Centre—I am sorry that the Member has already left—I was trying to find out where this office was situated—whether

it was the URP office which he and a former Member for Parliament were fighting over as to who should gain what space and where. I am not quite certain about this export centre because the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) building is not too far from there. NAMDEVCO was designed to do marketing and to help exporters. So it was very difficult to follow what the Member said. I know the Member wanted to find out about EMBD and SMCL, but they are not under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. So, these are the few areas that the Member spoke about in relation to the Agricultural Census.

The Member for Naparima did make relevant points for agriculture, but if the Member was listening when I was delivering my presentation, I touched on all those areas that the Member spoke about. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has an accelerated programme for land distribution. I said that during last year and also this year, we have given out 230 new plots to farmers which are approximately 450 hectares of land—that is an average of 5 acres per farmer—and that is acceptable to agriculture. Up to this present time the Member is not even listening. The Member came here with a prepared speech and read it out. The Member did not understand what was written for him and he came here and repeated all what I have said. Up to this time the Member is still not listening so he would not get any information.

With respect to the Noonoo Farm, this is what I said when I was making my presentation. The Member read everything and did not understand what he was reading. The Noonoo Farm yes, there was laryngotracheitis disease on the farm and we culled 22,000 birds. The cost of doing this by the ministry was very high, and we need to restart the farmer, but we have to go through a process. There must be an assessment of how much money the farmer lost. According to the laws of the country, we have to work out a system by which we have to pay the Noonoo Farm. As soon as the reports come in we would be taking them to Cabinet. This Government does not do things behind our colleagues' back. We carry our matters to Cabinet to get approval.

There are farmers who have claims for flooding in the ministry. There is also the black sigatoka that is appearing down on the southern tip of Trinidad. We have already destroyed some of the plantain and banana plantations in that area, and we need to pay these farmers. It is an ongoing process and the Government would pay. We do not pay money like how money was paid to certain people to build houses on 350 acres of land. It must go to Cabinet and when we get permission from Cabinet—the collective responsibility of the Government of

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Trinidad and Tobago—certainly Noonoo Farm would be paid. There are certain things coming out of the investigations that the officers need to look at.

With respect to insurance for agriculture, for a number of years now a number of governments have tried and even private owners have tried, to get insurance for agriculture. Agriculture is a high risk. As a matter of fact, a farmer that I know came to my office in Arouca yesterday. The farmer has been doing agriculture for about 30 years. Recently he lost—and he is an experienced farmer—\$11,000 on a plot of watermelon that he put down. If he had gotten the rains in time he would have made a lot of money, but the rains came when the watermelon was at a certain size, and as the rain fell all the watermelons burst. He lost his entire crop. It is a high-risk matter and the government needs to look at it. Insurance for agriculture is very high and insurance companies would not take that risk. We have tried, but maybe the Member has some other way of getting it done. The Member could speak to me and I could introduce it to the ministry, but up to now we have had that problem. [*Interruption*] The Member cannot get insurance for himself, but he wants to help farmers to get insurance. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Naparima spoke about organic fertilizers coming from the poultry industry. My information on that matter is that the same chemicals that are used to feed the poultry are the same chemicals that would come out in the manure. That has to be rested for about five years before it is organic. Organic is nontoxic—no pesticide, no chemicals. Someone fooled the Member. If you have horse manure—horses are fed and they are injected with high chemicals. If you have a horse out on the race track in Arima—I live around the race track—and people want to use the meat from that horse, you would have to put it out to pasture for about three months so that the horse would purge itself, and the meat would then be good for human consumption. So when the Member was talking about fertilizers, I did not understand what he meant. I am talking here about bio-fertilizers. Bio-fertilizers are what we are speaking about. In common terms, bio-fertilizer is manure. Do you understand? That is the modern term—bio-fertilizers.

**7.05 p.m.**

This organic farming is a big thing now in Trinidad, and very few people know what they are saying, because in order to get healthy crops, if you use your real organic farming, you will get a better price for your produce. People are health conscious now and are paying a higher price for agricultural produce that is non-chemical. Sometimes we are not informed properly and that is a problem.

The Member for Fyzabad, well that was a disaster. He was not listening “none” of the time. When I was speaking, I indicated that this Government is serious about agricultural census. This is why we put \$5.5 million into the budget. I also said that the FAO was giving us US \$235,000 for helping us with technical support, training, a scanner which they provided for us which will make it instead of two years to get information, we will get it in six months. I said all of that.

I also said that the exercise will cost \$16.8 million. I said that. I am certain that at least 20 per cent of you on the other side would have heard that, but I am certain that I said that. The repairs for ECIAF will cost \$1.8 million. That is just repairs, urgent repairs, for toilets, dormitories and so forth. We are not talking about major repairs, because for six years nothing was done. The place has gone down to the extreme that people from Grenada, instead of coming to Trinidad to do the two-year diploma course are going somewhere else or staying in Grenada, because the facilities here are no good. It will cost much more than that. I am certain that when the Member for Diego Martin East comes here, you all will support him on spending additional money for that facility.

With respect to the new date for the census, there is a period. The Minister had to give a period, May 01 to September 30. The census will be done in six weeks. Because of today, having to come here, the CSO has indicated to me this morning that their start off date—because they have done all the training and so forth, and they will continue to train the people—to go to the public will be June 16, 2004. I would like to clear that up.

The forms that the Member for Fyzabad was using probably were really the forms from 22 years ago. Some of them came back, but these forms here, as I indicated when I was making my presentation, there are 23 sections.

**Mr. Sharma:** How many pages?

**Hon. J. Narine:** I will tell you what is happening. What I did allude to is that apart from those 23 areas, if you would like me to call them back out, I was looking at the agricultural census for the new things that we have included into that questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by the FAO. The PNM did not do the questionnaire. The Government had input into the questionnaire, but the FAO is the one that put in the technology and the expertise to build this questionnaire.

This questionnaire is not for the PNM to find out who is African, who is Indian and who is Syrian. That is nonsense. A couple years ago we did a population census. The population census had the same questionnaire. He did not have a problem with it, but because agriculture has to put a census, we are going to be

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victimized because we want to know who is Indian and who is African. That is the nonsense that happens here Friday after Friday.

I was concentrating on the new areas. Beekeeping is a new area. Praedial larceny is a new area in the questionnaire. Marketing information and production problems. That is part of what he was asking. It is there in the form. What problems do you have for production? He certainly was not reading the right thing. Certainly, he was only smelling propaganda, if he had the same form. Do you have the form with aquaculture on it?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Oh. And you have the form with praedial larceny?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes.

**Hon. J. Narine:** And you have the form with production problems?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes.

**Hon. J. Narine:** And those are the same questions you were asking?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Well then you “ent” know how to read! [*Laughter*] We have also asked new questions on education and training in agriculture, location, size, tenure and land use, and so forth, drainage and farm ways, water supply and irrigation. Those are the new questions, but it was convenient to take up the form and say we are asking who is Indian and who is African. That is all the Member for Fyzabad can talk about. He comes here, he makes those statements and certainly, it is not the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to place it on the record again that the jobs for that census were advertised. The persons who were sent to the interviews came through the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. Persons who have A levels, and so forth, went to the Ministry and applied. They did not take 1,000 persons from Laventille to send to Toco, Guayaguayare and Icados. It was distributed according to what type of agricultural holdings and how many we anticipate we would need.

Persons would not be going from Mayaro to Guayaguayare. There might be someone from Guayaguayare who has taken the training, has the ability and the educational background to do the census, and they have to take that oath of secrecy, because I would think that if you choose any and everybody, then the Member of Parliament for Fyzabad will again come here and call names and say



all kinds of things like telephone book, and so forth. We do not want to hear that. We want that when this exercise is complete, Mr. Speaker, that we get the full benefits that we are supposed to get out of this exercise, for the money that we have spent. [*Desk thumping*]

They were interviewed by the CSO; not at Balisier House. The Central Statistical Office has set up, they set up—

**Mr. Sharma:** Without advertisements?

**Hon. J. Narine:** We are not like you. What you used to do is in the past and it will never return. Your problem is \$40 a barrel for oil. That is their problem! The highest in 14 years. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, they are dribbling over the Treasury. We could understand that because they had a time when they could have done that. The people of Trinidad and Tobago are wise now. As a matter of fact, he did not win a seat in Sangre Grande Regional Corporation in the last local government election. Why? Because they did nothing for the agricultural sector up there.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members on the lower ranks, on the Front Bench of the Opposition, please, let the Member conclude his address.

**Mr. Sharma:** He is provoking us, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no. Please continue, hon. Member.

**Hon. J. Narine:** That did not only happen in Sangre Grande. It happened in Siparia too. Fyzabad lost, because that rhetoric and the false information that they have been perpetrating for years can no longer stand scrutiny with the educated population that we have in Trinidad. [*Interruption*] I am not worried about that. You are going to stay in Opposition forever, if you get another chance.

**Mr. Partap:** You stole the election!

**Hon. J. Narine:** I? I got 14,000 votes, brother.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, hon. Member for Nariva. It is late.

**Mr. Partap:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. J. Narine:** They say short people does get on real bad, but he is a different type of character. You understand? Because he wrote [*Word expunged*] in the newspaper coming to Parliament— [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no. Please.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Untruths.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, you will expunge that.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. When we were in Opposition, he had the opportunity to write in the newspaper, false information every week. When he came here, he continued with the same thing. He was trained properly by the media. Half-trained!

I have confidence in the CSO officers. They had the interviews and they have selected the people. Once this census is officially started on June 16, 2004 in the areas on the ground in Trinidad and Tobago, I am certain that in six months' time, while we are doing our strategic planning exercise and we have to get further information to bring that agricultural sector policy and everything together, Mr. Speaker, at the end of it we are going to be better off and we are going to be moving the agricultural sector forward and we are going to make sure that we alleviate the poverty that we have in Trinidad and Tobago throughout the rural communities.

I thank you and I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the Agricultural Census Order, 2004 be approved.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be adjourned to Friday, May 21, 2004 at 1.30 p.m. I want to inform the House that the Finance Committee meeting will be called for that morning at 11.30 a.m.

**Mr. Singh:** If you are having Finance Committee, are you having the debate in the evening?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** The issue of questions and responses, you normally have it on a Wednesday and then have a Friday debate. It gives us time to respond. If you have it in the morning, to have it in the evening might present some problems in the context of answering questions on the Finance Committee.

**Hon. K. Valley:** I take the point made by the hon. Member, Mr. Speaker. One, we can make the assumption that we would not have any questions. *[Laughter]* Two, Mr. Speaker, we can have Finance Committee on Friday and have the debate the following Wednesday, which is going to give—*[Interruption]*

*Adjournment*

*Friday, May 14, 2004*

or the following—well I do not know if that will give sufficient time to our people to get the responses.

Mr. Speaker, I am at the mercy of the House, as a servant of the House, but we will have the Finance Committee on Friday, and then—

**Mr. Sharma:** At 1.30 p.m.

**Hon. K. Valley:** We can have it at 1.30 p.m., in which case, we will follow the Order Paper and the Bills introduced on the Supplemental Order Paper, starting with the Venture Capital (Amdt.) Bill, will then be taken. In addition, there are some amendments coming from the Senate relating to the Accreditation Council Bill which will also be done.

Mr. Speaker, what we would do, therefore, let us agree that priority would be given to the Finance Bill, unless there are a number of questions, in which case, we would have to defer the debate on the report of the Finance Bill.

**Mr. Singh:** I hear the Leader of Government Business, but I think for good order and proper parliamentary debate, we ought to really have an established date. It will lend itself to better organization.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, we would always attempt to accommodate the Opposition. Therefore, we would have the Finance Committee on Friday and we would at that time determine when we would have the debate.

**Mr. Singh:** No debate Friday, on that Finance Bill. That is agreed?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Yes. We would have Finance Committee at 1.30 p.m., Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the House be adjourned to Friday at 1.30 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 7.22 p.m.*