

THE
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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON OCTOBER 17, 2002

SESSION 2003—2004

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 04, 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 Naparima requesting leave of absence from the sittings of the House for the month of June. The leave which the hon. Member seeks is granted. I have also received communication from the following Members: the hon. Member for Arima; the hon. Member for Arouca South, the hon. Member for Tunapuna and the hon. Member for St. Augustine. The leave which the Members seek is also granted.

CONDOLENCES

(MR. JOHN PHILLIP SCOTT)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to bring to your attention the death of a former Member of this honourable House, Mr. John Scott. I ask Members, at this time, if they so wish, to express condolences.

The Minister of Housing (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all my colleagues on this side, I take the opportunity to record in the *Hansard* our notice and appreciation for the life and contribution of John Phillip Scott.

As you may know, Mr. Speaker, Mr. John Scott was one of those servants of the country. He first made his mark in Trinidad and Tobago as the consummate professional public servant who served as Chief Geologist during our early developmental era. He was in the forefront of a lot of the technical work that was done in preparing this country for the prosperity we now enjoy, with respect to the exploitation of our hydrocarbon resources.

Mr. Scott did more than that. By his very nature he was a very compassionate and humble man, but he had very high standards, especially with respect to young people and their aspirations and development. In his position as government Chief

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Geologist, he played a very significant role in guiding, I dare say, many of us, to the profession that we ended up in and whatever level we attained. I can speak without fear of contradiction that he did influence my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and myself. I am not sure what influence he had on the hon. Prime Minister, but I do know that he influenced a lot of us to take part in the profession of geology. I am advised that the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro was also one of those influenced by Mr. John Scott to take part in the profession of geology. He was always available to provide guidance and insisted on very high standards.

In my own case, I would have been somewhere else now doing something else, had it not been for his guidance into the political arena as well, because he was singularly responsible for encouraging me to join the PNM political party, in the constituency of Tunapuna. Mr. Scott served as the Member of Parliament for Tunapuna for one term and he served as parliamentary secretary during that period. He also did a lot of community work in sport and with the Boy Scouts. Today, the nation is poorer for his passing. He has left us a legacy of service before self and we mourn his passing. May he rest in peace.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*): Mr. Speaker, it has always been asked how do you pay tribute to a departed soul. The religious fathers have always advised that we look at the life of the departed soul and see what good we could obtain from it.

John Phillip Scott served as a Member of this Parliament for a number of years. As my colleague opposite indicated, he had tremendous influence, but I think the highlight of John's life was his ability and willingness to learn from his mistakes. He was very saddened when I last met him some months ago about the developments that now obtain in this country. He was saddened to see a Member of Parliament, in the very Tunapuna court, facing a particular charge, but more than that, during his illness he was largely left unattended. It is true that some colleagues opposite attended his funeral, but during his illness they were absent.

In paying this tribute, we must look at ourselves. Oftentimes, sitting Members of Parliament and former Members are left on their own. The question has always come to bear: How do we treat with our Members of Parliament? Perhaps, in paying this tribute to John Phillip Scott, we must examine our role and how we treat with each other. We on this side pray that John will obtain eternal peace and happiness in God's place.

Thank you

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I also add my sentiments on the passing of Mr. John Scott.

I had the opportunity of knowing Mr. John Scott in another organization of which we were both members. I can tell you that as a member of that organization

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he was very hard working and dedicated. What, perhaps, some of you do not know is that Mr. John Scott was a musician of note. He was an extremely good baritone and in that organization when we had Christmas concerts he would sing. He will be sadly missed, I am sure, by Members of this House and members of that organization of which I speak.

I ask the Clerk of the House to write an appropriate letter to the widow of John Scott and his family expressing the condolences of this House. May I invite Members to stand and observe a minute's silence.

The House of Representatives stood.

WRITTEN ANSWERS

(GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO PROVIDE)

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago you made a ruling consistent with the Standing Orders. Consistent with that ruling, the whole House ought to have been presented with copies of answers to five questions. Three weeks have elapsed and we are getting nothing but contemptuous treatment on the part of the Government.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that inadvertently those answers have not been sent to the Clerk. I have taken steps and they would be here shortly. The Government apologizes for that.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Trinidad and Tobago Roads (Registered Motor Vehicles)

102. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister kindly state:

- (i) How many motor vehicles are registered to use the roads in Trinidad and Tobago?
- (ii) Whether there are motor vehicles using the roads which should have been inspected and obtained the relevant certificates and which have not complied with the law?
- (iii) If the answer to (b) is in the negative, what steps are being taken to have such vehicles inspected?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Mr. Franklin Khan): Mr. Speaker, there are 377,371 motor vehicles registered to use the roads in Trinidad and Tobago, as at April 30, 2004.

The answer to Part (ii) of the question is in the affirmative. The answer to Part (iii) is as follows: The Transport Division periodically undertakes road checks through its officers in order to ensure that vehicles five years old and over have been inspected and issued with certificates in accordance with the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amdt.) Regulations, Legal Notice No. 197 of 1999 and No. 34 of 2002, respectively. Those vehicles and drivers found to be in breach of the regulations by the absence of certification or otherwise not inspected by duly authorized examiners under the law, are prosecuted accordingly.

Thank you.

**Highway Patrol Division
(Introduction of Computer Technology)**

104. Mr. Subhas Panday asked the Minister of National Security:

- (a) Does the Government intend to introduce computer technology in police vehicles and in particular those in the Highway Patrol Division, so that they can instantly retrieve relevant data about motor vehicles and drivers using the roads in Trinidad and Tobago?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the negative, why not?
- (c) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, when?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and the Minister in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Security, in fact, intends to introduce computer technology in the operation of police vehicles and, in particular, those in the Highways Division, so that they can instantly retrieve data about motor vehicles and drivers using the roads in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of National Security intends to introduce this technology by February 2006, that is, immediately after the Transport Division fully computerizes its records on a wide area network.

Part (b) of the question is not applicable, in light of the answer just given. The answer to part (c) of the question is as follows: The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service must wait on the Licensing Department of the Ministry of Works and Transport to fully computerize its records before it could be in a position to instantly retrieve relevant data about motor vehicles and drivers using the roads of Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of Works and Transport anticipates that its records will be fully computerized in about 18 months' time, after the lawful award of a contract.

The Ministry of National Security understands that the Licensing Department is in the process of preparing tender documents for the award of a contract to fully

computerize its database, thereby allowing accessibility of its records to the police service. It is anticipated that the tendering process will be completed within a matter of weeks; therefore, within the next three months or so, a contract is likely to be awarded. It is to be noted, however, that the police service already has in place a system whereby data is accessed on a biweekly basis from the Licensing Department and this information is stored at the control room of the police service. Highway patrol vehicles, in turn, access this information from personnel at the control room and by way of wireless broadcast.

Thank you.

**DIPLOMATIC POUCH
(MISUSE OF)**

The Prime Minister (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise this honourable House of continuing action being taken by my Government consequent upon the alerting by security officials of what appears to be a clandestine, illicit drugs operation, allegedly involving some non-diplomatic staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their misuse of the diplomatic pouch in the furtherance of their nefarious activities. My Government acted with dispatch in recognition of the seriousness of the development.

Mr. Speaker, on May 11, 2004, the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, hon. Eric Williams, advised the Senate of developments up to that time, including the charging of two midlevel officials with offences related to alleged drug trafficking. A third midlevel official has since been charged. In the meantime the law will take its course. Let me assure hon. Members that for our part the Government does not propose to engage in any witch-hunt.

On May 18, 2004, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift, in further updating the Senate, pointed to further weaknesses in the security system surrounding our diplomatic transmission and assured Senators of the Government's determination to eliminate these shortcomings.

On reviewing procedures, Ministers have learned, with some consternation, of a serious breach involving a diplomatic pouch which took place on June 05, 2001, resulting in the loss of 200 blank passports. Despite the fact that the then Prime Minister was notified, no remedial measures were put in place.

Mr. Singh: Blame UNC! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. P. Manning: Mr. Speaker, we intend to do better. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

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Hon. P. Manning: Accordingly, the Cabinet has decided to appoint a committee with the following terms of reference:

- (i) To investigate the present and past practices with respect to the security governing the use of the diplomatic pouch generally;
- (ii) To determine the extent to which the usage at (i) above is consistent with international law and best practice, using both international law and the experiences of other jurisdictions as a guide; and
- (iii) To make such recommendations as may be deemed fit concerning the further use and security of the diplomatic pouch.

The committee will be comprised of the following: Prof. Andrew Burgess, Dean Faculty of Law, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, as Chairman; Mr. Frank Abdullah, retired Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ambassador, and a third person to be named. In the circumstances, we have initiated discussions with the Canadian authorities with a view to obtaining the services of an appropriately qualified official provided by that government. It is the intention of this Government to have this committee report as expeditiously as possible, certainly within three months.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Sanitize the report, it has cocaine!

FAMILY PROCEEDINGS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill relating to Family Proceedings [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

[SIXTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [November 28, 2003]:

Be it resolved that this House reaffirm its commitment to the elimination of discrimination in all its forms and the right of the individual to equality of treatment from public authorities. [*Mr. G. Yetming*]

Question again proposed.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, during the last occasion when we met, I was entering upon an extension. I think I have an extended half an hour. I would use that opportunity to summarize what we had been dealing with and to make a few observations.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall that in my contribution I did point out that contrary to what the mover of the Motion had indicated was the intention to obtain out of this exercise, the Motion, in itself, had turned out and was engineered to be a back door discussion on racial discrimination and unfairness in various forms. I did make the suggestion and I am making it again, that it ought to be that if there is to be a discussion on race, race relations and discrimination, we should be man and woman enough to come forward openly and file the appropriate motion in the House and have Members come out openly and debate this very sensitive issue and not file a motion and seek to introduce very clandestine thoughts indicating that it is about something else when, in fact, the substance and genesis of the Motion is to talk about alleged racial discrimination.

1.50 p.m.

In my own case I did find myself being named as Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, as advocating, supporting and presenting some aspect of racialism and discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, because I tried to assist the House in indicating that the text of the particular document arose out of another document which in fact had its origin under the previous government. I introduced no new idea. I simply pointed out what the document said; where it came from and how it occurred.

I cannot understand why the people of Trinidad and Tobago have a death wish? We have a very destructive streak about us. We are a very fortunate people. Our very strengths can be and will be our undoing if we are not careful. No country has ever risen to its full potential, ever realized its goals and ambitions, if all the people of that country did not pull together around common ideals and thoughts. Today, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have a bunch of people who are playing the fool with our future. I would draw your attention to a comment that was made many years ago and it stuck in my mind as a young man.

During the era of the Cyprus crisis, I remember seeing a cartoon in the *Times* or one of those magazines, of a gentleman sitting on a barrel with a cigar or cigarette in his mouth. The caption said that Cyprus is a powder keg surrounded by a chain of careless smokers, chief of whom is Archbishop Makarios" who happened to be leader of Cyprus at that time. Of course, you know what happened to Cyprus after that? Today, in Trinidad and Tobago, I am saying that Trinidad and Tobago is a powder keg surrounded and inhabited by a chain of careless smokers, chief of whom is the Leader of the Opposition. When we get political success, everything is okay. The minute we get political defeat or failure our intention is to destroy the entire country, so as to make a point that if we do not have it, we would destroy it. That is what we are facing today.

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What brought this Motion here? It was a technical assessment of the need to treat with a particular problem we have of the under performance of Afro Trinidadians, especially the young ones. The technicians pointed out that something has to be done about this for the country's benefit. That statement in that document and that policy position caused all kinds of lawlessness to be stirred up. I want to draw this to your attention. I did not bring a copy, but a few months ago on the *Time* magazine, front page cover the article was about a similar kind of problem being faced in Brazil, where Afro Brazilians, making up a large part of the country, were deemed to be under-performing at the national level. The government of Brazil took a policy position to instruct that certain actions be taken to end up with a situation where Afro Brazilians are playing a larger role in the Brazilian society. They went as far as to instruct the universities to ensure that a certain percentage of Afro Brazilians get into those institutions. They found it was unacceptable to have approximately 30 or 40 per cent of Afro Brazilians and only four of five per cent entering university. Whatever the reason, the government of Brazil found that had to change if Brazil had to develop in the way it ought to be. If that happened in Trinidad and Tobago I presume that there are those who would have burnt down the country.

I draw your attention in a similar vein. Given how people behaved, especially the politicians in response to the COSTTAT mandate and the policy position outlined for its role in addressing the balance and underperformance of Afro Trinidadians, I draw your attention to no less a country than the United Kingdom. We fashion our Parliament after the United Kingdom. We claim to have the Westminster system. We are part of the Commonwealth. I draw your attention to an article in *Sunday Express* dated April, 18. I looked very carefully to see if there was any comment from the other side but I have not seen it as yet. Maybe they do not read the newspapers, but maybe they do. The article is headlined, "London Police fast-tracking black recruits". It says:

"Britain's biggest police force is urging positive discrimination in favour of black recruits in one of the most radical reforms in nearly 30 years of race relations law,...

The Metropolitan Police Force wants to 'fast-track' ethnic minority people into its training schools ahead of some white candidates to make its force more representative of London's racial mix.

The Met believes its plan for positive discrimination would be illegal under the 1976 Race Relations Act as it stands.

The force says if the proposal is blocked the government target to have 25 per cent of its officers from the ethnic minorities by 2009 will be missed by 'light years' despite having had a decade to succeed.

The Met is more white than the population it serves, and the target was set after the force was branded institutionally racist by the Macpherson report into the Stephen Lawrence scandal.

Within the next fortnight Met chiefs will meet the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to ask for its advice and backing.

If secured, it will seek the support of the home secretary David Blunkett.

Martin Tiplady, the Met's head of human resources, told the Guardian: 'This plan is the one that needs the most work, it is the most radical and would have the best chance of success.' ...

'We want to explore, if we can recruit not just on merit, but also on ethnicity,' Tiplady said.

Leroy Logan, chairman of the Met's Black Police Association, denied the plan would be unfair. 'There is an obvious imbalance in the force and it needs to be corrected so we can do our job properly.' ...

We need to sustain and retain people who are in the force already. We're haemorrhaging black staff.' ...

Here you have a situation where the British have a problem and it is not enough black people in the police service. They have come out openly and said that they have to do something about that because it is desirable to have a larger proportion of black people in the police service because if they do not, they would have certain problems. I did not hear anybody burning down England and any political party in England accusing anybody of racism and discrimination. They acknowledged their problem and insofar as they acknowledged that positive discrimination would be illegal under the Race Relations Act, they said that they had to take steps to bring this problem into the legal fold. The solution can only be to bring more black policemen into the service. If that had happened in Trinidad and Tobago, what would have been our response? Suppose I had said something like that, you would have heard accusations of the worst kind and put in the worst possible construction. Here you have in Britain a publicly open statement about how they intend to treat with a problem of imbalance.

In Trinidad and Tobago a policy document of under-performance of an identified group, albeit Afro Trinidadian males, turns this country into something

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that we cannot understand. I am urging it. Maybe, we need to have a proper debate in this Parliament on race relations, so that all the issues that are being raised clandestinely, and all the allegations and threats would come out. Let people stand and say what is their position. Let people use evidence to support their position. If there are imbalances and there is need for adjustment or a different approach to race relations, let us do it in a civilized way. That is required in this country. Not every Friday you come to Parliament, every single issue you see an element of racial distrust.

This Motion does not stand on its own. It is an appendage of a position of the Opposition. The Opposition has clearly taken a position that it would exploit racial divisiveness for political gain. We are talking about discrimination and only today we are hearing aggressive statements from the Member for Fyzabad about local government under their control not being given this and that. He seems to forget that evidence was presented here by the Member for Arouca North which showed that during their tenure, Corporations controlled by the PNM, like Diego Martin and Port of Spain did not get one cent from the allocation of the Road Improvement Programme. We did not create racial strife in this country.

I want to tell Trinidad and Tobago that what is going on today with respect to the stoking of racial hatred and this constant clamour about discrimination and looking to see race here and there, and worse, the fact that the official Opposition and its leaders have taken a position to poison the mind of the East Indian community against others in this country would put Trinidad and Tobago on the road to destruction. We have a choice. We can build this country together or destroy it.

When the Leader of the Opposition led a march under the guise of crime and in fact it was a political march, and he spoke about, 'we are in the majority' and we must not tolerate whatever he talks about. Who is the "we"? It could not be the UNC because the UNC is in the minority. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I must appeal to you to let the Member have his say in peace. We have some young school children. Let us recognize their presence. Mr. Panday you would have your chance. I do not think that you have spoken as yet.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The Leader of the Opposition talks about "we are in the majority". He was not talking about the UNC because the UNC is in the minority. The reason why you are there and we are here is that you are in the minority. He was talking in coded language to the East Indian population following on his allegations of racial discrimination. [*Interruption*] You could shout as much as

you like and say whatever you want. It is my turn to speak in this Parliament. I am going on record as saying that the UNC is engaging in racial baiting in Trinidad and Tobago. I am appealing to the Indian population to disregard the political death bed arguments of the UNC because they are being misled. Every single issue of governance they find—*[Interruption]* I am glad you said that.

In a recent contribution in this Parliament, the Member for Couva South had the temerity to say to me as Minister of Housing in Trinidad and Tobago, that the reason I have taken issue with a particular project in Couva is that the people who are getting the houses are Ramlack, Ramsingh, Singh and Rampersad and I have taken a position that because Indian people are involved I am going to stop the project. Do you know what he is saying? He is saying that if I, as a minister in Trinidad and Tobago, find a problem in NHA with a contractor, and it happens to be a contractor of Indian origin, I should do nothing about it because I should be afraid of him accusing me of racism. I have taken an oath and it is to operate without fear or favour, malice or ill-will. If the contractor has a problem whether he is Chinese, Arab, Indian or African, my job is to ensure that it is investigated and it would be. Given what I have discovered, to tell me that I must keep quiet because the Member for Couva South would accuse me of racism, that is what they want. They want to be able to say do not do this or that because—every single issue they raise is to make the country look bad and make the Government look as though it is discriminating. Observe something! It is not the average person in this country who is saying that. It is the political directorate of the Opposition that is leading this charge. The people in this country live in harmony. All this talk about racial discrimination is in the political arena. It is because they believe that they could ride on this topic into political power. That is a dangerous thing for a country like Trinidad and Tobago. Whilst sometimes we talk about unity, there can be no unity if the leaders are playing this dangerous game.

2.10 p.m.

The leaders are playing this game, at every level in this country. This country is crying out for leadership and the Opposition leader is a leader in this country and when he takes the position of denigrating the country's institutions or the position, "I have no responsibility to Trinidad and Tobago"—man you could shout as much as you like, you had your opportunity.

Imagine that a few years ago we had a situation where the wife of the US ambassador to a South American country was found to be operating as a conduit for the transport of cocaine to the United States. *[Interruption]* That is an established fact. Not one soul in America has been reported as describing the

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American Government or foreign service as “narco traffickers”. But in Trinidad and Tobago we had the situation where some people were found breaking the law, attempting to use our diplomatic pouch to transport drugs; they were arrested and on the way to the court. The matter is being dealt with according to law, but how does the Opposition deal with it? By labelling the country and the Government “a narco government”. [*Crosstalk*]

You might know; I do not know. The bottom line is: how we handle ourselves as against how others handle themselves. I do not know how the US ambassador’s wife got the cocaine to America. What I do know is that no American politician labelled the American Government or its system, “narco traffickers”. But you are too glad when you hear about a murder or trafficking in cocaine. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: What? Nonsense!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: It is your intention to report bad news. The day something does not go well you are excited to report it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The son of one of our Members was murdered. I want the Member to withdraw that we are happy to hear about a murder.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Withdraw what? That is my opinion.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Withdraw it! It is totally false!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Please, please!

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please, we have young children in the House. [*Crosstalk*] Please continue.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, they can say what they want, it is my opportunity to give my opinion; they do not have to like it. [*Crosstalk*] You could say what you want.

Mr. Speaker, they are on a crusade about crime. As far as they are concerned the only crime in this country is murder. “Tiefing” government money is not a crime, as far as they are concerned. So you have the ridiculous state of affairs where those who have led this country into an era of Treasury rape, all of a sudden they are leading the country against crime. To impress whom? Instead of expressing some contrition for what has happened under your administration, you are leading an attack on crime! It is an absence of credibility that causes the criminal not to take us seriously.

You talk about the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), attacking the office of the DPP. When the DPP was called upon to investigate LABIDCO, it was viewed as an independent office. When he wrote a letter to the Bernard Commission cautioning the Chairman to make sure that he did not trample on the rights of individuals who may later face prosecution, he was okay. The minute prosecutions have begun and persons have been arrested, you, from the highest political level, no lesser than the Leader of the Opposition, launch an attack on the DPP, accusing him of being in the control of the PNM and the Government. [*Crosstalk*] The minute it does not suit you, your approach is to destroy and denigrate.

I took careful note of the fact that one of their Cabinet colleagues was on a murder charge. He went to court and got off. Nobody on this side said that they had anything to do with it. I have a question to ask. The Leader of the Opposition, who was the then Prime Minister, told this country, reluctantly, that he received a letter from Sumairsingh saying that his life was threatened by a particular individual. He admitted receiving the letter. I saw in the media that the person who typed the letter is still in this country, yet you have a murder charge being dismissed and neither of these two persons turned up in the court, because that was not part of the evidence.

As a layman, I want somebody to explain to me how such important information could not have been part of that trial, because as far as I am concerned, the Leader of the Opposition should have been in the witness box as part of the evidence to say what he received and who threatened whom, but it did not happen. We did not say that the court was biased or that it was UNC, but there was a ruling in the Tunapuna court last week and, all of a sudden, the Opposition launches and attack on the Judiciary, making allegations which are damaging to the country's image, because our colleagues on the other side are telling the world that in Trinidad and Tobago the Government controls the courts and the bench and what goes on in there is as a result of what the Government says and wants. It is a good thing the people of this country understand the desperation of the Opposition and are not taking them on. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, insofar as the Opposition has latched on to this approach of doing their business in trying to incite the East Indian population into believing they are being disadvantaged, in trying to believe that the Government has a design to destroy their opportunities, insofar as they have taken a political decision to ensure that people in this country, the few thousands who would listen to them—because in a population of 1.3 million it is not hard to get 2,000 or 3,000 people to follow you—the vast majority of people in this country of all

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walks of life, of all racial considerations are good, honest, right-thinking people. Notwithstanding what you have to say, they would think for themselves and would compare what you have done and what we are doing.

Even before we begin to give out houses, they know that we are discriminating. [*Crosstalk*] Even before the allocations have started! Tens of thousands of persons need houses; we are building houses; they are objecting to every single site. As the Minister of Housing, I will do the job that I am assigned to do, without fear or favour, malice or ill will. [*Crosstalk*] Insofar as they continue to bleat about discrimination, I will disregard them in the full knowledge that my staff, my Ministry and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago are all acting fairly to all our citizenry. [*Desk thumping*]

Insofar as they seek to incite racial hatred on the radio stations, in the newspapers, in the Parliament, I have every confidence that the vast majority of the East Indian population will see it for what it is: naked politics which cannot be supported by facts. [*Desk thumping*] I will simply say: If they get their wish in creating the kind of discord that they seek to create for a political party, if they succeed in poisoning the social structure of this country to create animosity between neighbour and neighbour, Trinidad and Tobago's bright prospect will flit away and be replaced by the kind of aggravation, danger and brutishness which the people of Cyprus, Ireland and other places experience, because certain leaders believed that their political position was more valuable than the country's future.

I stop on this note and ask you, Mr. Speaker, to take careful note, as we proceed from here, and see how they conduct their business; see who they appeal to; hear what they say and see what they do, and ask yourself if that is for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. They are not alone. This country has to take its future seriously and right now the Opposition is not contributing to the future development of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Gillian Lucky (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Mr. Speaker, it is clear, having heard the contribution by the Member for Diego Martin West who, obviously, allowed himself to reach to a certain volatile level, self-induced of course, it seems that he has not recuperated from the fact that the UNC was able to get a wide cross section of people last week Sunday, 15,000 in number, to march against crime. [*Desk thumping*] This Government for too long has been underestimating the frustration that people feel because of its inactivity with respect to dealing with the escalation in crime.

It is said that when you point one finger at someone, three point back to you. I am sure that when the Member for Diego Martin West was speaking, he obviously did

not realize that three fingers kept pointing at him. When he accused this side of using this Motion as a back door to discuss race, that is really what was in his mind. He has made this debate go into a very restricted, closed discussion on racial discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, accusing people, because he, himself, is guilty.

The Member for Diego Martin West should really be Judge Rowley, because Judge Rowley is able to say that people who are presumed innocent and are now before the court are guilty of theft. That is the kind of discrimination that people are facing in this country and that goes over and above race. When people are charged, everything is being done by the other side to ensure that they do not get a fair trial. Yet you have Members standing like Pontius Pilate and boasting that they will be fair, free and show no favour, trying to impress who, the young students who have come to join us today in Parliament?

Then so clever the Member for Diego Martin West thinks he is, he said to you, Mr. Speaker, "Listen now and see how the other side will conduct themselves." He is in for a big surprise, because I do not intend to take this discussion down the road that he has taken it. We will deal with discrimination and not limit it to racial discrimination, because as you pointed out earlier, Mr. Speaker, we are mindful that we have young people here today. One would have thought that the Member for Diego Martin West would have recognized that when we have young visitors coming to the Parliament, young minds who are going to be the future of our nation, there is a greater onus upon us to make sure that we adhere to our very serious oaths of office.

Let me make it very clear from the outset: I read this Motion filed by the Member for St. Joseph. I have been listening very carefully to the contributions from both sides. Upon reading it what I think stands out most is what is contained in the resolution:

"Be it resolved that this House re-affirms its commitment to the elimination of discrimination in all its forms and the right of the individual to equality of treatment from public authorities."

To me, therefore, contained in this Motion is not only an opportunity for the Opposition to do as we have done in the previous contributions, give evidence and situations in which there has been discrimination or apparent discrimination that has gone unattended by the Government, but also a challenge for us on this side to work as a team to implement measures to eradicate discrimination. After hearing the contribution by the Member for Diego Martin West, it is clear in my mind that

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this Government is not committed to eradicating the kinds of discrimination we face here in Trinidad and Tobago, not limited to racial discrimination. [*Desk thumping*]

I can speak quite openly and happily of how proud I felt of Miss Danielle Jones that night at the Miss Universe Pageant 2004. She represented all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I have always looked at the pageant, not for some aspects of the competitions that, perhaps, other colleagues would want to focus on, but I like certain aspects of that competition. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Miss G. Lucky: As I said before, Mr. Speaker, you know what has been used against me, in terms of the unparliamentary insinuations but, as I said, one finger here, three back to him. It is on the record, so, perhaps, those who would be affected by it, we could show it to them.

When Danielle Jones was moving forward in the competition, I am sure we all felt a sense of happiness. She is a Trinbagonian who has made us proud. No issue of race or political affiliation arose. Of course, we were disappointed when they announced the fourth runner up and it was Miss Trinidad and Tobago, but we did so well to come in the top five. I take this opportunity to congratulate Miss Danielle Jones. [*Desk thumping*] That is how we must start thinking in this country. We have to stop thinking of race and colour of the skin and start understanding that if we have a true sense of patriotism and country then issues such as race will naturally be put on the back burner and, hopefully, blown into obliteration; but it does not happen that way. It does not happen because the other side is always willing to make false allegations against us.

Take for example what the Member for Diego Martin West referred to. He used an analogy taken from Cyprus or some other jurisdiction and he also used an example from Britain. The Member referred to something called “affirmative action”. It is no secret to say that affirmative action has been adopted in several countries, but those very countries have also been very mindful about the disadvantages of affirmative action. If the Member for Diego Martin West is so convinced that there is nothing wrong with a policy of affirmative action, then he should not just limit it to education; let us apply it across the board. Let us look at the police service, the coast guard and the army and determine if one race is in the majority and another race in the minority; let us apply affirmative action. From the time you start showing the other side that if they have a policy they must apply it across the board, fairly and without favour, they jump up and say, “No, no, no, no, why are we going that far?” “Let us do it on a trial basis.” Their trial

basis is always a very restricted approach. Let us not use conveniently a policy that is meant to be applied across the board if, in fact, it is to be applied at all.

We talk so much about affirmative action. I am sure many of them on the other side do not even know what it is. [*Crosstalk*] Affirmative action is one of the possible solutions against discrimination in which an approach is taken that to fight discrimination one uses discrimination. I quote from a document that is called "Colour blindness" edited by A. Cameron. In this article a very concise explanation was given of affirmative action, explaining, not only the process but the disadvantage of the process:

"Affirmative action is where women and racial minorities get extra 'points' when applying for a job, trying to get into college, applying for housing, etc. For example, let's suppose that John, Billy, and Suzy are all applying for a job and that John is white and Billy and Suzy are black. Let's also assume that they all score the exact same score on the test, let's just say they got 50 points. Since John's a white male, his score stays at 50. Billy, a black male, gets extra points for being black, upping his score to, let's say, 70. Finally, Suzy gets extra points not only for being black but also for being a woman, upping her score to 80. Obviously, Suzy would get the job, leaving John and Billy unemployed."

So the writer gives the explanation and then hastens to add:

"The political solution, of affirmative action in particular, often times harms the ones that we're trying to help. Although there are many ways in which this is done, one of the most obvious is the effect this would have on those beneficiaries that actually earned what they are receiving. They would be constantly under the suspicion of favouritism due to their gender or their skin color, even if that had nothing to do with it. Also, solving discrimination politically wouldn't solve the problem of personal [or social] discrimination. Actually, it would make personal discrimination worse than it already is..."

Putting it in its concise form, even affirmative action is a political solution to discrimination, but because of the attendant hazards and the risk of worsening the problem, it is not applied with any great degree of frequency.

Only last year, the Supreme Court in the United States had to admit, by what was a very thin majority, the decision that affirmative action is something that has to be reviewed and revisited, because it is creating more problems than it is solving. So when the Member for Diego Martin West jumps up to speak about affirmative action in these glowing terms, let him do a little more research and

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have a better understanding of a policy that this Government seeks to use for its own partisan interests. [*Interruption*]

I agree with you, let the press do their research, but this is one afternoon when I would still be called ungraceful and bumptious.

As I said before, discrimination is something that exists and it is the challenge of every government and institution to deal with it. The best method to deal with discrimination is by ensuring that we create a sense of patriotism, a sense of feeling proud about our country, fighting for the nation's interests. That is why I must again refer to that march which occurred last week Sunday. Whereas the PNM, and the Government, moreso, would have expected 2,000 or 3,000 people, which the Member for Diego Martin West still believes was the number of people there, the Government cannot come to terms with the fact that 15,000 people of different races, most of which support the UNC, there were, perhaps, some who had no political affiliation, were willing to take to the streets in the rain, because one of the greatest discriminatory acts taking place right now is the discrimination that law-abiding citizens feel.

Law-abiding citizens in this country feel that they have been discriminated against, because this Government, despite its boasts and in light of its hypocrisy and incompetence, cannot deal with the situation of crime. Jump high, jump low, the Government cannot deal with the situation of crime. They have tried to dismiss it in a flippant manner and they have talked about measures that are yet to be implemented. Just in case any Member on the other side does not think that it is relevant to the Motion, we need to understand that discrimination in this country is really not along racial lines, but there is a political divide in the country. The political divide is being exacerbated by those who sit on the other side. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, all the allegations made here this afternoon about the UNC promoting race is not true. I really must say, it has not been expunged from the record in the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin, but I took umbrage to the statement when the Member said that we in the UNC get excited about bad news and that we are happy when a murder is committed. Perhaps, that is how they feel on that side. Let me be fair to his colleagues, perhaps that is how he feels about it. He was right; the Member for Diego Martin West said that it was his opinion.

Mr. Speaker, let me now formally put it on record, especially since that statement was, no doubt, made to inflame the minds of those who might get carried away and believe it to be true; we on this side never feel excited about a

murder. [*Desk thumping*] We could never be happy that a person is killed in this country every 35 hours. We on this side intend to do something about it. [*Desk thumping*] Pro-active action is what we will be taking. To dismiss something that people feel very strongly about, make it look to those innocent minds that we on this side are so wicked, we are happy when people commit murder, what an insensitive statement; not surprising. [*Crosstalk*] Let that go on the *Hansard* record.

You are entitled to your opinion. In a democracy you are entitled to have a wrong opinion and your opinion is wrong. It cannot be sustained. [*Crosstalk*]

What was very alarming to me and I think very saddening, was when I read an article this week in which there was a description of what occurred at a school in San Fernando. It seems that with respect to violence, murders and kidnapping, San Fernando is unfortunately taking the limelight. On page 3 of the *Express* of June 03, 2004 reported under the headline, "Bring Sir back", is a story by Richard Charan; it states:

"Armed riot squad police with sub-machine guns were called out to a secondary school yesterday to squash a violent protest by pupils angered over the transfer of their principal.

Hundreds of pupils of the San Fernando Secondary Comprehensive School threw chairs..."

And this is the very disturbing part:

"and hurled racist remarks at teachers, who they accused of forcing the removal of principal Gene Bacchus who is to be replaced by Vishnu Dass."

This particular article worried me; it did not excite me or make me happy, but after the contribution from the Member for Diego Martin West I could understand why this kind of behaviour has now filtered to the schools of Trinidad and Tobago, because young people are beginning to think that this kind of behaviour is acceptable and right.

Mr. Speaker, what has made it very worrying is that these young people made racial remarks obviously because they were confronted with a situation in which there was a principal of one ethnic origin and another principal of another ethnic origin, and not only the violence, which in itself is alarming, but also the fact that they felt that was the way to deal with the situation. Again, we make the point that unless and until the Government starts setting the proper example, the future of this nation is going to be something that we have to be very worried about.

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If you read the contributions from those on that side, it becomes a tit for tat. Those on the other side are never able to explain or justify why they do what they do. What they do instead is say, "Well the UNC did this and the UNC did that." Perhaps if they start taking responsibility for their actions while they are in office, we would all be on a better footing. That is why a Minister of Foreign Affairs could say that he accepts full ministerial responsibility for drugs found in a diplomatic pouch and it is acceptable and the norm that he would not go the further step and say, "And as a result I resign," because that was incumbent upon him. If in any ministry things go wrong while under the watch of a particular minister, that minister must give his resignation forthwith. Those are the kinds of conventions, traditions and ethics that make the Westminster system of government work and those are the kinds of ethics and conventions that we do not have in Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like to quote from an article written by the People's Movement for Human Rights Eradication and Education, not the People's National Movement. It says:

"What is the human right to freedom from discrimination, every woman, man, youth and child has the human right to freedom from discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other status and to other fundamental human rights dependent upon realization of the human right to freedom from discrimination. These human rights are explicitly set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international covenant, the Convention on the rights of the child and other widely adhered to international human rights treaties and declaration. All these are powerful tools that must be put to use in efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination. The human right to freedom from discrimination entitles every woman, man, youth and child to fundamental human rights including the human right to the highest attainable standard of health, the human right to live in a safe and healthy environment and the human right to participate in shaping decisions and policies affecting one's community on the local, national and international level."

The kind of discrimination that is presently occurring in this country, because of the kinds of policies initiated and propagated by the Government, means that people in our country are being denied their basic fundamental human rights.

I just referred to one of the very important human rights, the right to live in a safe and healthy environment. Let us ask ourselves: Do we really think that we are living in a safe and healthy environment? That is why when one is having a discussion on discrimination and one is looking at solutions to deal with the eradication of discrimination in a country, it is important to see where the problem

lies. Merely to say that the problem lies here, because one party is saying one thing and, of course, we are often accused here of things we do not even do, is skimming the surface; it is a very superficial view. In this country we do not live in a safe environment.

Before coming to the House this afternoon I must admit, without exaggeration, that I am still very upset and traumatized by the recent kidnapping of four-year-old Saada Singh. I do not have to account to those on the other side and let this country know that I am not using it for any kind of political advantage. I feel very upset every time I hear that somebody has been murdered or kidnapped, because there is a trauma that is experienced by that family that nobody in this room can say they understand unless they have experienced it. None of us would wish that on our worst enemy.

I am sure that the Member for San Fernando West is equally traumatized hearing what has happened to somebody I am sure she knows very well. Therefore, I am not even going to deal with the lighter side, in which the Member for San Fernando West seemed to be very concerned about whether she will be able to retain her seat. I cannot say whether she will be given the opportunity to be nominated, but if this Government continues operating the way it has, San Fernando West gone from the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that hon. Members must have heard recent statements by those involved in enforcing the laws in this country. Only last week, the Commissioner of Police indicated to the nation that kidnappings had been reduced by 49 point something per cent and that murders had increased by 5 per cent, but his overall view was that the crime situation was not out of control or it was not a situation about which we should be unduly worried.

With the greatest respect to the Commissioner of Police who, no doubt, recognizes that he needs to be more firm in his approach when dealing with his request for resources that his men presently lack, but who no doubt would agree that looking at the statistics, in terms of numbers, is not enough, the reality is that more violent crimes are being committed in our country and that bandits clearly understand that they can get away with murder in this country. The reason I say that there is discrimination against law-abiding citizens is simply this: When law-abiding citizens who work very hard to uphold moral and spiritual values, are bombarded and confronted with incidents of those who are bent on breaking the law, because they are bandits being embraced by government officials, being quoted by government officials, being praised and given benefits by government officials, it sends the wrong message to those who are trying to do the right thing.

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When people who do wrong things are rewarded, that is a form of discrimination, because it makes the law-abiding citizen wonder, “Why am I trying to uphold the law?” “Why am I trying to do what is right?” Right in front of that law-abiding citizen’s face is a government prepared to tolerate criminal activity, and that cannot be right. That is why when frivolous statements were made in the past about kidnappings being bogus, mysterious, suspicious and part of a political agenda and warnings were sent to the other side, “Please refrain from these statements, because you are trivializing a very important situation,” we were scorned and scoffed at. Notice, Mr. Speaker, the 180 degree turn that now has to be made. No longer can kidnappings be described as bogus, suspicious and mysterious. What are you going to say about four-year-old Saada Singh?

Mr. Speaker, before coming here I did call someone to find out whether there was any further news. Up to 1 o’clock my information was that there was nothing; no statement. I am talking about the safe return of the child. This morning I had the opportunity to tell members of the public, “Let us not concentrate on who was wrong or right at the school; let us not talk about who was irresponsible, negligent or reckless; let us, as a nation, get together and pray for the safe return of the child. That is the priority.”

What is amazing is that I would have thought that the newly appointed Junior Minister in the Ministry of National Security would have had something to say about what is really a very frightening event, this latest kidnapping, but instead more time was made on dramatic appearance than by giving any substance. That is what this Government is all about: propaganda and promotion of scandal to make the population lose focus about matters that really affect us. As long as we live in an unsafe environment, as law-abiding citizens, we are the victims of discrimination. Let us understand that we are all, as law-abiding citizens, victims of discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, what was even hilarious, and I say that tongue-in-cheek and, certainly, sarcastically, is that the present Minister of National Security who, again, up to three weeks ago was boasting that he was a man of quiet action and unlike his predecessor in office, he was implementing measures and procedures to deal with escalating crime and again we were being told that crime was under control, this very Minister is reported in today’s newspaper in an article by Richard Lord of the *Express* as saying:

“Minister: Fight against crime going too slowly”

In this article the Minister states:

“It is very unfortunate that we are not as successful as we would like to be; every now and again we are going to lose a battle (but) until such time that

we put the measures and have the criminal intelligence, proactive type of policing, we are still going to be uncertain because we are still in a period of uncertainty,”

Does that even make sense?

“...we are still going to be uncertain because we are still in a period of uncertainty.”

How could this Minister have boldly stated to the population about two weeks ago that crime was under control? How can you say that you have something under control, when you say you are uncertain about your state of uncertainty? It is not making sense. It is as ridiculous as the senior police officer who said, “Listen, we have gotten all the cocaine that has washed ashore; we have taken an inventory and we have all the cocaine that washed ashore; we can account for all the cocaine.”

2.50 p.m.

How can you account for all the cocaine when you do not even know how much you are looking for? How can you account for all the cocaine when some of the cocaine may be in diplomatic pouches or being put into the tanks of Members of Parliament? You do not know.

Mr. Valley: I rise to enquire whether the Member is still on the Motion.

Miss G. Lucky: Mr. Speaker, if I may give my explanation.

I was very careful in quoting from the People’s Movement For Human Rights, Education and Eradication. Obviously, the Member for Diego Martin Central was listening but he was not understanding. Under the rubric of the human rights at issue, one of the issues affected by discrimination is the human right to live in a safe and healthy environment. This article which consists of seven pages—I promise that I would give the citation to the Member because he needs to understand the concept—is making the point that discrimination affects fundamental human rights. One such fundamental human right is the need to live in a safe and healthy environment. When one looks at the motion which I already referred to—we were told that we would go down some racial road as predicted inaccurately by the Member for Diego Martin West—it says:

“Be it resolved that this House reaffirm its commitment to the elimination of discrimination.”

If you want to reaffirm your commitment to the elimination of discrimination give us a safe Trinidad and Tobago. Put the policies in place to give us a safe Trinidad

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and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, I am sure you would just allow me this one piece of vernacular because we have young people and to use what I think they say and they go, "Nuf said".

I intend to take all my time. Sometimes I use drama to ensure those on the other side are following. Law-abiding citizens are being discriminated against because we cannot enjoy our fundamental human right to live in a safe environment. What makes that discrimination worse or the methodology by which the Government goes about discriminating against law-abiding citizens, is that they pretend that things are okay when they are not. For example, two weeks ago, the Minister of National Security, Martin Joseph made us feel that everything was good and he is a man of quiet action. Perhaps we do not hear the helicopters because his helicopters are silent. Maybe in Trinidad and Tobago when our helicopters are in the air we do not hear them. We get a 180-degree turn where we are now being told that we are losing a battle. The Minister wants to say that every 35 hours we lose a battle because every 35 hours there is a murder in this country. That is discrimination.

The Member for Diego Martin Central wants more evidence? *[Interruption]* He is trying to understand the technology that he has in his hands. Imagine police officers are saying that they feel discriminated against. On today's *Express*, June 4, 2004, page three, there is a story by Darryl Heeralal, "Police plan picket Monday". I would not read the entire story. It is interesting to hear their interpretation of how they are being discriminated against.

"Police officers plan to picket the Ministry of National Security on Monday in protest over the Government's special anti-crime unit."

Immediately the police officers are saying that they are upset over the establishment of this anti-crime unit. And why?

"Holder and his Association are protesting the transfer of officers into the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, the exclusion of Special Reserve Police Officers in respect of salary increases and the 'wilful neglect of the Government to provide basic equipment and sanitary facilities for police officers to perform their duties.'

...the recruitment of 1,000 SRPs are initiatives of Prime Minister Patrick Manning's Government to fight increasing crime, and both measures Manning has said, are crucial to the assault on crime."

Obviously, these measures are not working. This is the telling part of the article.

“The *Express* understands that junior officers in SAUTT are getting no less than a \$5,000 increase in pay and allowances and a constable in the unit is working for more pay than a police inspector.”

That is the discrimination that police officers who are mandated to protect and serve are feeling in our service. Who is responsible for that? Can you really point and say the UNC? Which government established this special anti-crime unit? It was the Prime Minister in his budget presentation last year. Establishment of unit by budget. A new concept in Trinidad and Tobago. Nobody minds new concepts but when they are contrary to the law or justifiable convention, something is wrong about them. Let the Member for Diego Martin Central and others continue to try to understand technology in their hands while a nation is dying. This is discrimination and it is not along any racial lines. What are they going to say? The UNC has asked the police officers to march?

I am now getting my information from the Member for Barataria/San Juan. He would know about things that are being stopped because they stopped the operation of his Guardian Angels. When you have this kind of demoralization in the police force where police officers are saying that an inspector in their service is getting more money than somebody in this “elite group” of officers specially appointed by the Prime Minister, are you going to say that is not discrimination and does not come within the ambit of this Motion?

This Motion has been drafted very carefully and not clumsily presented like much of the legislation coming from the other side. It allows this ambit of discussion. We are not going to refrain from our duty as a responsible opposition from raising these matters and asking the Government to explain what is going on.

Speaking about the kind of discrimination going on, the police officers have also indicated that while special facilities have been given to those who are operating in the special anti-crime unit—I cannot say that I know exactly where their office is located—there are officers in police stations who literally have had to run for cover. The Government has never come forward to give any explanation why this is happening.

In Carenage, when the police officers abandoned the station, and I hasten to add, did not abandon duty, the big issue by this Government was: Is there any criminal action that could be taken against those officers? This Government is prepared to take police officers to court because they have left a station that literally, may come down on them at any time. You have people in a special anti-crime unit led by Brig. Peter Joseph, in some nice place, maybe, air conditioned

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offices and we do not even know what they do and how much that establishment costs. The Brigadier pointed out that they are not fully operational. If the special anti-crime unit is not fully operational, last week why did the Brigadier join the Commissioner of Police to make people in this country feel that we are safe? Why does this Government not act in a forthright manner? If you want to eradicate discrimination the Government should act in a forthright manner. This is one of the tenets of any good government, acting in an honest manner, being transparent and accountable. Every time you ask the Government to be transparent and accountable, we are flooded with legislation a week or two later trying to remove entities very surreptitiously. One example is the Freedom of Information Act so that those entities would not have to disclose certain information. This is how the Government is acting. There is restriction on information. That is only going to encourage discrimination.

On Sunday June 20, there would be the celebration of Father's Day. With that celebration one would remember that the Member for San Fernando East has often described himself as the father of the nation. Being a father is a very serious issue. All those who are fathers would recognize the responsibilities. Jumping up and saying that you are the father of the nation is just not good enough. Being a father means that you are taking responsibility for 1.3 million persons of Trinidad and Tobago. It does not mean that you would be showing favouritism to a small group of people who support your political ideology.

Every parent would know that when you have more than one child you are always faced with ensuring that the children are treated equally. Sometimes children would complain that they are getting left out in the cold. Whether it is justified or not these are the complaints. For those who have more than three children, there is something called the third child syndrome. Books have been written about this particular kind of feeling psychological defect that the children in third place feel especially when they come after or between two very boisterous children. These things exist. I use the analogy because I take it now to somebody who has declared himself as father of the nation. If you have to take care of 1.3 million citizens, obviously you are taking a burden onto yourself to ensure that everybody feels he or she is being treated fairly. If that is a responsibility that you have assumed you have to ensure that you carry out your responsibility fairly, in an effective and efficient manner. The Member for San Fernando East and his political administration have not been fair to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a fact.

In this kind of society one has to recognize that there would always be allegations of discrimination and when there are, it is not enough to say that they

are orchestrated by the UNC. One would have thought that by now this Government would have recognized its role when these allegations are made to examine itself and to see whether it is not creating the problem by operating in a very mysterious and suspicious manner. Every time the Government is asked to answer questions you can never get a straightforward answer. Every time you ask the Government to explain why houses are being erected in various constituencies without the necessary planning permission, you get a response from the Minister responsible, that it is a legal question. Every loophole that may or may not exist is used by this Government to try to hide its activities. Once a government operates in this kind of clandestine manner there would always be allegations of discrimination.

That is why I think it is totally hypocritical when now you are hearing Mr. Manning, as the Prime Minister of the country saying that crime knows no race. It is almost as though he had to study out of a textbook and pass some kind of examination to make this kind of analysis. For years, and more specifically in recent times, the UNC has been saying over and over to deal with crime because it affects all citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. As I end on that particular point that deals with crime, let this Government understand that if it wants to eradicate discrimination in the country, it should start showing the country that it cares and start giving the police officers the resources that they need to protect and serve all citizens.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to make one further point before moving on. Many times the accusation has been made that when it comes to crime the UNC is saying that only East Indians are being targeted. If one looks at the statistics and the analysis one would see that it appears to be one group that is, I would not say targeted, but affected. At the end of the day, bandits are looking for any citizen that has money or is alleged to have money or assets and he or she would be affected. When persons say that a particular group is targeted, I try to explain that it is not a group being targeted, but bandits look for persons who have what they want, be it jewelry or money. That is why crime is being conducted in the way that it is.

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.

Miss G. Lucky: Mr. Speaker, thank you and all my colleagues.

When it comes to crime, I do not think that the demographics are important. I say this on my behalf. What is important is that there are people who are affected and are victims. When one hears about a four-year old being kidnapped, nobody

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thinks about the race. You think about a young child, in this case a girl. Always when it is a girl as opposed to a boy, extra sympathy is felt because there is extra fragility and vulnerability. That is what is of great concern. I do not think that any time should be spent determining which race or races are more affected. Let us look at the fact that kidnapping is a very serious issue that has to be addressed in the country. Let us concentrate on the fact that these bandits and kidnappers are now prepared to mastermind kidnapping. They are brave enough to go to a school and dress up and be part of an entire transaction, if one might say that. That is clearly not an act of spontaneity and that must be worrying. The victims are getting younger; the criminal activity is becoming more elaborate and intricate and the commission of the crime is getting more violent. Innocent law-abiding citizens in this country are feeling discriminated against by this Government because it appears that the Government is more prepared to entertain the requests and have an audience with those bent on breaking the law that are called community persons, rather than giving those involved in enforcing the law what they need to ensure that we have a safer Trinidad and Tobago. That is the aspect of discrimination that I wanted to deal with in this particular Motion.

I move from the issue of crime and the need to provide a safe environment. Interestingly enough this comes under the rubric of government's comments. In this article the human rights and its relationship with discrimination are stated and it goes on to discuss Government's obligations and commitments. One of the commitments a government must give when it wants to deal with discrimination is to ensure—this comes from the *Habitat Agenda*, paragraphs 27 and 40 which state:

“Equitable human settlements are those in which all people, without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, have equal access to housing, infrastructure, health services, adequate food and water, education...We...commit ourselves to...Eradicating and ensuring legal protection from discrimination in access to shelter and basic services, without distinction of any kind...”

When you hear that kind of commitment and obligation that ought to be given by a government and you take that as it deals with discrimination and the eradication of this evil called discrimination; you juxtapose it on what happened a few months ago with respect to the demolition of squatters' homes in Union Hall. Once again, that was an act of discrimination. When you read the paragraph that comes from the *Habitat Agenda* and you take what occurred in Union Hall, Wallerfield and Cashew Gardens, you become very concerned that the housing

policy and the approach to providing housing in this country is also an issue that is part of the political agenda of this Government. When you ask the Government about how houses would be distributed, the answer given is either that it has not been determined as yet or it would be determined at a time in the future. In the future whether you ask the question you still do not get answers. When you read in the papers about all these wonderful ideas and where houses would be built, there is no indication as to what system would be used to ensure that there is fair distribution. One only has to refer to the numerous articles that appeared in the newspapers around the time of the demolition of the squatters at Union Hall. The National Housing Authority was indicating that the squatters at Union Hall were wrong. In an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* dated April 27, 2004 page 5 states:

“A high-ranking Government official has offered evidence that squatters at Union Hall had disregarded the law by setting up illegal structures.

‘Investigations have revealed that there has been a naked grab for land over the years,’”

In Union Hall you had squatters. According to this senior official those squatters did not have any rights to be on the parcels of land that they were occupying. The houses of the Wallerfield squatters were also demolished and it was indicated that the land that some of those persons who were occupying belonged to NHA. It had not passed on to a private citizen and therefore, the squatter was squatting on the land of a private citizen. The squatters in Wallerfield and Cashew Gardens were living on state land. One official from NHA went further to state when having to deal with the situation at Union Hall that although all the squatters were breaking the law, those in Union Hall were breaking the law in a worse manner because they were occupying lands owned by private citizens, whereas those in Cashew Gardens and Wallerfield were occupying lands owned by the State. NHA was saying that those in Union Hall were in greater breach of the law.

How did this Government deal with it? The Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East took a hands-on approach. He went to Union Hall. There were stories of the army providing food and water. In no way am I saying that provision should not have been given to those persons affected. That is not the point. The other side is quick to skew what is being said and suggest that we on this side do not care. In the same way the Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East took a hands-on approach with respect to the squatters in Union Hall, a similar approach should have been taken for the squatters in Cashew Gardens and Wallerfield. That was not done. When you have this disparity in treatment, the obvious question is: Why were those in Union Hall given better

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treatment than those in Cashew Gardens and Wallerfield? What makes it worse is that Union Hall is in the constituency of San Fernando East. Immediately you begin to think that this action must be part of some political agenda. Instead of being forthright and giving some kind of explanation that could be accepted, the Government decided to chastise anybody who seeks to raise the issue and does not want to give any explanation whatsoever. That is why I return to the analogy of a parent who has more than one child. Children by their very nature would always want to be the favourite and seek to find some situation in which they could claim that they are not treated fairly. It is incumbent on the parent to ensure that there is always fairness.

Why does this Government not adopt that approach? It is because this Government recognizes that its acts of discrimination are working in terms of their political agenda which is not a national one that would encourage patriotism. It is a very selfish agenda that is meant only to ensure that the PNM remains in office. In the Opposition we are saying that this Government would not be allowed to get away with these acts of discrimination.

I am so sorry that the Member for Diego Martin West is not here. After standing in a very brave manner and boldly speaking about all that he would and would not do, it is amazing that when he appeared to have been in trouble over the manner in which he dealt with the Union Hall squatters, Dr. Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West, had to quickly state:

“Even if the Prime Minister expressed some disappointment and dissatisfaction with one aspect of our housing programme, I can tell you he is extremely happy with the rest of it,”

That sounds like a member in a political regime or Cabinet who is trying to make amends with his political leader because he recognizes that if he does not he would be put in the dog house. He comes in this honourable House and pretends that he is prepared to take any stand as long as he could say it is fair. That is not what is happening. People from that side are coming and pretending that they are doing the right thing. When they are exposed it goes to show that they, too, are carrying out these acts of discrimination.

Sometimes discrimination is expressed; sometimes it is apparent, implied or constructive. I am not saying that all the Members on the other side deliberately sit and manipulate. By not standing for what is right and being part and parcel of a political agenda, each Member on the other side is equally culpable for the kind of discrimination that is being faced by the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

What I found to be very interesting is that yet another human right or fundamental freedom that has to be protected and is in jeopardy once there is discrimination, is the fact that there must be a good health care system. I found it very interesting because we have a Minister of Health who is prepared to say that citizens must demand better health care and then by some magic or wave of some wand, we would find all the health institutions in the country operating at an optimum. Every minister has a responsibility to ensure that all is well in his ministry. Citizens are demanding better health care. Nobody has to encourage a citizen to say that we need to have more facilities, better amenities and greater access to drugs. Citizens complain on a daily basis about the poor state of our health institutions. This is not about racial discrimination but against persons who are poor and cannot afford to go to private institutions. They are being told by the Minister to demand better health care and they are demanding it, but it is not forthcoming.

This is a point that I think has to be amplified this afternoon. It is a very worrying point when it comes to this whole issue of discrimination and the manner in which this Government is operating. This is what appears to be the intention not to muzzle the press, but certain persons on radio stations who are giving people in this country an opportunity to vent how they feel about this Government's inability to provide good governance.

A headline in the *Express* dated May 31, 2004 says, "Run from racists says PM". Mr. Manning, the Member for San Fernando East is quoted as saying:

"Without any intention to attack the media in the least, it has now become fashionable for various talk show hosts operating from various sides of divides they help to create, to routinely carry on their discussions, not in objective terms, but from the perspective of 'we' and 'they' transforming their programmes into the latest politics or race platforms...

He said these radio hosts also bully the public to take sides, aided and abetted by the same regular callers all the time."

Discrimination in any country can only be eradicated if people are entitled to a very important fundamental freedom of expression. News has gone back to the Member for San Fernando East that whereas years ago there were one or two radio programmes in which the agenda appeared to be to promote the PNM and the Manning administration, there are several radio stations with a diverse group of radio hosts who allow persons to express how they feel about what is going on. The Member for Diego Martin West could stand here and shout and say that he is entitled to give his opinion in this House. What is wrong with citizens who could

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equally be justified in saying that they are entitled to give their opinions on radio stations that have hosts that are prepared to entertain what they have to say, even if it is against the Government? On that side there is a policy that what is good for them is not necessarily good for anybody else. That is discrimination. What we have in this country is not a racial divide as much as we have a political divide. We have a political divide, the PNM and the UNC. I say it openly. The PNM party consists of a group of people from one ethnic origin and the UNC party equally, consists in the majority of a group of people from another ethnic origin. When you have a political divide it is very easy to mistake where the discrimination is coming from.

In this country we have complaints by people who are saying that because we do not belong to the PNM or we are not affiliated with the Government in power, that is the Manning administration, we are being discriminated against. That is not racial discrimination. That is political discrimination. Because we have that kind of composition of the two parties it is very easy to get it mixed up. When the Member for San Fernando East says that radio talk show hosts should not encourage—he said initially racial divisiveness. Then, two or three weeks after, no doubt after listening to a particular radio talk show host, he changed it from racial division to political divide, recognizing that in this country, the divisiveness is not along racial lines. When the prime minister of any country seeks to muzzle freedom of expression, that is only going to promote accusations whether founded or unfounded, of discrimination.

Recently, in Grenada, we had a reporter indicating that because she was prepared to put a story in black and white about the prime minister of that country, she was warned that if she put it in writing, her station would feel the power or the force of the law. That particular reporter said that as a result she felt that she could not be true to her oath as a journalist to report freely, frankly and fairly and she resigned. Grenada is just a stone throw away from Trinidad and Tobago. We have to be careful that when this kind of occurrence is felt in a country not too far away, we have to ensure that we do not allow it to filter to our country. It is very worrying when you hear a prime minister say, perhaps not deliberately, but certainly insinuating that these radio talk show hosts and the radio stations would be dealt with. That is from the point of view that you make the stations feel that they have to restrain themselves in how they express themselves. I am not saying that there are not those who go over board. I am not saying that from time to time people ought not to be reined in. It is clear that this Government does not want to confront the situation that it is committing acts that make people in this country feel that they are discriminated against.

As I come to my conclusion, I want to use one glaring example that in my view, suggests why so many people in this country are saying that discrimination exists and the Government is doing nothing to eradicate it.

In the *Trinidad Guardian* dated June 02, page 7 there is a story written by Gail Alexander with the headline, “Energy Minister tells the Senate Petrotrin VP post was not advertized”. The article states:

The post of vice president human resources and corporative services at Petrotrin now held by Rollingson Agard who is paid \$32,000 a month was not advertized. Energy Minister Eric Williams said yesterday, nor did the post exist before his statement also indicated...

UNC Senator Wade Mark asked Williams whether it was normal Petrotrin practice not to advertise such high level posts.

This is what the Minister responded:

I cannot say but it is a normal practice in many organizations to engage consultants in the industry to have a headhunt for senior posts especially in large organizations.

In other words, the direct question is: Is it normal practice to advertize? The Minister of Energy and Member for Port of Spain South said that he could not say. I cannot tell you yes or no. I can tell you that it is not unusual practice to look for such persons in an organization. We are not fools. The nation is not stupid. That is what you call circumventing a question and giving an answer to something that was not asked. Whereas in a courtroom one could appeal to the judicial officer and say Your Worship, MiLud or My Lady, the witness has not answered the question, because of the Standing Orders—this is not an indictment against the Speaker—because of the way parliamentary procedure operates, and this has happened on many occasions, there is no sanction that can be imposed on ministers or members of the government who do not answer the questions directly. When you have this kind of answer to a very serious question, it comes back to the point made earlier in the contribution that it makes you wonder why they have to hide this. Why would the Government not want to say the methodology, process or procedure used to recruit this person in an open forum? I agree with the Member for Caroni East that the more money that is given to an official the greater one expects that level of transparency and accountability.

This is a good example of the Government doing its thing, appointing people willy-nilly and feeling that it could use semantics and technicalities to get away from accountability. As I conclude—[*Interruption*] Please do not prompt me,

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Member for Diego Martin East for going on longer.

In conclusion, it is said in 1 Corinthians Chap. 13:13:

“...faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

Many persons have been able to interpret that word charity to say that it is speaking of love. If everybody in this country started off by loving the Almighty in whatever form one may worship him and if we recognize that we must love our country, everything else would fall in place. If when we go to the temple, mandir, mosque, home or to a church, and listen to some of the religious songs, be they hymns or bajans and hymns such as:

“Stand together for what you believe

Work for what must be done

Love each other in all that you do

Till all my people are one.”

If we start not just singing but understanding and living what we say and know is right, then, we would all be living in a better Trinidad and Tobago and it would be easy for us to achieve this resolution and get that commitment from the Government, that it would seek to eliminate discrimination in all its forms in our beloved isle, Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.

3.30 p.m.

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Speaker, I really did not plan to participate in this debate when the Motion was first moved by the Member for St. Joseph, but as it unfolded it appears to be another attempt by the Opposition to engage in a discussion on racism and discrimination. I look at the Motion and I would like to read just three of the “Whereas”:

“*Whereas* since December 24, 2001 there has been a renewal and an institutionalization of the victimization of and discrimination against employees of State Enterprises, Statutory Authorities, Government Ministries and Public Authorities by the PNM Government;”

What the Motion is really trying to say is that on December 24, when Prime Minister Patrick Manning was sworn in, discrimination appeared. Even before the Government was formed, they took the stance that in order for them to attack the Government, they have to do so on the basis of race.

The Motion goes on:

“*Whereas*, throughout our nation, through victimization and discrimination by the PNM Government, citizens are denied the opportunity to access jobs, contracts and loans in the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP); the Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO) and other public programmes; and

Whereas throughout the nation, citizens are denied equality of treatment in accessing training opportunities in the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA); On the Job Training (OJT); Helping You Prepare for Employment (HYPE); Geriatric Adolescent/Partnership Programme (GAPP) and other public programmes;

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can testify to the fact that this statement is totally inaccurate. All of the programmes that this Government has put in place have been advertised in the daily newspapers. Throughout Trinidad and Tobago, any citizen—

Mr. Singh: Would you tell us when and in what newspapers were the CEPEP programmes advertised?

Hon. J. Rahael: Mr. Speaker, before the programme even started, it was advertised.

Mr. Singh: No, in the first case it was never advertised. Never! Bring it!

Hon. J. Rahael: The point is that the entire nation was aware of these programmes. More than that, I personally, when I was the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, when the Government introduced the YAPA programme, not only did we advertise it—and I can attest to that—but we advertised it in all the daily newspapers and in the weekly newspapers. More than that, I came to this Parliament and I went to the majority of the Members on the other side whom I believe represented a constituency that was involved in agriculture and, in order to provide the opportunity for their constituents to participate in the programme, both as young people getting involved in agriculture through this programme and also for farmers to participate in the programme, I gave most of them there—

Dr. Nanan: That is not true.

Hon. J. Rahael: That is very true and I am not giving way. *[Interruption]* There are Members here who will not deny that. I said most of you all—and the Member for Tabaquite in particular—

Dr. Nanan: I thank the Member for giving way. I gave the Member the information he asked for and up to today, nothing has happened.

Hon. J. Rahael: Again, that is inaccurate, Mr. Speaker. We indicated to him if he could identify a parcel of land, we would have put some YAPA personnel in Tabaquite, but he never responded.

We must also remember that the Member for Couva North led a campaign indicating that none of them was to attend any activity in their constituency where we were promoting programmes for the people. I remember, I think it was the Member for Oropouche, who was invited to participate in the opening of a sluice gate in his constituency, but his leader, the Member for Couva North—

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). The Member said in his contribution that I was lying.

Hon. J. Rahael: I did not say that.

Dr. Nanan: He said that.

Hon. J. Rahael: I never said that. If I said that, I withdraw it. I would never say that.

So, Mr. Speaker, the minute Members on the other side went into opposition, they took a different posture. The Member for Couva North, we will recall, during 1996—2001, his battle cry was unity, bringing the races and people together—and that was admirable—but the minute he was no longer the Prime Minister and they were no longer in Government, it was a different cry. It was, “we against them”; it was, “them against us”. It was, “we the East Indians must unite”.

Recently, on Indian Arrival Day, when they did that demonstration and said it was a march against crime, when he addressed the gathering, he referred to Mahatma Gandhi and he said—*[Interruption]* It came over the news. I saw it on television. He made statements to the effect that the East Indians were in the majority and that they must unite. He referred to Mahatma Gandhi and he said that Mahatma Gandhi said that if each Indian were to spit in the same spot, they would drown the British. What was he implying? It was pure race. So when they come here and move a motion like the one before us, it should be reflected on them.

Someone asked: how could you access the On the Job Training Programme? This programme has been around since 1992. When we were in government between 1991 and 1995, the OJT was introduced in Trinidad and Tobago. They met it and, for all intents and purposes, all good programmes that we had implemented between 1991 and 1995, they discarded.

Now we are back in government, it is the same programme. It is not a new programme. It is one where firms, businesses and professional offices can employ people and train them within their sphere of work. If you are a manufacturer of footwear, garments or soft drinks, you can take on 10 or 15 persons for a six-month period, giving them the opportunity to be trained, at the same time ensuring that there will always be a cadre of workers for your industry and that the cost is shared between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the employer. If you can identify employers who are prepared to participate in that programme, they too can have the opportunity for their constituents to access the programme.

I do not know why Members on the other side entered politics. When they offered themselves to represent a constituency, they offered themselves to serve the people of that constituency. When they offered themselves to serve the people, they had no idea whether they would be in government or not. The chances were always there that they would be in opposition. When they are in opposition that does not mean they must stop serving their constituents and not access all the programmes that the Government is offering. They should go out of their way to be aware of the programmes and get the information, so that they can pass it on to their constituents. Even if they are in government, they may not necessarily be in the Cabinet. They are committed to service. Politics is about making a difference in people's lives for the better. Do you understand?

Mr. Singh: He is not prepared for the debate.

Hon. J. Rahael: I am very much prepared for the debate.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Trinidad and Tobago are fun-loving people, who really have the interest of one another at heart. We come together so many times and enjoy each other whether it is the Strike Squad at a football match, the West Indies team playing or Danielle Jones, who placed fifth in the Miss Universe contest. Whoever it is, we all rally around the person once he or she is successful, because we are all proud of that person as a Trinidadian or a Tobagonian. It has nothing to do with race.

Why is it that it appears—and I agree with the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre—that it is more in the political arena than at the ground level. At this level, it is we: we must be able to bridge that gap and reach out and work together for the benefit of all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

When the Member for San Fernando East was the Leader of the Opposition between 1996 and 2000, having served as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and

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Tobago, understanding all the various institutions in government, there were crimes as well. You will recall the Member for Couva North, as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, throwing his arms in the air and saying there was nothing more that he could do. It was the political leader of the People's National Movement who went to the then Prime Minister, the Member for Couva North, and said, "Listen, I know what you are experiencing because as Prime Minister between 1991 and 1995, I experienced the same impotence with respect to the institutions and the structuring of the institutions".

The then Prime Minister Basdeo Panday welcomed the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition that they must form a committee headed by a non-partisan person to come up with a bill to reform the police service. That committee sat for three years, or whatever period; everyone signed off on it. The chairman of the committee was Sir Ellis Clarke. The UNC government accepted the proposal and the report. The People's National Movement did the same. It was their bill and now that they are in opposition they are no longer in support of the bill. They are no longer in support of denying bail to persons charged as kidnappers.

Mr. Speaker, they claim that it seems that East Indians, in the majority, are being kidnapped. The reason for that has to do with wealth. That is a fact. A person is not going to try to kidnap someone who does not have wealth. They will kidnap someone who has money, so that they will get a ransom. Obviously, the East Indian population is, in the majority, through their stint of hard work and entrepreneurship, business owners in Trinidad and Tobago. They cannot deny that. It is a fact and that is why, because they are in the majority and they have more businesses than any other ethnic group, that is happening. It is the same when they come here and cry race because of names. They asked us to provide a list of names. This morning they wanted the list of the 16,000 applicants for a \$10,000 grant from the Ministry of Housing. What is the purpose of that? To try to identify people's race by name.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, if you go to Chaguanas to all the businesses and look at all the employees, 95 per cent are of the East Indian race. That is understandable.

Mr. Ramsaran: In contrast, if you go to URP and CEPEP in Chaguanas, you will find 99 per cent Africans.

Hon. J. Rahael: I am coming there. I am trying also to say that if you come to Port of Spain, you will see a total mix of employees in the businesses. It is because of the demographics. That is why that is so.

If we only try to identify people in a particular area and see how many persons of East Indian or of African descent make up most of the persons in that particular institution or area, that is not necessarily race. In the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, in the daily-paid category, almost in every station, 90 per cent of the employees are of East Indian origin. That does not mean it is race. In URP, you will find that there is a majority of persons of African descent. It is the same. Why is it that in the medical field, 90 per cent of the doctors are East Indians? In the professional field, whether they are attorneys-at-law or accountants, in almost all the professions, the majority are people of East Indian race. Does that mean race? No. That is not race, Mr. Speaker.

I therefore urge the Members on the other side not to come here and request lists of names of thousands of people to try to determine from that list whether there is racism in whatever institution responsible for whatever is being afforded the people.

Again, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre talked about if you have five children and the third seems to be disadvantaged, et cetera. The Government of any country or any party that is in government must see all its citizens as children. They are the guardians of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the government's role and the government, therefore, must be able to share all that they have with all of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We know that the children in our own families are not all equal. Some have different talents to others. What do we do? Those weak in certain areas, we complement their weakness to try to make them strong. We continue to encourage those who are strong. But to those who are weak we need to give them a helping hand.

If we see a certain group in Trinidad and Tobago that needs assistance in any particular area, we should, as a government and as guardians of the people, come forward with that.

Again, when we sit, whether in caucus, in Parliament, in Cabinet or in a party forum, we do not see race in each other. I have been a member of the PNM since 1981 and at no time have I seen any form of discrimination against myself, the Member for Arouca North, the Member for San Fernando West or the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. You cannot say that we must have equal numbers of people of East Indian descent as people of African descent in the Coast Guard or in the police service. It would be fair then to say that there must be equal numbers in agriculture as attorneys-at-law. It cannot be like that. Everyone has his own strength.

When I look at the other side and I see the Member for St. Augustine, the Member for St. Joseph or the Member for Barataria/San Juan, I do not see race. I

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see a human being. I see the Member for Barataria/San Juan as a doctor—a successful doctor—who represents his constituency. I see the Member for St. Joseph as a professional financial expert. I see the Member for St. Augustine as someone who cares for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is because of the Member for Couva North and his antics about race, because he believes that the only way he can regain government in Trinidad and Tobago is to unite the East Indians and appeal to them on the basis of race. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: That he is imputing improper motives?

Dr. Nanan: To the Member for Couva North.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think so.

Hon. J. Rahael: Mr. Speaker, let me come to that vexing question of Caroni (1975) Limited. When the PNM was in government between 1991 and 1995, they, recognizing that they needed to restructure quite a number of institutions, did so. When they had to offer VSEP to workers in the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, I think over 1,000 workers lost their jobs. The same thing happened with PTSC, WASA and many other institutions. No one cried racism at the time. Come the year 2002, the Government was faced with a deficit of a state enterprise of over \$500 million per annum. This state enterprise also had vested in it over 70,000 acres of land that was being under-utilized.

When we looked at it, we recognized that we had to restructure Caroni (1975) Limited. Not only did the PNM recognize that, but also the UNC. The Member for St. Joseph agreed that the company could not have continued the way it was going. We are in 2004. If we had left Caroni (1975) Limited the way it was, today the losses would have been close to \$700 million. Instead, we are seeing the sugar manufacturing company talking about a profit. [*Crosstalk*]

How did we treat with the workers? They were given the best package that was given to any worker in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think it is time I refer everyone to Standing Order 40. It states:

“A Member present in the House during a debate—

(b) shall maintain silence while another Member is speaking, and shall not interrupt, except in accordance, with these Standing Orders;”

A bit of crosstalk is okay, but the constant crosstalk, apart from humbugging the Hansard reporter, you are disturbing me, too. I am not hearing the Member properly. Please! Let us behave ourselves!

Hon. J. Rahael: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have outlined the Caroni plan many times. What did we do with the employees of Caroni (1975) Limited? [*Interruption*] Far from that! I do not know where that came from. I think it was the Member for Couva South who came up with that wild idea. I never said that and I would never make a statement like that, Mr. Speaker. I am not about “bussing” anything. I am about building. That is what we are about. We are about building a society that would be able to enjoy a quality of life like anyone else in this universe.

Coming back to Caroni (1975) Limited, what did we offer them? We could have taken the easy way out, which was that a state enterprise was losing a lot of money, which was coming from all the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, there was no future with respect to the operations of Caroni (1975) Limited. The government could have said that Caroni (1975) Limited no longer exists, that we would look at the union’s agreement based on the retrenchment, pay them off and God be with them. We could have done that. That would have been legal and easy to do but we decided not to do that. We wanted to ensure that all the workers got the best package possible so that when they were no longer employed at Caroni (1975) Limited, there would be many other opportunities for them.

Mr. Speaker, we enhanced the retrenchment package by an average of 30 per cent. No other workers in the history of Trinidad and Tobago ever received an enhancement on their retrenchment package based on their own union’s agreement. Some employees went home with close to \$1 million. [*Interruption*] But they are still employees of Caroni (1975) Limited. Based on their salary, that was what they were entitled to.

We did not only do that. We said to all the employees of Caroni (1975) Limited—and I must admit it is taking a little longer than I had hoped it would have taken—that they would be given preference to lease agricultural lands, so that they would have a lease on certain agricultural land so that they could become independent farmers. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, an opportunity like that? The Government also agreed that these employees, who have been involved in agriculture for most of their lives, would still have the first option, provided of course that they were serious about agriculture, to lease a parcel of land. What would have happened then? They would have had their own farm. They would have had their own business. We would have had an increase in agricultural output. They would have grown what is feasible, what is in demand and become financially successful.

Not only that, we also said, for those workers who do not presently own their home, they would be given first preference to housing lots or units as part of the

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Government housing thrust. Again, no employee in Trinidad and Tobago has ever had that opportunity, and yet Members on the other side are accusing us of discriminating against the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. How can they in all conscience come to this Parliament or go anywhere and make those statements and indicate that the PNM took that action based on race? Where are the facts?

Many of the workers came and thanked us for giving them the opportunity to get out of what they were in. We gave them a cash enhancement. We made the commitment for land for agriculture. We made the commitment for those who do not own their homes and, more than that, we knew there were a number of young people under the age of 40—we offered to all, but we anticipated that the younger person under the age of 40 would have liked to access training programmes. We put aside \$25 million in order to facilitate all the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited, who wished to take the opportunity to further themselves, to develop a skill, to go to school; and many of them have taken the opportunity and made good of it.

We continue to provide that kind of arrangement to the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. As a matter of fact, every now and again you would see a batch graduating in one field or another. This PNM Government has done for Caroni (1975) Limited's workers more than they have done for any other worker in Trinidad and Tobago. Where is the discrimination?

Please! I beg you. Let us not continue in that vein. Let us together build Trinidad and Tobago. Let us do it together. We invite you to join us. Many of the commentators are calling on the leadership of both parties to come together to deal with crime and other areas that need attention. We have invited the Leader of the UNC, the Member for Couva North; on many occasions, the Prime Minister has called him to his office—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: Were you there?

Hon. J. Rahael: I do not have to be there. You were there. He called your leader and whomever he brought. It was an olive branch. Come! Let us work together! You sit there, you criticize, you complain and when the opportunity is provided you to work with us, so that we can deal with all that is taking place that needs to be put right, you come out with all kinds of airy fairy things—constitutional reform, equal opportunity. There is always some excuse for not cooperating with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

The Member for Couva North has said it before. His job is not to make Manning and the PNM look good. His job is to make us look bad even when we

are doing well. The Member for Couva North is not prepared to support the Government with any programme whatsoever. Even the programmes as we said earlier—that police bill was a UNC bill. I have spoken to some of the Members on the other side and they do not agree with the leadership of the UNC because they know that what is happening is not right. *[Interruption]*

I am not going to call any names. I know some of them. We are friends. As a matter of fact, I think the Member for St. Augustine had made a comment that there were certain things he would like to do to support the government of the day. The Member for St. Joseph is no different. I am sure there are many other Members. I think that the Member for Siparia is a lady who has the people of Trinidad and Tobago at heart and I am confident that with a change of leadership we may see a change in the outlook of the Opposition.

I am appealing to the Members on the other side to put aside all the talk about race and discrimination. Let us work together to build Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* There is no political discrimination. There is no discrimination. It is all a figment of people's imaginations. In addition to that, it appears that you believe it is in your interest to perpetuate that kind of thing. That is how it seems.

I sit here. I am neither fish nor foul. I am telling you the impression I get. The impression I get is that you all make statements to perpetuate the divisiveness that exists in Trinidad and Tobago. The only reason I can think that you are doing that is that you believe that is the only way you can regain government in Trinidad and Tobago. That is not the way. You must really appear as the alternative government with ideas and suggestions. We look forward to some suggestions and programmes from that side.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Wednesday, June 09 at 1.30 p.m. I wish to inform this House that on that day we will do the report of the Finance Committee, as well as the Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few amendments on the Metrology Bill, coming from the other place, which we would also take on Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the motion to the vote, there is a matter on the adjournment and I now call on the hon. Member for Chaguanas.

**World Cup Cricket 2007
(Non-Participation)**

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): It was a couple weeks ago that a member of the media called me at home to ask for my comments on the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister that Trinidad and Tobago would not be bidding for a place in the finals of World Cup Cricket in 2007. My reaction to that reporter was that I could not believe that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago responded to such an important issue as the hosting of a World Cup in Trinidad and Tobago in the year 2007. I told the reporter to call me back because I could not really believe that.

I called around and I heard that it was true that the hon. Prime Minister announced to the nation and to the world that Trinidad and Tobago would not be bidding for a place in the World Cup Finals.

There are a few clippings here that I would like to put on record, but before I do that, this is a copy of the World Cup bid:

“The Bid Book contained the detailed requirements and standards for hosting matches in CWC 2007. The process gave each member country of the WICB an equal opportunity to offer itself as a host venue, regardless of its size or cricket tradition. It is a scientific and professional approach and an important first step to prepare the region.

We also welcome the bids of Bermuda and the USA, who are associate members of the ICC...

What’s in a Bid?

For example, we have received architectural drawings and cost estimates on the cricket stadiums and detailed plans on how your country will manage the event. Your Bid Committees have told us how visitors will be accommodated and how all fans, teams and officials will be transported, entertained and kept safe. We have received information on weather patterns and detailed plans for environmental and disaster management, medical and media facilities...”

Of course, this continued. Mr. Speaker, I have underlined the words “kept safe”. I thought the Prime Minister would have answered this Motion because, in all the releases that were made, I never saw the face of the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. I thought that the Prime Minister himself handled this. Maybe the Minister will explain the role of the Prime Minister in the ICC.

Mr. Speaker, were the words “kept safe” responsible for Trinidad and Tobago not bidding for the World Cup? We all know that today in this country wherever we visit, people are kept prisoners. I am discussing the World Cup issues and these words “kept safe”.

I was out of the country for one week and despite the fact that I went to a funeral as a result of tragic circumstances, when you come back to Trinidad and Tobago, there is this feeling of being unsafe. You drive out of Piarco Airport at night and the place is a virtual jail. People are indoors and afraid to come out. If that is the reason, the Prime Minister should tell us that he cannot guarantee the safety of the cricket fans, who will be here in 2007.

When we stick to cricket and we understand what is happening and we spoke to the members of the cricket board, do you know, Mr. Speaker, that people on the cricket board, including the CEO of cricket, were not told that the Trinidad and Tobago Government was not bidding for the World Cup Finals? They were as shocked as I was. I spoke to the Secretary of the Board on the very evening that I got this call from the media and they were not aware of what was happening.

You read on the newspaper where the president of the board said that he had no comment to make. I want to know who gave this Government the authority to interfere with the bidding process of a cricket tournament? I want to know how this happened. At least the Parliament should have been told that.

4.15 p.m.

Look at the piece of nonsense that was told to us today in the Finance Committee: Mayaro Sports and Youth Multi-purpose Facility, \$2.7 million. The addendum states that the additional funds are required to replenish the resources used to facilitate the bidding process for the hosting of the World Cup 2007. Where is the connection? What is that about? Is the Mayaro Sports and Youth Multi-purpose Facility one of the areas for which we are going to bid for a World Cup final? If this is so, the Government should tell the Parliament. The Government should not come to confuse us with this piece of nonsense.

I want to talk about the Prime Minister. I remember reading something in the media. He said he would not allow Miami to have a modern cricketing facility; he would have one in Trinidad and Tobago. He said no World Cup would be held in Miami. He is controlling Miami now. He feels that Miami is too fast to be bidding for a place in the World Cup finals. I told him, in this honourable Chamber, that Miami has all rights to bid for the World Cup because it is an associate member of the ICC. He went on and spoke about building a new facility in Marabella.

World Cup Cricket 2007
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Friday, June 04, 2004

In the *Newsday* of May 25, there is a report by Vinode Mamchan, which states:

“There will be no World Cup cricket matches at the government’s proposed site at Marabella.

This according to a reliable cricket source yesterday.

‘There will be World Cup matches only at the Oval as far as Trinidad and Tobago are concerned. However there will be warm-up matches at the National Cricket Centre in Balmain and Shaw Park in Tobago.’”

Mr. Speaker, when people do things for politics and other various spheres in life, I believe sports should be left out.

Today, as we speak, the West Indies is two from the bottom. They are struggling to beat Zimbabwe and Bangladesh. On my way here I was listening to the commentary on the lunchtime show. They are now blaming the governments of the region for interfering with cricket. Now cricket is suffering. They said that too much politics is involved. The commentator asked the person who was being interviewed: “What do you mean by that? Is it cricket politics?” He said: “No, it is real politics.” People are interfering with the team. They are now destroying what we had kept together all along.

I want to read another article from the *Express* of May 14, 2004:

“Trinidad and Tobago would have been the natural choice to host the opening ceremony of the 2007 Cricket World Cup which will take place in the West Indies.

That was the view of Clarvis Joseph, president of the Antigua and Barbuda Chamber of Industry and Commerce and a Leeward Islands cricket official, in a panel discussion at the fourth annual Euromoney/Latin Finance Caribbean Investment Forum at the Hilton Trinidad, yesterday.

Joseph said Trinidad had the advantage of being the Carnival hub of the Caribbean and would have put on a good show. But he respected Prime Minister Patrick Manning’s point of view.

At a post-Cabinet news conference last week, Manning said Trinidad and Tobago would not be making a bid for any of the packages in the 2007 World Cup.

Trinidad and Tobago have submitted a proposal...”

I do not know the difference between a bid and a proposal.

“...but took the position they would not be competing against their Caricom partners and would take whatever matches came their way.

However, Joseph noted, nothing can stop a fete in the region. Joseph said cricket was the third largest sporting activity in the world and viewership for the World Cup is expected to be around 1.5 billion. West Indies can expect to keep between 55—60 per cent of the profit made from the venture.”

Mr. Speaker, I am at a loss to understand how the hon. Prime Minister of this country could weigh cricket against the FTAA headquarters. That is just not cricket. Which cricket fan in the country would understand how FTAA headquarters would affect hosting a World Cup in 2007? On behalf of the public, I am calling on the Prime Minister to explain this to them. There are thousands of cricket fans in this country. There are persons who travel all over the world to see cricket. Here we have a once in a lifetime opportunity for some of us and yet, the Government of the day has the country guessing. We have heard about a bid and an opening ceremony. Is the cost something that kept us from bidding? What are the reasons? I want to ask that question very seriously.

We on this side are making representation—we know it is too late—for the peace of mind of the cricket lovers in the country. I do not want to take my full time. I know, as Minister of Sports, that the Queen’s Park Oval has invested over \$1 billion to bring it to an acceptable standard to host the World Cup finals. When I was Minister, I spoke to the administrative officers of the Queen’s Park Cricket Club. We had the understanding that once the Government had the opportunity, it would bid to have the World Cup finals in Port of Spain.

Speaking among my Caribbean colleagues in sports, they never thought that they could bid against Trinidad and Tobago for hosting the World Cup finals in Trinidad and Tobago. They thought it was a *fait accompli* because Trinidad and Tobago has sustained the cricket world in the West Indies. They are now spending that money. I know the Government of the day has not assisted them. Who will bail Queen’s Park Oval out of its financial difficulties?

I know the Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs is trying his best to come to grips with what has happened. The Prime Minister of the country has embarrassed Trinidad and Tobago, as far as sports is concerned.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Roger Boynes): Mr. Speaker, the West Indies Cricket Board has been granted the right to host the ICC Cricket World Cup in 2007. On November 03, 2003, the ICC host agreement was

World Cup Cricket 2007
[HON. R. BOYNES]

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signed and signified the West Indies Cricket Board's contractual obligation to host Cricket World Cup 2007. This was signed by the Presidents of the West Indies Cricket Board and the ICC. The host agreement was witnessed on behalf of Caricom, by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the hon. PJ Patterson and the Chairman of the Conference of Caricom Heads of Government.

The ICC Cricket World Cup West Indies 2007 Inc. was incorporated by the West Indies Cricket Board and is responsible for executing and managing Cricket World Cup 2007, on behalf of the West Indies Cricket Board. Consequently, an Olympic-style bid process was developed regarding the hosting of matches and events for Cricket World Cup 2007. To this end, there was developed the ICC Cricket World Cup 2007 Bid Book, which is a master venue development blueprint that details the minimum requirements and standards for countries participating in Cricket World Cup 2007.

In keeping with Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to support Cricket World Cup in 2007 in the region, a technical bid committee was established, which also included the President of the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board. Queen's Park Oval was represented on that technical bid committee.

The technical bid committee undertook all major activities towards finalizing preparation of Trinidad and Tobago's submission. On May 06, 2004, Trinidad and Tobago submitted proposals outlining Trinidad and Tobago's qualification for hosting events and matches pursuant to this country being a possible venue for ICC Cricket World Cup 2007.

The Prime Minister is very correct. It is unfortunate that the word "bid" was used at all. The Caricom region already won the bid from countries such as Australia and India. The bid was given to the Caricom region. Why it is necessary for one country to be bidding against the next? A regional approach has always been articulated by the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] It is instructive to note that, at the recently concluded Prime Minister's subcommittee to deal specifically with Cricket World Cup 2007, this regional approach was endorsed and a regional approach as to national security has been put in place. Sunset legislation, from a regional perspective, has been articulated and is to be put in place.

Mr. Singh: What kind of legislation?

Hon. R. Boynes: Sunset legislation. As a matter of fact, it is expected that another meeting of that particular committee would be called next week, in order to deal with World Cup Cricket 2007 from a regional perspective as well.

I just wanted to indicate that the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, for the past two years, has been articulating a regional approach. It is unfortunate that the word “bid” was used in this entire process. Trinidad and Tobago’s approach was clearly indicated by our submission. We submitted qualifications for hosting events and matches pursuant to this country being a possible venue for ICC Cricket World Cup 2007. The submission was supported by a clearly defined caveat that indicated, inter alia, that Trinidad and Tobago was not submitting any bid, as it were, for a specific package, as it was not the intention to compete against any Caribbean nation’s bid to be the host venue for a particular package or for any combination of packages. Our Prime Minister is quite correct, we are here as a region. We are supporting World Cup Cricket 2007 but we are not going to compete against the other nations. We are here demonstrating our capabilities of hosting World Cup Cricket 2007.

The next step in the process was the visit to Trinidad on May 26 and 27, 2004 of the venue assessment team on a venue verification tour. They came to Trinidad and Tobago on that day. The team consisted of 11 international experts of the ICC and Cricket World Cup 2007 Inc. While in Trinidad, the venue assessment team conducted site visits and met with key stakeholders, including members of the technical bid committee.

It is to be noted that the announcement of award of events/matches by the ICC Cricket World Cup West Indies 2007 Inc. would take place on July 13, 2004. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Answers to Questions (Circulation of)

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): In accordance with the undertaking of the hon. Leader of Government Business, he indicated that the answers to the five questions which ought to have been circulated three weeks ago, would have been circulated and made available before the end of the sitting. I want to inform this House that I made a request of the Clerk to find out whether or not those questions have reached the Office of the Clerk of the House. This has not been so. We are in a situation where there is another sitting of Parliament and there is contemptuous disregard for the Standing Orders of this Parliament.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, we do have some answers to the questions. There are two others that we need to look at. The sitting is on Wednesday. Given that we did not get all five before the adjourned time, I thought we could satisfy that before the next sitting.

Mr. Speaker: Let me emphasize the fact that really and truly it has been an inordinate delay in submitting these answers. I hope when we come here Wednesday all the answers will be supplied. Please get on to the Minister of Education or whoever is responsible for submitting those answers to the Parliament. They should have been here three weeks ago. Accepting your undertaking, certainly by Wednesday, all five answers to questions would be circulated.

Mr. Valley: Before Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker: I am giving you up to Wednesday.

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

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.30 p.m.