

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, June 25, 2004*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PRAYERS****LIVE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE  
(REQUEST)**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received several requests from media houses, interested groups and members of the general public, that the debate on the Police Reform Bills and the attendant Constitutional (Amdt.) Bill, due to take place on Tuesday, June 29, 2004, be aired live. Hon. Members of the Government and the Opposition have agreed and, accordingly, I now state that debate on the Police Reform Bills and the attendant Constitutional (Amdt.) Bill would be aired live. [*Desk thumping*]

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Cipriani Labour College (now the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies) for the year ended December 31, 1984. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Cipriani Labour College (now the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies) for the year ended December 31, 1985. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Cipriani Labour College (now the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies) for the year ended December 31, 1986. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers 1 to 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

4. Annual audited financial statements of First Citizens Trust and Merchant Bank Limited for the year ended September 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. Annual audited financial statements of First Citizens Bank Limited and its subsidiaries for the year ended September 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers Laid*

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

6. Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the Review of Constituency Boundaries pursuant to section 72 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago dated June 15, 2004. [*The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Hedwige Bereaux)*]

#### **Elections And Boundaries Commission Report 2004**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I also wish to advise that on Friday, June 18, 2004 I received a copy of the Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission for the year 2004, on the Review of the Constituency Boundaries pursuant to section 72 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This report headed:

“2004 Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the Review of the Constituency Boundaries pursuant to section 72 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago”

was addressed to the hon. Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and to the hon. Barendra Sinanan, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Hon. Members, as you are aware, the hon. Speaker is out of the country. It is therefore my obligation, under section 72(1) of the Constitution, to present this report to this honourable House. I wish to advise that sufficient copies for Members were, in fact, delivered by the Elections and Boundaries Commission to the Parliament this morning. These copies would be made available to Members. Apart from that, this copy will be placed in the Parliament’s Library for Members’ use, if they so wish.

#### **JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT**

#### **Public Broadcast of Debates and Business of Both Houses of Parliament (Presentation)**

**The Minister of Housing (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table the report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the public broadcast of debates and business of both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, permit me a moment to reflect. This committee was appointed and was asked to report by June 30, 2004. I am pleased to report today that we have been able to conclude our assignment. A report, with recommendations, is available to this honourable House.

I now take the opportunity to thank the Members from both Houses who have co-operated to ensure that we reported on time. What we have recommended in that report is that there is benefit and merit in broadcasting the proceedings of Parliament live, and that resources should be made available to the Parliament to ensure that this action becomes operational in the not-too-distant future.

There is one area of concern and that is the matter of abuse of privilege. We thought long and hard on this matter; we looked at what transpired in a number of jurisdictions around our Commonwealth world, and the record has shown that this has not been a problem with live broadcasting. Insofar as we have made this recommendation to have our Parliament's proceedings broadcast live, we would be joining a list of very eminent Commonwealth countries who have gone ahead of us and who have had only good reports of this development which would serve the public's interest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

#### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, questions for written responses are on the Order Paper. These responses should be passed to the Clerk for circulation.

#### **CARONI (1975) LIMITED AND ORANGE GROVE NATIONAL COMPANY LIMITED (DIVESTMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT) BILL**

Bill to provide for the vesting of the operational undertakings of Caroni (1975) Limited in another company and the vesting of the real estate undertakings of Caroni (1975) Limited and Orange Grove National Company Limited in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and to provide for the management of and for the development of those real estate undertakings [*The Minister of Finance*]: read the first time.

#### ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

[SEVENTH 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. J. Rahael:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in continuing my contribution on this Motion I must, again, refer to the Motion itself. The last paragraph of this Motion says:

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“*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. Deputy Speaker, if this by itself had stood alone it would have gotten the support of all Members of Parliament.

One of the paragraphs that precedes the Motion states:

“*Whereas* since December 24<sup>th</sup> 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;”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on December 24, 2001, the Member for San Fernando East was sworn in as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. The Government itself was not formed, yet, in that same year, on that same day it was stated that:

“...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;”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even before all of us could have taken up office they were on this campaign that the PNM would discriminate against certain members of its citizenry.

The Motion goes on to say:

“*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;”

I would like to know from the mover of this Motion if he could provide any evidence that there was discrimination against any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago as he is alluding to in his Motion. I made the point before—and I am going to make

it again, Mr. Deputy Speaker—when I was Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, that not only was the YAPA programme advertised throughout the media in every daily and weekly newspaper, but application forms to join the YAPA programme were actually given to a lot of the Members on the other side who, we believe, represent constituencies where there was a large acreage of land for agriculture use.

But be that as it may, the Government of which I am proud to be a member, is committed to building a just and equitable society in which all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origin, could enjoy the fruits of a developed nation, a nation in which we see ourselves as one people; Trinidadians and Tobagonians. We do not see ourselves and we should not adopt the American method of referring to ourselves as Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians. We are all Trinidadians and Tobagonians, therefore, that is how we should refer to ourselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I found it very disturbing that the Member for Couva North, the Leader of the Opposition, could make public statements when he addressed a large gathering of his supporters indicating to them that they are in the majority and they must unite. Unite against whom, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We are all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. When we have the Leader of the Opposition talking about uniting against other citizens of this country that is discrimination and it is not unreasonable to interpret that statement as sowing discord in our society.

Our Constitution guarantees every citizen equality of treatment and everything we do, on this side, is premised on that guarantee. Archbishop Desmond Tutu once referred to us as a rainbow people because he, like so many other foreigners who have visited our land, left with a feeling that we are a people made up of different races, different backgrounds and yet we live in harmony. We enjoy each other's company; we share each other's food; we participate in each other's events and we celebrate all events in Trinidad and Tobago, whether it is Divali, Eid-ul-Fitr, Easter or Christmas. All citizens of Trinidad and Tobago celebrate these events and that is what we want to build.

We have to see ourselves as people working together for the benefit of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We cannot be so blind not to see that it is a win/win situation when leaders mobilize their constituents to transform poverty and insecurity into prosperity and peace. Mr. Deputy Speaker, everybody wins and that is what is going to make this country a country that other countries all over the world could look at and say, yes, that is a model we should adopt.

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Our diversity is, in fact, our strength and we must build on that. We must build on it to create the model from which, not only countries within the region but also countries throughout the world would like to take pattern. It is no secret that there are many who envy us as a nation, despite, I must admit, the problems and challenges we face from time to time. But we are a young country, only 42 years old, and we are growing. We have a small population and that is why it is a lot easier for us to come together for the benefit of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Caroni East and other Members of the House for their support.

Every programme of this Government is planned in such a manner so as to touch the lives of all its citizens. As I indicated before, politics is about making a difference in people's lives for the better. That is what we are about, Mr. Deputy Speaker; so that we could better the lives of ever group in our society and so that no group would be left behind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, regardless of the ranting of the Members on the other side, we would not be deterred by those who oppose us for opposing sake. We would not allow "ol' talk" to set us back and erode the gains we are making in uniting this our beautiful country, Trinidad and Tobago. Creating a society that is just and humane; founded on the brotherhood of man is one of the pillars of our vision for obtaining developed country status. This is a process that requires all of us, notwithstanding our political affiliations, to work together to build sustainable communities throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, so that the quality of life we enjoy as citizens of this country must be on par with that enjoyed by citizens of developed countries.

The suggestion on which this Motion is based is clearly not in sync with the actions of this Government. Whatever we do is for the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. All our programmes, whether it is in agriculture, housing, in every ministry, social services, sports, health, it is targeted to benefit all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I have strong faith in our beautiful country. Nothing is going to turn us back or stop us from realizing our vision for uniting and developing Trinidad and Tobago. Every Member of this House must

recognize that strengthening our unity must be our highest priority. Those among us without this vision would pay the political price.

We stand today on the threshold of a new era in our country's development; a new era in government that puts our people at the centre of what we do. Could we imagine the great future that lies ahead of us as we are referred to as the rainbow people? The opportunity is ours to make our contributions as parliamentarians through intelligent and meaningful debates so that history would record us as having served with distinction and not consigned to a bonfire of irrelevance.

In the Ministry of Health programmes have been put in place in order to eliminate the long waiting list at our hospitals for all different types of surgery. We have put in place surgeries for hernias, fibroids, cataracts, and all those areas. *[Interruption]* That is not true, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All those surgeries for which people have been on the waiting lists for years, we are now proceeding to deal with those waiting lists.

We have expanded the programme for cardiac failure and open-heart surgery. When I went into office we were doing ten adult surgeries for the indigent, at no cost, every other month. We have increased that to 10 per month. With respect to pediatric cardiac surgery, there is no longer a waiting list for children needing open-heart surgery. We have been able to eliminate that list and we continue to deal with all the other areas. The private institution to which the Member for Barataria/San Juan referred has pledged its support and has committed to doing 50 free surgeries.

**Dr. Khan:** Could the Member say if it is completely free and that the Government would pay not a cent for that?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is being done at no cost to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and to the patients. This is being done by the doctors at the institution at no cost to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and to the patients themselves.

**Dr. Khan:** Are you saying 50 surgeries?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Yes.

**Dr. Khan:** What about those surgeries after the 50?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I gave way to the Member because I wanted to answer his question. We have not yet made other arrangements for any other types of surgeries other than those that they have committed to give at no cost and it is not only that institution, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a background in

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negotiating and, therefore, I was able to negotiate that and that is his problem; he cannot understand that. We have also been able to get an institution in San Fernando—for your benefit—to do 50 free surgeries, and another institution in East Trinidad to also do more than 50 surgeries. These are same-day surgeries, general in its operations, and as a doctor he would know that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we put these things in place, we put them for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago; we do not select. It is because you are screened and you are eligible for surgery that we provide the surgery for you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is for persons on the waiting lists, so it is not the people who could afford these surgeries that are getting them at no cost. It is for indigent persons; persons who have been on that waiting list for months and even years. That is only an example of the kind of programmes this Government has put in place for the benefit of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they come here and cry discrimination they are only saying that because they have nothing else to say because they cannot attack this Government for the work it is doing. All the social programmes we have put in place; all the other programmes for training—There is quite a long list of programmes that are available to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago for training and, as was indicated to this House, a booklet has been prepared and it is going to be circulated very shortly to all Members of Parliament so that it will inform them—in addition to all the ads that were placed—of all the programmes the Government has put in place and how one could access those programmes. Each one of us, elected Members of Parliament, when we go to our constituency office, could assist our constituents in order for them to access these programmes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this includes all Members on the other side. This is a Government of transparency and openness.

As I said previously, we cannot look at one specific area and ask for a list of all the names of persons who may have accessed those programmes and based on that cry of discrimination. I made the point that in many institutions one would see persons of one ethnic group but that does not necessarily mean that persons from one ethnic group is being discriminated against. I have been given permission by Mr. Vernon Ramesar, a radio announcer on 7.30 and he has said it publicly—I asked him if I could use his name to illustrate the point that as a young man he and another person applied to join the coast guard, they were both interviewed and were both successful. When he told his father that he was going to join the coast guard his father said “No, no, no.” His father debarred him from joining the coast guard because, culturally, Ramesar was not—[*Interruption*] His parents told him, “No, you need to do something other than that.”



I made the point that today you have one ethnic group in the majority in many professions, whether it is in medicine, in law or in business; in many areas you would find that. In other areas you would find persons of another ethnic group, all culturally, because this is what we were taught. One ethnic group would encourage their children to probably look for jobs in the public service. On the other hand, one would find another ethnic group which, probably, would not encourage their children to do that. The point I am trying to make is that you cannot just look at a list of names and claim discrimination. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I have been able to make the point—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Does the hon. Member support that evolution in the sense that, do you think that public policy should now respond to change those imbalances created by social values and upbringing and so on?

**Hon. J. Rahael:** Not necessarily, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the evolution is taking place by itself. Okay, my ethnic origin would have dictated that I get involved in trade because way back then the Phoenicians were the first traders in the world and therefore it is handed down. This is why you would have found in the early stages, when people from the Middle East came to Trinidad and Tobago, they were drawn towards that type of profession. As time went on, however, one would find that a lot of their children have now gone into law or medicine and there is even one in politics, so that evolution itself is taking place and, it is something we should encourage. But you cannot legislate something like that. You have to encourage all the races and persons of all ethnic backgrounds to go wherever they would like and give them the opportunity in order to get there. Today what are we seeing? If you walk into those businesses on Queen Street and on Frederick Street you would see a different culture; different faces than you would have seen 30 years ago. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why we should encourage each other to get involved in other types of activities and professions.

I made the point the last time I spoke and this afternoon, that if we could unite; if we could reach out to each other; if we could help those who are in need, regardless of their background or ethnicity, let us help each other so that we could lift all our citizens while we lift ourselves to a better quality of life. That is what the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is doing; this is what we want. I indicated that the Government is really the guardian of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and we cannot discriminate against our citizens because they all are our responsibility.

I hope I have been able to add to the contribution of this Motion and have been able to clear the air on this subject.

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

**Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a Member of Parliament for more than 10 years, I want to bring to your attention the calmness which obtained in this Parliament over the last few sittings. I say this simply because the purpose of us coming here is to add value, and the environment is critical. Since you have sat in that Chair it has been the observation that Members on both sides are extremely comfortable and if that learning and experience could be passed on to others who may sit in that Chair, it would add value.

It is very unfortunate I had to speak after my good friend, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, who really sings for his supper. Having sent home 10,000 sugar workers, he has earned \$126 million. This is based on a newspaper article of today's date. The question that begs—

**Mr. Rahael:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know what the Member for Fyzabad is trying to assume. I do not know anything about any \$126 million.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** I shall cause the newspaper to be circulated to the Member before the end of the sitting. More than that, however, the fact that the Minister was responsible for sending home 10,000 workers brings to focus, in a very instructive way, the Motion before us today.

I want to congratulate my colleague, the Member for St. Joseph, who was attacked in his personal capacity by the Member for Diego Martin West, identifying his ethnic background as the reason for advancing this Motion as a very unfortunate one. When you look at the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin West on Friday, June 04, 2004, he did say this country is crying out for leadership. I do not know why he was attacking the Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East. He went further to indicate and to present justification why the PNM is involved in the export of drugs. I read from the *Hansard*. He said:

“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. That is an established fact.”

He went on to say this to justify that it is okay for the PNM Government to be involved in the export of drugs. He went further:

“You might know; I do not know. The bottom line is: how we handle ourselves as against how others handle themselves.

But you are too glad when you hear about a murder or trafficking in cocaine...”

The point to be obtained from this is that the PNM has clearly indicated the direction in which it wants the country to go. We have said on many occasions that the high level of discrimination and racism that obtains under the PNM is destroying this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was tempted last night, in preparing for this debate, to indicate we are very much against discrimination and racism of any kind. In fact, I attempted to pen, like my good friend the Member for Tabaquite, and I wanted to present a personal pledge against racism and discrimination. As a Member of this Parliament and as a member of the United National Congress, I stand against racial discrimination and intolerance of any kind. Throughout our parliamentary life—and I speak for all Members of Parliament on this side—we will continue, as we have done in the past, to promote equality, justice and dignity among all the people in every constituency and in every community and, by extension, every part of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is important that we cause some reflection to take place. We have observed over the last 13 months, under the PNM rule, where we have reached in this country. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that could best be seen by the number of murders, kidnappings, rapes, the abuse of State funds and the expenditure of the Government. I would highlight some of those in a few minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to identify with some of the constitutions of the world. The Indian Constitution states:

“The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within India.”

It further states:

“No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, language or any of them.”

When you look at what obtains in this country under the PNM rule in the state organizations, when you look at expenditure—and may I remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the State’s resources are used largely in the PNM constituencies—you will recall a question which was asked last year in this Parliament—I think it was question No. 84—to identify the moneys spent by WASA and of more than \$15 million spent under the national social development programmes, more than \$14 million went to PNM-controlled constituencies. Is that not discrimination and racism at its highest?

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When you look at self-help projects, a question was again asked in this Parliament, of more than 160 projects, 84 per cent were in PNM-controlled constituencies, with as many as 20 going to the Laventille East, West and elsewhere. How much more could this PNM Government discriminate against us? Why must they use taxpayers money to do it? Do they think they own the money? When one looks at advertisements in this country sponsored by the State one would have seen very little of persons who looked like me, but recently for the Police Reform Bills they suddenly found persons like me. The Prime Minister has misled the national community when he said they spent \$2 million on the ad but my information is that they spent \$11 million because they have met with a number of groups and have promised them money: NGOs, CBOs, and others. The evidence in this Parliament is that moneys across the board go only to the constituencies of the PNM and that is public information. You cannot hide that information! The Prime Minister is bent on destroying this country and he is using our money to destroy it!

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about Vernon Ramesar who went to join the coast guard—he was trying to mislead this House. Let me tell you what obtains under the PNM. In 1980, they were in Government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, bear in mind that Members opposite get people enlisted in the police service; they have tremendous influence in every sector of the State and I will identify some more. In 1980, and this is from the: Report Centre for Ethnic Studies, University of the West Indies.

Of 100 per cent intake, 32 per cent represent people from Indian origin and non-Indian, 68. PNM in government, of the 100 per cent, 29 per cent represented Indian element, non-Indian, 71 per cent. In 1982, with the PNM in government, 32 per cent of the 100 per cent, Indians. 1983, PNM still in Government, 27 per cent. In 1984, PNM in Government, 26 per cent. Of course, they were out of Government but returned. In 1991, of 100 per cent, 13 per cent were people of Indian origin. In 1992, there was 19 per cent of Indian origin. In 1993, PNM still in Government, there was 27 per cent of Indian origin.”

So when the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West tried to score cheap political points, playing the ethnic game in this Parliament, the figures are here.

**2.15 p.m.**

**Miss Seukeran:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, could I ask the Member for Fyzabad from which document he is quoting?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Pay closer attention!

**Miss Seukeran:** Would you mind repeating it?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** I indicated.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, it would appear that the hon. Member for San Fernando West did not grasp it. Just assist her.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Member for San Fernando West, it is from a document put out by the Centre for Ethnic Studies. Sometimes these questions are asked to divert attention. This is public information and should be in your library. If it is not there, get a copy.

In the data on the ethnic composition of the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Services, Divisional Fire Officers are less than 20 per cent, Assistant Divisional Fire Officers, same number; Fire Substation Officers, 29 per cent; intake of firemen—these are recruits who go to become fire officers—the Indian membership is less than 25 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not happening by accident; it is designed by the PNM. Wherever the PNM can peddle their influence, these are the kinds of statistics we will come up with. This obtains in every state sector—in both the armed and unarmed protective services. In fact, when you look at the report—and I hope that Members have this—*Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Report of the Police Service Commission, 2002*—it is a very frightening development here. The Prime Minister wants to have a police state. He intends to control the national community by having police officers treat with us at every corner. This must never obtain.

The evidence that has come to the public attention, both through the print and the electronic media, is that the cocaine and other instruments found in the water tank of the former Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, Sen. Sadiq Baksh, was planted by agents of the PNM. That is a fact. If you were to ask someone in London, they would tell you that is what they know. How did it come about and why they did it, I will treat with it in a few minutes, to show the discrimination. I refer to the documents I have in front of me dealing with the Police Service Commission. [*Crosstalk*]

“The Commission's Goals and Objectives

The Commission focuses on its major goals and objectives in its effort to continuously—”

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Couva South, we are going well. Do not allow yourself to get into this, please.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Deputy Speaker— [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members for Diego Martin Central and Couva South, if that is to happen, I tend to agree with the hon. Member for Couva North, maybe it is an investigation we should call, but not now, please. We can do it after.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask the investigators to investigate whether he ever reached the Prime Minister's residence to join the PNM.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Let us not get into that. [*Interruption*] Hon. Member, if you continue, I will adjourn the sitting. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Couva South and Member for Diego Martin Central, please! [*Interruption*] Do not instruct the Chair!

That crosstalk that we had there, since none of the Members have been given permission to speak, expunge it!

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pity that we could not start broadcasting today because the national community would have seen the PNM's conduct; but more than that, they would have seen that whenever the PNM is faced with the truth, they bring these sidekicks.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, do you want to get back there. I do not want us to go there. You are making a contribution; you are saying whatever you want to say; be that as it may. I have just dealt with that and I want you to leave it alone! Please continue making your contribution!

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was on the point of the commission's goals and objectives.

“These goals include:

- (i) addressing the shortcomings of the recruitment process with a view to improving the quality of recruits entering the Police Service;
- (ii) promoting officers on the basis of merit;
- (iii) ensuring that the Performance Appraisal System is implemented and is operational in the Police Service...”

There are some other areas.

“Delegation of Authority

The Police Service Commission is the authority responsible for the recruitment and appointment of Police Constables, but since the promulgation

of the Police Service Commission Regulations in 1966 it has delegated to the Commissioner of Police the power to:

- recruit trainee-constables;
- promote police officers in the Second Division;
- appoint police officers to act in the ranks from Police Corporal to Senior Superintendent of Police;
- exercise disciplinary control over police officers in respect of acts of misconduct which do not carry the penalty of dismissal;
- transfer police officers from one district or division;
- confirm the appointment of police officers in the Second Division; and
- suspend police officers.

Persons are recruited as trainees i.e. constables, and their services may be terminated by the Commissioner of Police if they are found to be unsuitable or unsatisfactory during the period of training.

All police officers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division are appointed by the Commissioner of Police. Officers on first appointment are required to serve a probationary period of two (2) years during which time the Commissioner of Police is empowered to terminate their services if found to be unsuitable.”

I want to tell you of the findings of the Commission.

“The Commission was of the view that the issue of the recruitment process in the Police Service was one of national concern and proposed that a Committee of four (4) persons be established to look into the recruitment process, and an ethnic balance be reflected in the composition of that Committee.”

What does this say? It says that under the PNM racism and discrimination obtains everywhere.

“It was agreed that the Committee should comprise a retired Judge of the High Court, a retired senior police officer, a member of the Chamber of Commerce with expertise in Human Resource Management and a representative of the Director of Personnel Administration.

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The Commission had observed that there was a gender imbalance among trainees...”

So they do not only discriminate against male applicants, they certainly discriminate against trainees of Indian origin, and there is also a gender imbalance.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, indicate, for the record, the date of that report and the period, please!

**Mr. C. Sharma:** This report is entitled “*Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Report of the Police Service Commission, 2002*”. I suspect it was meant for 2002. It does not specify. It is a public document.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope the national community is listening carefully.

“In August 2002, the Commission wrote the honourable Prime Minister to seek his endorsement with respect to the establishment of the above mentioned Committee, before an approach to Cabinet was made for the funding of the project. However, at the end of 2002, no response had been received.”

The hon. Prime Minister in this instance is the hon. Patrick Manning. What they say is that the Prime Minister is promoting racism and discrimination that is why he did not respond and to date he has not responded. That is why he wants to control the police service. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you could see why the Motion brought by the Member for St. Joseph is so applicable, meaningful and relevant to Trinidad and Tobago today? I move on.

“As stated...the Commission in making promotions, relies heavily on the Commissioner of Police...”

That is why he must not be controlled by the Prime Minister. In fact, in the present arrangement, the person whom the Prime Minister prefers to be Commissioner is ninth on the list. The reason the Prime Minister wants this person is that he can get him to do anything, including lock up Members of Parliament.

I have asked a question in this Parliament that does not appear on the Order Paper. I have asked it in committee stage in another place. I have asked that the telephone numbers of Members of Parliament that are being tapped be made known to us. The Prime Minister has refused to answer that in his capacity as chairman of a particular committee. This will not stop with Members of Parliament.

“As a result, the Commission has no way of challenging the Commissioner’s recommendations unless it becomes aware of evidence to the contrary. The



Commission's interest is in the quality and level of performance of the officers recommended for promotion and, in this regard, it has a duty to ensure that the promotion exercise is fair..."

So the Commission is having difficulty because the Prime Minister, as head, is not lending support as he is required to. It is not a courtesy he is extending.

I move on to some of the matters that require attention now. I made reference to the Indian Constitution. I want to tell you what section 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states.

"The Republic of South Africa is one...democratic state founded on the following values:

- (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms."

They do not encourage and promote racism. It goes further. Section 29(1) states:

"Everyone has the right..."

That does not obtain in Trinidad and Tobago. When the Government chooses to send home 10,000 workers and, by extension, their families, more than 100,000 persons are affected. They could not raise their voices; they had no rights. To date, they have not been treated with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would have seen in today's newspaper an advertisement that the Government has caused to appear saying that payments would be made. These payments have been owed to the workers for the last six months and every month there is a new date. Today's newspaper indicates that it will be paid now.

Section 29 continues:

- "(a) to a basic education, including adult basic education..."

I raise this simply because a spokesperson for the PNM, in the person of Prof. Cudjoe, who is paid with taxpayers' money and, to date, since he has been sitting in the Central Bank, has been paid close to \$1 million to fly back and forth, is arguing about admission to the University of the West Indies. The admission policy obtains on all campuses, but he is saying differently. The Government's response is to establish the University of Trinidad and Tobago. So you see where the racism and discrimination are going.

I want to tell you what obtains in Canada. Section 15:

- "(1) Every individual is equal before the and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination

based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”

In every other country, there is fair play, but under the PNM, this does not obtain in Trinidad and Tobago. Let us look at some of the agencies, for example, WASA. You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a very bright young man, a Commonwealth scholarship winner, Mr. Kanhai, who was earning the respect of governments throughout the Caribbean because he was lending them support in their fight to win water. In fact, under his leadership, so much obtained at WASA. As soon as the PNM came in, he was removed and replaced by my good friend. What was Mr. Kanhai’s fault? His only fault was that he was of Indian origin. He had no other problem. He was more qualified. He had much more experience, but he was removed because of his ethnic background. Not only that, he was paid almost two and a half times his salary.

Let us look at another state company—Petrotrin.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder, while the Member is in that vein, whether he would want to tell why Malcolm Jones was moved from NGC when they came in; why Louis Lee Sing was removed from TTT; why Henry Sealy was removed from the Unit Trust Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago? Why? “Yuh bold and brass face!”

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That is a risk you run when you—

**Mr. C. Sharma:** That is a risk you run when you speak the truth and we shall be guided by the truth.

The Prime Minister referred to Petrotrin as “Petrosingh”. Again, under the PNM, a number of people have been removed only because of their racial origin—for no other reason—highly qualified people. The same obtains at MTS and it does not stop there. The PNM is prepared to demonstrate to Trinidad and Tobago that they do not care about equality. They are prepared to demonstrate, at taxpayers’ cost, discrimination and racism.

Let us look at what obtains in the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). Under CEPEP, \$400 million is being spent. There are a little less than 200 contractors. In 93 per cent of it, there are PNM members, PNM councillors, PNM financial supporters and they have been identified one after the other in this House. That cannot be by accident. It has to be by design and that is taxpayers’ money.

The payback to that is that on Tuesday of next week we will be debating a particular bill. At this time, thanks to technology, I received a text message, which

I have asked my contact to send to me, that the PNM, using CEPEP contractors, have confirmation from 61 of them, to sponsor maxis to bring people to Port of Spain to support them on Tuesday. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 61 multiplied by 12 is more than 600. If they are 25-seaters, that is 1,600 persons. That is how the PNM intends to run this country. So on Tuesday, Members of Parliament, especially this side, have no protection. The square across the road will be made available to them. That is how the PNM operates. The PNM wants to use muscle power.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will see in today's *Express* a full-page advertisement, centre page, where the Minister of National Security is talking about guns. It would seem that since the PNM's return in 2001—and one cannot deny how they came into government because you would have seen the provisions given to the former President of this country up to this very day; \$24,000 a month for all sorts of fancy considerations in return for giving them government.

In today's newspaper, the illegal sale of guns has gone up by 200 and 300 per cent. That comes about because of Government's discrimination. In CEPEP and URP, the Government maintains ghost gangs, and they get rewards for it. The people who are coming on Tuesday, they are coming to support the Government because the Government has given them CEPEP and URP.

A question was asked by the Member for Oropouche last year about the \$75 million spent by the National Housing Authority (NHA) to paint apartments. You would have seen that paychecks are made for a number of persons who do not exist. I remember one name—Jennifer Lopez, among a number of them. *[Interruption]* Hear the Member or Arouca North's argument. She is an Indian. So it is okay for an Indian to receive it. You see the racism and discrimination. That is a government response. The Member for Arouca North is giving a government response—she is an Indian. He is very much aware of the fraud that takes place at the NHA and makes no attempt to draw it to the attention of the police.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a Member of this Parliament, I cannot and will not allow the PNM to continue their acts of discrimination. The time has come when we must stand up. *[Interruption]* A senior Cabinet member asks what we will do. Do you know why he is asking that question? Because he is saying: "I control the police service." You would have seen in the Prime Minister's meeting with people, he took the Commissioner of Police and the Head of the Defence Force, making it a political football and having him in front of live audiences. Where in the world do you find this happening? He is going there as the political leader of the PNM to gain support and he is taking the police with him.

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When I said that \$11 million was spent, part of that money is promising people SHARE programme, Self-Help programme, money to build buildings and it does not stop there. You would have seen when the kidnapping situation developed in this country, the Prime Minister's response was: "They are Indians, they are doing that." That is a prime minister of a country.

One of my research people pointed out something very interesting to me. The Prime Minister attended a number of openings of trade delegations—and rightfully so—but, when Lord Brown came from BP Amoco—a tie like mine; when the guy from Costa Rica came—a tie like mine. Do you know when the Guyanese President came it was a PNM tie? That is a statement. That was not by accident. Ken Valley attended; he did not go with a PNM tie. What was the statement?

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, just for the record, the Guyanese President came to Trinidad on a Friday. Having come to the Parliament, they know we attire ourselves in the certain way in the Parliament. That was the reason. There was no other reason.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** You are the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. You have to have two ties. The State buys your clothes in any case; so let them buy another tie for you. [*Interruption*] You cannot go—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, as outlandish or however the statement made might be, let us allow the Member to speak.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope you will consider some injury time. We are not only talking about discrimination against people of Indian origin, but across the board. I want to highlight some of it.

PNM councillors are crying discrimination across the board. The country has 126 councillors, 70-plus are PNM and they are crying discrimination. It appeared in the newspapers, so it is public advertisement.

There is an article appearing on page 4 of the *Express* dated Thursday, January 22—"President urged to take action on discrimination". It is getting to the President's office as well. The level of discrimination is so high that the President has been called upon to take action. When we were blessed with the visit of President Nelson Mandela some time this year, he, too, was called upon to treat with the question of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago.

In an article appearing on page 7 of the *Guardian* of Tuesday, April 27, 2004:

“SC says client fired for resisting political force

Former UTC chairman Herbert Alleyne was fired as head of the financial institution because he refused to bow to political pressure, his lawyers were arguing.”

So you see the Prime Minister's intervention there too. The matter was brought

“...before Justice David Mayers in the Port of Spain Civil Chamber Court with Dr. Claude Denbow, SC.

Previously a chamber court matter, hearing was open to the public after the judge deemed it a matter of public importance.”

You see how important it is.

“The lawsuit is to determine if the UTC board and chairman are required to act and/or comply with the directives from the Finance Minister, in accordance with Government policy, and whether the Minister and Cabinet are empowered to instruct or advise the President to revoke his appointment.

It names as defendants, Finance Minister Patrick Manning, junior Minister, Conrad Enill and the Attorney General.

Denbow submitted that his client was sacked as head of UTC less than 14 months after his appointment, because he failed to give way to the wishes of the Finance Minister to appoint then executive manager Renwick Nickie to the post of executive director to replace Clarry Benn.”

Again, when you look at the composition where the government has influence, the UTC for example, it does not reflect the rainbow of Trinidad and Tobago. Again, that cannot be by accident. How is it that wherever this PNM puts its hands, the composition does not reflect you and me? That is a very frightening thing. You and I represent Trinidad and Tobago, and there are others, and it must be reflected.

When you look at TSTT, the same thing obtains. When you look at T&TEC, the same obtains; so it cannot be by accident. It is the PNM's policy of discrimination and racism no matter how they try to hide it.

I just read a very interesting article as it relates to the UTC. According to the article, the then chairman of the UTC took it to court, but it does not stop there.

“Nickie, latest casualty of the UTC/FCB issue

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Unit Trust Corporation Executive Manager, Renwick Nickie is the latest in the war of words over the Corporation's proposed merger with First Citizens Bank. In a reversal of fortunes, Nickie, once tipped to replace Clarry Benn as director, was fired by the board through a letter dated December 19 and signed by chairman Harewood. The latest move comes two months after former chairman, Herbert Alleyne, was fired after making comments on the proposed merger between UTC and FCB".

Do you see the connection? Someone appointed by the PNM chairs FCB. The PNM wants to get its hands on the funds of the FCB and talks about a merger—no consultation. It does not invite the public to participate. It does not invite the stakeholders to give their opinion, but they put it out and when you stand up and say that perhaps this is not best, you are fired. That is how the PNM operates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I saw a very interesting advertisement placed by the FCB. It followed the advertisement by the PNM to gain support on Tuesday, where there were a number of hands. I am sure you would have seen it. On the hands are written: "Enough". That is a PNM advertisement. You will recall in the elections they were using the word "enough". They did not stop there. FCB placed an advertisement some time later with the exact hand and the word "enough" removed. You see the connection. That is how they operate. A PNM appointee who carries on the work of the PNM chairs FCB. So the racism and discrimination of the PNM treats across the board.

You will recall an article in the *Sunday Express* dated March 28, 2004:

"Coudray remains 'unafraid'

'PNM loyalists are out to get her' but...

While stating that there continues to be 'subtle attempts to pressure me', Marlene Coudray has declared that she remained 'unafraid'.

Fresh from victory in a battle to have her transferred from the San Fernando City Corporation...to the Point Fortin Borough Corporation, the Chief Executive Officer—in an exclusive interview with the *Sunday Express*—said: 'Certain PNM councillors in San Fernando are saying things like, 'we ain't taking she on, she against we boss'. The SFCC staff has felt like it's been up against the San Fernando East constituency, and others...'

You see how the PNM operates. This is the worst thing to happen to this country.

While the PNM boast of investment in the energy sector, I want them to tell this House, what is the country risk? When people from abroad are brought here

to work, they are paid a country risk allowance and the highest ever paid is what is being paid under the PNM currently. These are studies done by international bodies, like PriceWaterhouseCoopers, looking at the risk of foreign workers coming to Trinidad and Tobago. I think it is about 69. It means that when you pay \$1, you now have to pay \$1.69. That is a lot of money because of the PNM's foolishness; because of their racism and because of their discrimination.

Another article that appeared on page 3, Tuesday, March 23, 2004:

“Manning threatened to deal with me”

He threatened to deal with me, too.

“The honourable Mr. Patrick Manning (the Leader of the Opposition) personally threatened to ‘deal’ with me when he returned to power.”

This is a very frightening thing; this is where this country has reached. This is the Prime Minister in opposition threatening to deal. That is why they did not appear in court. They did not want all of this to come out but, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the truth shall always prevail. I am scared reading this article.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we really have to pay attention to what is happening in this country. It is a young country, people are scared and migration is at its highest. Today more and more people are trying to migrate. If tomorrow morning people can go to Canada and the United States, half the country may go because of the PNM's policy of cheating the citizens of this country.

Hear what this article says. This is Marlene Coudray still.

“I believe I am being targeted by the honourable Prime Minister and agents of the ruling People's National Movement party who are now in government.”

What will they do to the Opposition and people who stand up against them? How will they treat people who say that the police reform bills are not the best for the country? Will they be victimized?

“I am being victimized because of my perceived failure to co-operate with and to do favours for friends and political supporters of the PNM despite

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the fact that this could/would involve violations of the law and compromising my professional integrity...”

Here is the Chief Executive Officer saying these things. How many other persons are saying it? Members on this side receive this kind of information on a daily basis and people are scared to go to the police. People do not have money to go to court.

“On Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> day of May, 2003, Prime Minister Patrick Manning reminded me of his threat to ‘deal’ with me when he returned to power and promised to do so soon...”

Is this the country your children would want to grow up in? Is this the country our citizens have to face? Is this a prime minister of the people? We will have to negotiate with some other country to protect us. This cannot and must not be allowed to continue. And the Prime Minister wants to get his hands on the police service to control them? Do you know what they will do to Members of the Opposition and persons opposing the Government?

When you look at history right in the Caribbean, the exact thing the Prime Minister is trying to do is what Eric Gairy did in Grenada and hundreds of people were shot and killed. The same thing Forbes Burnham did in Guyana and thousands of people had to leave that country. The same thing obtained in Jamaica; with Idi Amin in Uganda and with Robert Mugabe. Is this where the Prime Minister wants to take this country? Thank God for this Opposition. Had it not been for the struggles of the Opposition, led by Mr. Basdeo Panday, this country would have been deep with regret.

“On or about the 7<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2003, the Prime Minister publicly...predicted at the post-Cabinet media conference aired ‘live’ on I95.5 radio Station.

Louis Lee Sing...”

The Member for Diego Martin Central just asked—10,000 sugar workers went home, bringing in foreign exchange of close to \$1 billion; not treated with; 10 workers at I95.5 and the Prime Minister runs and gives them a licence so that they could carry their propaganda. Today I95.5 receives the highest number of advertisements from the PNM. Money is flowing like water—PNM discrimination. I90.5 is not getting that. 103 FM is not getting that. 102 FM is getting some.

When will this stop? The Member for Arouca South corrected me. She said 103 FM is getting some. I will tell you the connection. This was “aired ‘live’ on I95.5 Radio Station that I would in fact be transferred to the Point Fortin Corporation”.



If the Prime Minister is allowed to have his way, you would not sit in that Chair again. Never! *[Interruption]* The Deputy Speaker! *[Interruption]* I would tell you why. I am glad you asked why.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, remember I am unable to take part in this debate. Convention has it that you should leave me out. I would appreciate it.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** The article continued:

“The executive has used and/or misused its power and influence to orchestrate and/or to procure and/or prompt and/or secure my transfer and removal from the San Fernando City Corporation.

The Government has been constructing multi-storey apartment complexes and housing schemes under the aegis of the National Housing Authority without any building and other requisite approvals from the San Fernando City Corporation”.

So when a public servant, as is required by law, stands up to do his or her job, you see how the PNM treats with it?

It is interesting that when the Member for Diego Martin West and Minister of Housing spoke some time ago, he singled out a particular contractor, Hanover Construction. He said this contractor was a former campaign manager of a UNC Member of Parliament. He went further. The question that begs is why did he single out this contractor. Before I identify why, let me present some facts.

Of all contracts issued to date by the NHA, almost every other contractor has had cost overruns; has not been able to deliver within budget and has earned no revenue. The only contractor that has earned revenue and, by extension, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, is Hanover Construction. The facts are there. *[Interruption]* Whatever you call it. Anand Persad. Why was he singled out?

The only contractor doing NHA programmes who has brought revenue for the NHA is Anand Persad and the Minister, using the protection of Parliament attacked him—he said he was the campaign manager for a UNC candidate. I want to go further and say that it demonstrates PNM’s discrimination and racism again. That is a classic example.

**3.00 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion moved by my colleague, the Member for St. Joseph, must be seen for its merit. The Member for St. Joseph, like all Members on this side, wants to add value to the lives of people. He wants us to have a better

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Trinidad and Tobago. Discrimination and racism obtains most under the PNM. We must do something. How can we treat with this matter? It is the Equal Opportunity Commission. Of course, the PNM refuses to support it. The PNM is doing everything within its power to make sure that discrimination and racism continues, because it is to their benefit. Why is it to their benefit? The PNM thinks it will keep people at that level, by not educating them or not treating with them fair and square. By doing that, they think they would continue to get votes. That is how they intend to remain in power.

Let me tell you what obtains in the United States. An Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was set up, with powers to enable and initiate litigation for cases of discrimination arising out of unemployment. That does not obtain in Trinidad and Tobago. Hundreds of people who apply to agencies such as WASA, MTS, T&TEC or TSTT, in many instances, are not given employment, based on their ethnic background. Many of them, when they go with letters from Members opposite—Members opposite write letters—which, indirectly, is an instruction to employ. MTS is flooded with letters. The Member for Diego Martin Central writes many letters.

In Northern Ireland, the Equal Opportunity Commission, shaped after its counterpart in the United Kingdom, is also concerned with discrimination at the level of employment. In the case of Sweden, a decision was taken in 1976, to set up a ministry for matters concerning equality between men and women. In 1980, based on the Equal Opportunity Employment Act, an Equal Opportunity Commission was set up. The same thing obtains in France and many other countries. The reason the PNM Government does not want to treat with the issue is that keeping it as it obtains now is to their advantage. We cannot allow that to continue.

I want to make some further observations. We looked at what obtains in Trinidad and Tobago. Last Saturday, in this rainbow country, we saw the players of an instrument—when the PNM was hoodwinking the national community, they said they would name the tassa as the second national instrument, to date nothing has happened—who had to stop playing. We saw the same thing in religion. For many years, followers of the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha Movement were discriminated against by the PNM. They were not allowed to practise their religion. They were taken to court, in some instances. It was the UNC who treated with them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to recommend that the citizens of this country must be treated with equality: equal in dignity, equal in rights and they must demonstrate the ability to contribute to the development and well-being of

Trinidad and Tobago, in a constructive manner. They must not be denied that right because they are supporters of other parties except the PNM.

**Mr. Valley:** Other than!

**Mr. C. Sharma:** They must not be denied that right because of race, religion, or gender. We further advance that our citizens constitute the Trinidad and Tobago family. They all contribute to the progress and development of the country and must be treated in like manner. Cro Cro must not get money to sing calypsos against one sector of the community. Calypso tents must not receive moneys to sing against us, discriminate and be racial. When you look at the quantum of money spent, approximately \$200 million was spent on Carnival and less than \$20,000 for Phagwa. Very little money was given for Eid and Divali because, in the PNM's book, steel pan and calypso is PNM and they would get their votes.

When you look at the distribution of housing, under the National Housing Authority (NHA), it cannot be by accident that the NHA houses are not occupied by people of this rainbow Trinidad and Tobago. The classic example is in the constituency of Couva South. More than 900 homes were given out and less than 5 per cent went to people looking like me. It cannot be by accident. We note that under the PNM, racism and racial discrimination is at the highest level and is now affecting the development of this country. We are asking the Government to start paying attention to the cries of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If persons are saying that they are discriminated against, it must not be thrown in the wastepaper basket, but a proper investigation and corrective measures must be part of the process.

We have noted that more than 30 per cent of the national community live under the poverty line. Underemployment is high. There is social exclusion in the distribution of State resources. When you look at the SHARE programme and other moneys available from the different ministries, it is not reaching the national community. Persons in the rural communities are not reached. The constituencies that Members on this side represent are the last to get, if any, State resources.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West indicated that the Government is publishing a booklet that will identify resources that might be available. How were these resources distributed for the last 30 months? Were they only distributed to PNM constituency offices and PNM party groups? I do not have to tell you. The answer is yes. They are under pressure and suddenly they want to print a booklet. Why was it not printed one year or two years ago?

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We are concerned about development in our constituencies that is being hampered by the Government's discrimination. Presently, every Member of Parliament on this side has projects waiting for approval by the National Commission for Self Help. These projects were applied for by groups in our constituencies. To date, those projects are not approved. Members opposite are receiving approval on a daily basis. Over the last 30 months, more than 85 per cent of all funds made available through the National Commission for Self Help have gone to PNM constituencies. The remaining 15 per cent that have gone to the UNC constituencies were either through a PNM party group or PNM contact.

We are extremely concerned that, under the PNM they seem to want this level of discrimination and racism to continue. They are spending taxpayers' money: hundreds of millions of dollars. They cause it to continue. We want checks and balances in place. We want the Government to account. We do not want them to spend the money and then say that it was given for X,Y and Z, but to make sure that the moneys of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago reach out to more people.

We are extremely concerned about what obtains in the Ministry of Health. In many health centres, simple pharmaceuticals are not available. Persons suffering from diabetes, oftentimes, cannot receive their medication. You would recall, those medications were made available under the UNC Government. The cheapest medication ever to be available was under the UNC Government. The free supply of medication came under this Government. Today we are seeing a change. However, what is happening is the management of the pharmaceuticals is operating out of the National Insurance Board. It cannot be by accident that health centres in UNC constituencies are suddenly getting fewer supplies. Again, that is PNM design.

There must be value in diversity. The cultures of Trinidad and Tobago must be represented at all levels. In recent times, we have seen hundreds of millions of dollars spent on the Prime Minister's Best Village Programme. Again, this does not represent the rainbow practices of our country. The Member for Laventille West is advancing that we do not contribute to it. This is the State's money. The State has a responsibility and a requirement to make sure that the money is not taken and given to PNM party groups at all times. They should not get PNM party groups to create other groups and call them something else. In a number of PNM constituencies, Members of Parliament and shadow Members of Parliament instruct them to do so. Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo has been going to Fyzabad and meeting with the PNM party groups and her instructions were—she will be treated with at the right time—that they maintain the same membership

and call themselves anything: action group, NGO and they will get funding. You would recall on the last occasion, we identified a number of resources that the Government pays for and it goes to PNM party groups. They are hiding behind NGOs and CBOs.

An advertisement, which cost millions of dollars, appeared both in the print and electronic media. This advertisement told the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to demand of their Member of Parliament—this was aimed to Members on this side—to support legislation intended to come to this House on June 29, 2004. We know that has never obtained anywhere else in the world. That does not obtain under the British Westminster system.

A group in Cumuto applied for the use of the Cumuto Government School. That permission was obtained. Today, the permission was withdrawn. On the one hand, the Government is saying demand of your MP. The MP had nothing to do with the meeting. That MP happens to be the MP for Nariva. They invited an attorney, Mr. Joseph Toney, former Member of Parliament, to address the meeting on the Bill. He agreed. The PNM has withdrawn the school. That is discrimination and racism. How else does it happen? The acting Minister of Education cannot pretend he knows nothing about it. I hope he did not authorize it. *[Interruption]* It is the Cumuto Government School. Take your cell phone and call and find out. You still have a few minutes to do so. The reason they have withdrawn the support is, you would recall both in the print and electronic media, a group in Cumuto marched against crime. It is the same group that is hosting the meeting tomorrow. Are you seeing the connection?

Some schools are provided with public transport. This is not a gift from the Government, it is a responsibility. There are schools that are provided with maxi taxis and public transport buses to take children to school. How is it that a large majority, more than 75 per cent, is going to schools in the PNM constituencies? It cannot be by accident, again. I have never seen a government as dangerous and racial as the PNM. Never! I never would have thought in the year 2004, we would have Ministers of Government who are prepared to do that. For what, the title of Minister, tax free car or being able to jump on a plane and fly all over the country? It cannot be! We cannot destroy a country to hold power. The Government cannot discriminate against more than half of the population.

The PNM felt when we talk and show evidence of discrimination we would only point to people of Indian origin. I demonstrated today that they discriminated against women and children. You should have seen the number of children they were sending in a particular PNM-sponsored programme. I think the programme is

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HYPE. One of the applicants—how is it that this group that is being trained does not represent all of Trinidad and Tobago? The Minister said to keep it quiet. That is where we have reached. The PNM is saying that all is well in the country. They are hoodwinking the country with the Bills that are coming on Tuesday. They have called them the Anti-crime Bills. We asked for money to place our response but there were no moneys. We ask for airtime, no airtime. The Government is hosting groups all over the country. We are not permitted to host groups. The PNM is using taxpayers' money to host groups all over the country and offering incentives. This matter requires urgent attention. We must deal with it. We cannot allow it to continue. Under the PNM, this has obtained for many years. It has now gotten worse.

I have a book entitled *Simboonath Capildeo*. Research has shown that successive PNM governments—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, you have only one minute.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** At this time, in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, the majority of citizens are very uncomfortable. They are worried about being raped, kidnapped, murdered, fired or sent home as a result of PNM discrimination and racism.

I beg the Government to review its position. Thank you.

**The Minister of State in the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Affairs (Hon. Diane Seukeran):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is extremely sad when an East Indian like myself—because that is what I am: a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, but of East Indian origin—sits on this side and listens to the arrant nonsense that is spoken in this House time and time again; not just in the content that is being expressed, but in the method and manner in which race is perpetrated within this House and how it flows from colleagues of mine sitting on the other side, dividing this country time after time, as fact is tinged with race, dividing this country. If we are dividing this country, it is being done—It takes two to divide it. It does not happen once. I say to that side, the fault lies on that side. It is with great sadness. I was looking at this and just decided to rise to my feet. It is with sadness that I saw that it was the Member for St. Joseph who laid this Motion. I did not expect that of him. The Motions says:

“*Whereas* since December 24<sup>th</sup> 2001 there has been a renewal under the institutionalization of the victimization of and the discrimination against employees of state enterprises, statutory authorities, government ministries and public authorities by the PNM Government;...”

Victimization and discrimination is perpetrated by the PNM Government since December 2001. It says:

“*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;”

It mentions YAPA, OJT, HYPE, GAPP and other public programmes.

The fact that the Member for St. Joseph should move this is extraordinarily sad. When he or the Member for St. Augustine does something like this, I feel sad because it says to me that we have come down to the lowest rank in race and discrimination. When perceptions become reality to the point where, distinguished Members such as these; learned and intelligent men, should perpetrate and put it down into the *Hansard* that is happening in the country of Trinidad and Tobago is sad. This is not any other Member raising it; it is the Member for St. Joseph. I have the greatest respect for him. I want to say to the Member for St. Joseph, in line with this document, this Government, myself particularly Sir, is very pleased to support the Motion. I have an objection on how the Motion is raised. The Motion itself, I have no problem supporting. It continues:

“*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.”

I have no hesitation. I take great pride in saying that the People’s National Movement, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on this side of the House and the entire country, support this Motion 100 per cent.

The baseline for the rationale of the Motion is nonsense. The fact of the matter is that all of us—as the Member for Fyzabad calls it, within the family of the people of Trinidad and Tobago—have to support this, and do so. I listened with sadness to what was said today. I am a Brahmin Hindu. That is the stock from which I came. I listened to a Brahmin Hindu from Fyzabad. [*Interruption*] My father was a Brahmin priest, as you well know. The distinguished Member for Fyzabad is a Brahmin pundit. Brahminism, as far as I know, is the search for knowledge. The Member for Couva South does not happen to stand in the same caste. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Allow the Member for San Fernando West to make her contribution. Let us listen. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Ramnath:** Are you a member of the Susamachar Presbyterian Church?

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** My mother was a foundation Member. I am not. My sister Radica is. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Couva South, please do not do it.

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** For the information of the Member for Couva South, I am a child of God. I respect all religions. Like a true Trinidadian; when it is Eid ul Fitr, I practise and celebrate with my Muslim counterparts. When it is Divali, I celebrate. When it is Christmas, I celebrate. For each festival, like a true Trinidadian, I celebrate and respect all. [*Desk thumping*]

I will continue without distraction from my good friend from Couva South. I say to my friend from Fyzabad, a true Brahmin looks at truth. He particularly, a practising Hindu priest, should know better than to stand in this House and say the things that he said. All that he is saying is perception. He perceives that there is racial discrimination and bias. In his mind, it has become reality. Unfortunately, it is being fed down to the population as truth. This is a devastating thing.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Fyzabad, you went ahead and I protected you throughout your contribution. I would like you to allow the hon. Member for San Fernando West to speak. She might be saying things that you do not like to hear. You could not hear or exit and come back.

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** In line with what the Member for Couva South was saying: in Christianity one is told to remove the mote from your eyes before you see the beam in another's. [*Desk thumping*] That saying is founded in Hinduism and Islam. In every single one of the major religions, you can find the same text. There are different ways of saying it, but they are saying the same thing. I ask the Members opposite to please, begin to understand, as they well know, the reality of government and particularly the danger that they now subject this country to, in perpetuating and continually repeating, time after time, the charge of racism in everything. They say that it is because of race their supporters are not getting this or that. Everything is race. Nothing is founded in truth.

I want to touch upon some of the points that the speaker preceding me touched upon. Before I do that, I ask the gentlemen—I see my friend, the Member for Siparia, is absent. This Motion is founded on the basis that we on this side, as a Government, are guilty of racial and gender discrimination. Can I, for one



moment, ask the Members opposite and indeed, this entire House, and particularly the members of the media, to focus on that side and focus on this side and look at the ethnic composition represented on both sides [*Desk thumping*] and then to say in fact, which has the bias?

Look at the issue of gender. I say proudly, on that side there is one female Member sitting there and one sitting there, that means two. On this side there is one here, one here, one there, one there and one there. We have five to two. That is the balance. That is what we mean by gender. In the Upper House, count again, four to two. Let us talk about gender balance. I have the pleasure of saying that I am very much a woman and very much proud to say that there is no gender imbalance in the PNM. In fact, in the next election, without doubt, you will see more—there will still be a PNM government—female Members in this House. [*Desk thumping*] Take a good look at local government representation. I do not have the statistics in front of me but anyone can count and see the number of women councillors in Trinidad and Tobago, all of who are PNM women. [*Desk thumping*]

Look at the grasping of straws! The hon. Prime Minister was wearing a PNM tie when he met the Prime Minister of Guyana. How sad! Is that not less than a straw? That is grasping at a piece of straw plummeting in the ocean!

The other comment was that it was indicated in today's newspapers that guns increased since 2001 by 200 per cent and 300 per cent. Again, the fault of the PNM. Why? The Member goes on. It is sad that a Brahmin priest goes on to say that it is because of the people—he says it quite categorically and the implication is clear. He has removed himself very nicely from listening. He has implied very clearly and was tying it to the payment given to CEPEP workers. He said the people who would be coming in their vanloads to support us in this House next week are the ones who have the guns—the 200 per cent and 300 per cent increase in guns. That was exactly what the Member for Fyzabad was very cleverly stating in this House. He said that is what would be coming out in the public.

We cannot say that teachers are criminals. We may not agree with their method of handling our children, but we cannot call them criminals, nor can we say that the decent people who work in CEPEP, URP or the supporters of the PNM, for whatever reason, are the ones who are contributing to the 200 per cent and 300 per cent increase in the guns. What is he saying; they are criminals, too? Because you are a PNM, you are a criminal? Because you support something, or the Government hires you, you are a criminal? That is what the Member for Fyzabad was saying in this House today. I am totally shocked that a Member of the House of Representatives says this. I am shocked that a Brahmin priest says this.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, let his priestly attributes—keep it out a little.

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Couva South, let me deal with it please. I have dealt with it.

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** I will take your guidance. I am offended simply—I use it—by the very fact that his stand tells him that he should do better.

I would continue to touch upon his knocking the SHARE programme. The SHARE programme is designed to help those who are least fortunate. It is a hamper. Oh good heavens, must we tie that into race as well? The self-help programme is designed to help people to help themselves. If you want a project done and you can raise a portion of it, the Government will help you. My gosh!

With respect to the statements he made, he quoted from the Centre of Ethnic Studies, the composition of the fire services, the police service and all the different agencies. He noted, as we all know, the lack of imbalance. It is a fact that there is a lack of ethnic balance in those services. He has not gone—he does not say that 100 persons of East Indian extract applied for the jobs and were turned down without reason, or the reason was such. He simply quoted a statistic that has come out of analysis from the centre. He does not give the reason. He does not say that the East Indians of Trinidad and Tobago—I call them East Indians—or the Indo-Trinidadians have culturally, over time, not wanted to apply to the civil service in the days of the colonial regimes and coming forward. It is only today, when Trinidadians and Tobagonians of all ethnic composition see themselves as being able to apply for jobs, the applications are coming forward. If the Member for Siparia, or any Member on that side—if you look at the statistics of the number of applications—could see how many people of what ethnic grouping applied, then we could come to a true situation and analysis of what is the real problem in Trinidad and Tobago.

Why is it that we must harp upon the statistics alone, without saying the cause for it and then lead the population astray in saying that the PNM Government is saying there must only be 26 per cent Indians in a particular field? What nonsense is that? Let us ask the true questions and come as serious parliamentarians; people who are supposed to represent the people of Trinidad and Tobago, who must be sure of what is happening in our society, who must be careful of what we do, so as to create a cohesive whole in the society. That is what we are. That is how we are to behave.

That is why I am offended that the Member for St. Joseph should bring this Motion to the House today. I look forward to their support. I listened to the Member for Fyzabad and I look forward to his support of the Police Service Reform Bills that are to come. He quoted from the *Police Service Commission Report, 2002*. He went into the selection process. He quoted the statistics and what seems to him to be, apparent victimization of the Indo-Trinidadian male and the gender imbalance that exists. I look forward—I am sure we all do, given his comments—to him supporting what we want to do, which is to address all that imbalance.

Again, he is not coming out with it. It is sad that the Members opposite have not focused on the women's programmes. They have not focused on the GAP Programme. They have not focussed on the fact that the Government is focusing upon the creation of skills within our people and the gender balance of our people, so that women, particularly of the single headed households, can access jobs, because they are skilled and trained to hold on to a job. None of that has come forward, but it exists.

Perhaps, the only thing that can be said of this Government is that it does not get up and broadcast sufficiently, what it is doing that is good, proper and right for Trinidad and Tobago. That is a charge that we on this side lay against our own Government. We need to be actively in pursuit of a good public policy of information flow. Obviously, the Members opposite do not hear anything in this House and, therefore, they mislead the public. We need to be active.

I listened and I heard a comparison to my Prime Minister with Mr. Forbes Burnham, Idi Amin and Mugabe. With the greatest of respect, those goodly gentlemen are not people that we particularly want our Prime Minister to be like. I am very pleased to say that at no point in time, nowhere in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, in all the records: public and private, can the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago ever be accused of race. [*Desk thumping*] In every action that he has taken, in every statement he has made—he is very statesman-like—you will never hear the diatribe of race that comes out from the other side. It is with sadness. [*Interruption*] We have this thing about “Petrosingh”. When you quote a man, quote him correctly.

The next thing I heard was that they heard the Prime Minister wanted to get his hands on the police service, in the course of likening him to the other leaders that we do not want emulated in Trinidad and Tobago. We talked about the migration of people and tied it to the PNM. As far as I know, there is migration. There is the normal migration of Trinidadians and Tobagonians outward. We are

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an upwardly mobile society. As our people seek better and greener pastures, they go. It is quite true that many people today are frightened in the society, because of the levels of crime that are perpetrated and the failure to resolve and solve those crimes. There is no doubt about that. Some people are migrating because of this. Who can blame them? Which citizen in Trinidad and Tobago is not threatened and feels afraid? All of us do. If the Member for Couva South does not feel afraid then I count him a very foolish man.

Unlike the Members opposite, people on this side look at crime as having a twofold reasoning. One is the social pattern; what is happening. Nowhere would you hear, because of the liberalization process, we are losing jobs. Because of the gender imbalance within the society, we have levels of violence. We do not hear anything about the facts that exist in the economic world of Trinidad and Tobago and the threats that we face. None of this is reasoning for the levels of crime. None of this is reasoning that says that kidnapping is a business in Trinidad and Tobago and it does not matter who is being kidnapped. The reason for kidnapping is money. It could be the Member for Couva South, me or anyone of us. None of that is the rationale. It is simply a PNM thing. The PNM is responsible for everything that is wrong in the society. The Members opposite never once said: "We ruled for seven years and could do nothing about it. Did we pay attention to the cause of the crime?" which is what the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is focusing upon, all the social programmes.

There is a myriad of social programmes that are afoot in Trinidad and Tobago and were launched by this Government, to address an economic imbalance within the society, so that the people who do not have can find gainful means of employment and be given the skills that they require to have those jobs that they need and would not turn to crime. The education system can be better developed. Science and technology is taking us beyond the child's level into the adult world, so that we can reclaim our young, lost youth and retrain them and the Laventille School of Technology could exist. John S. Donaldson and San Fernando Technical Institutes, which were closed down in the last regime, should be reopened.

They do not see what the Government is doing for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are simply accused as the ones who are generating crime. As I said, we are touching it from two fronts; one is the social cause of crime and the other, the economic and educational imbalance that exists within the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a fact. The Government is addressing it aggressively.

There is the other part, which is crime as a business. Kidnapping is a business. It is the easiest way of making money. That is a fact. It has nothing to do with the

People's National Movement or the Government saying: "Go kidnap Couva South or Caroni East." At no point in time would we do such a thing. We are appalled by what is going on in this country and doing everything in our power, hence, the Bills next week. Let us be careful in what we say in this House. To have device we have device. It is being funnelled. There has always been. We are a multi-racial society. Unfortunately, through the history of Trinidad and Tobago—I come from old DLP stock—if you remember, it was Chanka Maharaj who said: "Aapan jaat vote nakki rauli". That means, one man one vote, but do not vote for a Negro. It was Chanka Maharaj. Let us be very careful of where it starts. That is how the Opposition of those days harnessed its support, along totally racial lines. *[Interruption]* It went to Seukeran, too. I have no doubt. *[Interruption]* I would answer him. He knows only too well that I come from a distinguished line of truthful speakers. *[Desk thumping]*

It is sad that the Members opposite, who come from the root of the DLP, should get up and accuse the Government of race, when they themselves continue from the days of Chanka Maharaj to today. They are perpetrating the myth of race in this country. They are feeding it in their frenzy of regaining. They are feeding into the population for support, that the PNM is victimizing you because you are an Indian. What happened to all the African support that the Opposition had yesterday: the government of national unity that reached out into the African community of Trinidad and Tobago? My opponent in the last election said he was going to take Laventille. He did everything that he could. We know what he did in Laventille.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is sad that the race only touches the community that they believe is the only community that supports them. We do not say that, but they do. They appeal towards the Indo-Trinidadian alone. It is no doubt that the DLP and the UNC stayed in opposition all those years, because they appealed only to one ethnic group in this country. The People's National Movement has always been broad-based. It is reflected here today. It is reflected in the history and in the statements of every leader of a PNM government of Trinidad and Tobago. It was indeed sad to sit here and listen to the Member for Fyzabad.

### **3.45 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened to the Member for Fyzabad, and I empathized perfectly with the Member when he talked about the stopping of the beating of the tassa at the Labour Day March in Fyzabad. I was horrified. Since when did the senior police officer become a Member of the PNM movement? Is the Member attacking the police service when he says that the police uniform should be a

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balisier pin? That is nonsense! Every Member of the Government was horrified at what happened on Labour Day. Tassa is part and parcel of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. In every PNM function one would hear tassa. I cannot tell you how shocked I was at what I heard today.

I would like the Members opposite to ask the leader of the Maha Sabha: What was the quantum of funds given to Hindu organizations this year for Indian Arrival celebrations? I have no doubt that if they were to be truthful, and if they were to answer correctly, the Maha Sabha would say that they have never received more money than what they have received in this particular year. We are in power; we do not have to give anybody, but we are giving as equally as we could to all the groupings, so that we could raise and generate the expression of culture, which is the expression of the soul of the people. We are proud of the cosmopolitan history of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

It seems to me, that on that side, there is a lack of recognition of the fact that the pan is the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] When we fund Carnival, we are funding pan. How could they dream the comparison that is obvious, when the fact of the matter is that they seek only to equate and equalize? The strength of—and the PNM has said it time and time again; the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has said it time and time again; and the Prime Minister has said it time and time again—of our people lies in the ethnic diversity of our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if 30 per cent of our people live under the poverty line—what we are talking about here is the distribution of wealth. The Member said that the 30 per cent came only from the rural communities. The fact of the matter is that—whereas in the countryside one could plant cassava and dasheen, and your neighbours are there to help you—in the urban section of Trinidad and Tobago, there is the greatest level of poverty of all. What are we doing about that? So that if the distribution of wealth is greater in the urban section that is so because the greatest concentration of poor people lives in the towns and cities of Trinidad and Tobago.

If the Member's charge is that the share is being distributed unequally, and the Government prints a booklet to show how the distribution goes, it shows them clearly in black and white—and anyone could check it—how the wealth is being distributed. The Member comes now and says, why the Government did not print this document before. The Member stands here in this House and continues to accuse the Government of racial bias.

The Member for Fyzabad said something that is so beautiful, and that is there has to be value in diversity. That is something I think that as country, all of us

have to recognize, but it is also something that the Members opposite have to understand. That diversity—the harmony and the balance of this country—could be so easily shattered by statements that appeared to be innocuous, coming out from the House with a hidden meaning behind it. This is being fed to a population of supporters outside there, who have now begun to believe that perceptions are realities.

There is no impediment once you have the skills for any job; there is no impediment to anyone acquiring any skill. Education is free in this country. It was a PNM government that made it free, and opened up education to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—whatever is your ethnic divide and wherever you came from. Schools were built everywhere.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want us to look back and see that only four bursaries existed for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It was Dr. Eric Williams, the founder of the country, who made it happen. Let us not knock education. If a school is not built in Cumuto, that is not because it is in Opposition territory, but because there are not enough children, or the site is another Biche site. We must be careful of what we say.

Let us talk about Best Village. Best Village is an area where any citizen or any group could participate. If certain ethnic groupings do not want to participate, what are we supposed to do? Should we take a hammer and knock them on their heads and drag them into Best Village? Is that what the Government is supposed to be doing? Best Village is open to all. The question is for us to say to all of the people that they could participate because Best Village is theirs by right. The Members opposite must stop holding back their people, and stop telling them not to take part in PNM things. That is what they are telling their supporters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we are in Government, we are a Government of all the people. This Motion here charges the PNM Government, so that the party is inextricably linked to this document. I want to assure the Members opposite that government is about all the people. When a government takes on the mantle of leadership—as our Prime Minister has done—of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, we have to represent all the people. That is what we intend to do.

There is no truth in the statement that the constituencies that are getting help are only the PNM constituencies, or in an Opposition territory, you could only get help through a PNM contact. What we are hearing is a Member of the Opposition, who is not in the Government, complaining that he cannot get what he wants. That is what is being said. [*Desk thumping*] This has nothing to do with the service of the Government to the constituencies of Fyzabad, Siparia, Couva

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South, Chaguanas, Barataria/San Juan, Nariva, Couva North, Caroni East or St. Augustine. All the Opposition seats are being serviced by the PNM Government.  
[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that in mind, I want to draw your attention to certain documents. I have in my hand a sheet from the Ministry of Local Government dealing with the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). I want us to look for a moment at the Chaguanas Borough Council. It says that in Chaguanas, there were 26 maintenance projects; there were 10 construction projects; and 412 persons from the constituency of Chaguanas were employed under the URP. There is no question here about not hiring people from Chaguanas, which is an Opposition area.

In Couva, there were 12 maintenance projects; 18 construction projects; and a total of 351 persons were employed under that programme.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Where in Couva?

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** Mr. Ramnath, that is in your area. Are you not aware of the persons in your constituency who are being employed? That is sad. What kind of representation is that? I want to draw your attention to the fact that the PNM representative for San Fernando West has complained bitterly, and the Member for San Fernando East has also complained bitterly that we do not get enough employment in our areas. The complaint is not one about race or victimization of Opposition territory, but it is the Member for San Fernando West, a PNM Member of Parliament who is complaining. I see the Member for San Fernando East is nodding his head. I have no doubt that the Members for Ortoire/Mayaro and Tunapuna are also complaining that they are not getting enough work under the URP. I am also quite sure that the Member for La Brea would also complain that his constituency does not get enough employment under URP. We are all complaining.

For instance, in Port of Spain, there were 102 projects and 452 persons were employed. On this side we are complaining. At the same time, we recognize that Port of Spain is the capital city, and it has a massive population; it spreads over a greater distance than any of the other constituencies and, therefore, it gets more employment. We accept it, but we complain. We do not complain on the grounds of race, or on the grounds of gender; but we are complaining as Members of Parliament. That is exactly what the Members for Fyzabad, Barataria/San Juan, St. Joseph, Caroni East or any Member on that side is doing. They could also get up and complain. The reality is founded in that as much as we are complaining, we have to recognize sometimes that there are certain needs of particular areas that have to be serviced.



I just want to point out that in two areas—and there are other areas here—that more is given. I do not know if the Members opposite know how many jobs are there in their areas. It is obvious that they do not know.

Again, from the Ministry of Local Government, the URP at work, I also want to lay this document. On the back page of this magazine created by the Government—this is a report which talks about the Road Improvement Fund. The period quoted is from 1998—2001. You would appreciate that the PNM Government was not in power at that point in time. This report was done by Members opposite when they were in government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us talk about victimization; let us talk about discrimination. We do not say racial discrimination; we do not say gender discrimination; but we are talking about political victimization—wicked discrimination. On that side, they only talk about Indo Trinidadian racial issues. [*Desk thumping*] They only see the PNM as being Afro-Trinidadian, and a person like me does not exist, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro does not exist; the Member for Diego Martin East does not exist; the Minister of Health does not exist; the Member for Tunapuna does not exist; and the Member for Point Fortin does not exist.

I remember very well a calypso that says that if you come down to the racial divide in this country, and you told the Africans to go back to Africa, and the Indians to go back to India, where would the Member for Point Fortin and the Member for Tunapuna be? There is great truth and merit in that calypso. Perhaps, we ought to pay attention to that calypso.

I want to get back to this document. The Member for Couva South is attempting to shout me down. He should look at the quietness of the Member for Couva North who is behaving as a distinguished Member should behave. On the other hand, the Member for Couva South is attempting to shout down the truth. The truth would be heard regardless of what the Member says. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, firstly, I think I should show you the PNM areas. The allocation for Arima Borough Corporation during the years 1998/1999 was zero; 1999/2000, zero; and 2000/2001, zero. There was no money for Arima. The Diego Martin Regional Corporation did not get a black cent during those four years. The Point Fortin Borough Corporation was fortunate, because they did not get any money in 1998 and 1999, but in 2000 they got \$317,160. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, we cannot hear the hon. Member for San Fernando West. I know sometimes when these matters come out we must comment, but let us allow the Member to continue with her contribution.

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you. The reality about Point Fortin is this. The year 2000 was an election year, and the reason for giving Point Fortin Borough Corporation that money was to ensure that the gentleman called Vincent Lasse—a betrayer of the PNM, who had crossed the floor—won that seat, and the people of Point Fortin would have supported a man like that. There are decent people in Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*] The Member for Point Fortin, Mr. Larry Achong, is one of those persons. They were trying to win that seat so they gave Point Fortin Borough Corporation some money. There is sadness in here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the years 1998—2001, the San Fernando City Corporation did not get any money. There was a UNC representative in the government from San Fernando who was the Minister of Local Government, Minister of Works, Minister par-excellence, Minister multi-faceted, Minister omnipotent and Minister omni-dexterous, et cetera, and the San Fernando City Corporation did not get a single penny. There is no wonder then that the PNM won the election.

The San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation did not get any money for the years 1998—2001. They did not get a cent; they did not get a penny. And yet the Member for St. Joseph is moving this Motion. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not be distracted by the Member for Barataria/San Juan whom I have a great deal of respect for. I would not descend into an arena with the Member for Barataria/San Juan, because as a Member of Parliament, I doubt the Member sees race when he sees a patient.

Before I move on to the positive attributes of this document, the City of Port of Spain that we are seeking to make the financial hub of the Caribbean; that we are seeking to bring the headquarters of Nafta; the capital for the headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS); and all the things that we hope and dream for are in Port of Spain. So although we are complaining, we understand what is going on.

For the years 1998/1999, the Port of Spain City Corporation did not get a black penny; for the years 1999/2000, the corporation did not get a silver penny—to please my friend, the Member for Barataria/San Juan; and for the years 2000/2001, the corporation did not get a golden penny; not even a black penny. [*Desk thumping*]

On the other hand, let me just point out for the edification of the general population and, certainly, for the edification of Members opposite—we on this side could read and the general public could read—that it was the PNM who opened up education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to the Chaguarnas Borough Corporation, in 1998, the Chaguarnas Borough Corporation got \$420,000; for the years 1998/1999, they got \$6,671,123; for the years 1999/2000, the Chaguarnas Borough Corporation obviously fell out of favour with the government because they only got \$1,874,020. Something obviously went wrong with what was going on politically in that corporation. In the year 2000, they got \$8,249,872—compare that figure with the Port of Spain City Corporation which got zero.

I would not go through the whole document. In 1998, the Siparia Regional Corporation got \$500,000; in 1999, they got \$722,498.

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

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. F. Hinds*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues and my colleagues opposite. The truth is only painful when it is the truth. [*Desk thumping*] The Siparia Regional Corporation got \$500,000; \$772,500, \$1,225,000 and \$2,670,000. The Port of Spain City Corporation did not get a cent and San Fernando City Corporation did not get any money.

The Princes Town Regional Corporation got \$10,468,000.90 and Port of Spain City Corporation did not get a cent, and San Fernando City Corporation did not get a penny. Princes Town Regional Corporation got \$10 million—black, white, yellow, green gold, red whatever kind of money.

During those four years, the Debe/Penal Regional Corporation got \$2,335,000, \$1,300,000, and then the allocation was reduced to \$800,000. I do not know what was going on inside that corporation, but during the year 2000, they did not get any money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really want to ask the Members opposite, who is really guilty of discrimination in this country? [*Desk thumping*] Which political party is guilty of discrimination? Which Government has perpetrated discrimination after discrimination against the citizens of this country? The persons in those constituencies who did not get a penny are citizens of this country—the family of Trinidad and Tobago—and they did not get a cent. They did not get any money to fix a drain; they did not get any money to pave a road; and they did not even get gas money for the garbage trucks. Then they have the temerity to come to this House and accuse this Government of race. That is nonsense!

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. D. SEUKERAN]

*Friday, June 25, 2004*

We heard about the charges at SWMCOL and the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). The Member said there were no programmes in their areas. In the Barataria/San Juan area, employment was generated to 420 persons; in Caroni Central, 80 persons were employed; in Chaguanas, 60 persons were employed; in Couva North, 120 persons were employed—I am going through the Opposition areas. In Couva South, 120 persons were employed; in Fyzabad, 100 persons were employed—

**Mr. Ramnath:** Where in Couva?

**Hon. D. Seukeran:** The Member obviously does not live in Couva. The Member should check up on his constituents. There is no wonder then they get upset with Members across there. In Naparima, 60 persons were employed; in Nariva, 120 persons were employed; in Oropouche, 100 persons were employed; in Pointe-a-Pierre, 60 persons were employed; in St. Joseph, 320 persons were employed. The man who brought the Motion, 320 of his constituents were hired under the PNM; and in Tabaquite, 60 persons were employed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to compare those figures with the areas controlled by the PNM. In Arima, 170 persons were employed; in Arouca South, 140 persons were employed. That is a highly populated area. In Arouca North, 120 persons were employed; in Diego Martin Central, 120 persons were employed; in Diego Martin East, 120 persons were employed; and in Diego Martin West, 120 persons were employed. If you were to add the number of persons employed in the three constituencies in Diego Martin, which is a half of the population of the City of Port of Spain, you would see that a total of 360 persons were employed in those constituencies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have noted that I said in Barataria/San Juan, 420 persons were employed, and that is an Opposition constituency. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the constituency of La Brea, a seat that you are very familiar with, 200 persons were employed in that area, and that is one of the most depressed areas in Trinidad and Tobago. In Laventille East/Morvant, 250 persons were employed; and in Laventille West, 220 persons were employed. If you add the both constituencies in Laventille you would get a total of 470 persons who were employed under that programme. When one talks about urban poverty, one is talking about Laventille. There is where we need to create jobs and, yet, Opposition territories are equal to PNM-controlled territories. So we must be factual in what we are saying.

In Point Fortin, which is the heartland of all the energy of this country—in a territory which is situated next to La Brea with all its poverty—there were only

180 persons employed; in Port of Spain North, 60 persons were employed; and in Port of Spain South, 260 persons were employed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us be real about these statistics. In San Fernando East, that is the seat held by the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, there were only 300 persons employed in that constituency; in San Fernando West, the most depressed area, having had no money from them on that side for four years—San Fernando East and San Fernando West have suffered, and there were only 320 persons employed in both constituencies.

In San Fernando East and San Fernando West there are deep pockets of social deprivation of poverty levels. In the constituency of St. Joseph, there were 320 persons employed there and that figure is equal to the number of persons employed in the Prime Minister's constituency, and yet the Member for St. Joseph brings a Motion founded in race and founded in gender. This is an extraordinary matter, and we should listen to these things. I tender this document into the House record so that any member of the media or any member of their voting group wanting to see this document is free to have it. It is based upon facts. Let us clear away the cobwebs; let us talk about the truth.

When a kidnapper goes after a child or a victim, what is that kidnapper doing? That kidnapper is feeding of the fear of a family by saying he would kill the person you love; he would hurt that person; he would rape your daughter; and he would bugger your son. That is what the kidnapper is saying to the victim's family. They are feeding of the fear of the family, and the kidnapper is making that family pay them—and nine out of 10 times the victim's family does not want to call the police because they are afraid that their loved ones would get killed.

What this Motion is doing is feeding the perception of discrimination of this country and founding it on race. That is how that side seeks and hopes to achieve government. [*Desk thumping*] Let us be extremely clear that this is a wicked basis for a Motion. However, the Motion itself is good, in that there is a single paragraph that reads that the country of Trinidad and Tobago should not have gender imbalance; that we should not have racial discrimination; and that the people should be afforded jobs because of the skills that they have. Under no circumstances, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago would play upon the sentiments of its supporters because its supporters are Indo-Trinidadians, Afro-Trinidadians, Chinese-Trinidadians, Syrian/Lebanese Trinidadians and all the mix—"melaou" of the people, coming together of the different races of the country, in the seats represented here by the Member for Tunapuna and the Member for Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*]

*Elimination of Discrimination*  
[HON. D. SEUKERAN]

*Friday, June 25, 2004*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say to Members opposite that it is time they stop dividing this country. When one listens to the radio stations in Trinidad and Tobago, there is hatred being perpetuated and fed to the population—I accused both sides, not only one side—and that is the most irresponsible thing that could happen. We have people in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—the Opposition is part of governance—that are so irresponsible as to tie a Motion such as this to race and victimization.

We are no longer living in the year 1956; this is the year 2004. The challenges facing Trinidad and Tobago in the global economic environment—the battle for survival for a small island State lies in the harnessing of the entire diversity of this country, of all the races and all the people coming together to fight the scourge of crime, drugs, illiteracy, lack of education, lack of skill-sets and, particularly, giving the country every boost, united only will we stand. Our Motto for this country is: Together we aspire and together we achieve. The attempt to destroy the very fabric of our country has to be resisted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand on my feet today, unprepared to have made a contribution, but doing so out of the emotion that I feel as a deep national of Trinidad and Tobago—proud to represent the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and a party that is founded on the complete respect for all races that make up this beautiful country. I would not sit and allow that side to continue to destroy the fabric of our society. When a society is divided with race you run that society apart.

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

**Dr. Fuad Khan** (*Barataria/San Juan*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very glad to be participating in this debate:

*“Be it resolved that this House re-affirm 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. Deputy Speaker, after listening to the last speaker, the figures that the Member quoted from the local government bodies—the moneys that were given to those bodies—there is no doubt that the discrimination that is occurring in our country—from whatever side we want to look at it—there is dire need for equality of treatment in this country.

It is unfortunate that the PNM cannot see the need for equal opportunity in this country. This whole Motion hangs around the equal opportunity movement of our country. When one goes through the whole Motion, one would see that in Trinidad and Tobago—maybe before 1956—there was a problem of discrimination.

Unfortunately, the Member for San Fernando West erroneously assumed that it was racial discrimination. That is nothing further from the truth.

Our country has been polarized since 1956 on political discrimination and it is—

**Ms. Seukeran:** It was Chanka Maharaj who started it.

**Dr. F. Khan:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for San Fernando West indicated what Chanka Maharaj said, but I am going to tell the Member what Dr. Eric Williams said. I take the liberty to respond. When Dr. Eric Williams second wife died, his daughter, Erica Williams, was a young girl. His friends on this side told him that he should remarry so that someone would take care of Erica Williams. Do you know what Dr. Eric Williams said? Unfortunately, I did not agree with what he said, but he said to bring me an Indian woman; bring me a Chinese woman; but do not bring me no Negro woman.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** When did he say that?

**Dr. F. Khan:** It is in the record and I will bring it for you. *[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** The Member should bring the record.

**Dr. F. Khan:** It is in a book called: *The Elusive Eric Williams* written by Mr. Soodoo. *[Interruption]* It is there whether Members like it or not; it is there in italics. *[Interruption]*

**Ms. Seukeran:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, will the Member give way?

**Dr. F. Khan:** No, I am not giving way. *[Interruption]* The Member has to read the book. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Where did you get the quotation?

**Dr. F. Khan:** The quotation is from a book called: *The Elusive Eric Williams*.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** By whom?

**Dr. F. Khan:** By Mr. Soodoo. *[Interruption]* “You all cannot take it, but you could give it. You cannot take it.” *[Interruption]* I will only give the Prime Minister way.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan for giving way. It is my experience that now that Dr. Eric Williams is dead and he is not in a position to defend himself, a lot of people are suddenly able to quote him as having said this, that or the other. My own experience is that these things should be taken with a pinch of salt. *[Desk thumping]* *[Interruption]*

**Dr. F. Khan:** I am giving the Member way.

**Mr. Ramnath:** I would like to find out from the Member for San Fernando West, what was the source of her quotation? Mr. Chanka Maharaj is also deceased and he does not have an opportunity to deny or confirm a serious accusation made by the Member for San Fernando West.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay, I will tell you what I will do. I will get from both Members, the source of their statements, and we would give it to *Hansard*.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance: (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think this is an appropriate time to move the adjournment of the House. [*Laughter*] In the circumstances, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday, June 29, 2004 at 10.00 a.m. I am sure that everyone is aware that on that day the Government plans to debate the package of Bills that have come to be known as the Police Reform Bills.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.27 p.m.*