HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 01, 2004

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members for leave of absence from sittings of the House: the Member for Caroni East (Mr. G. Singh), for the period December 01, 2004 to December 03, 2004; the Member for San Fernando West (Hon. D. Seukeran), for the period November 22, 2004 to December 07, 2004; and the Member for Tobago East (Hon. E. Job-Davis) from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the statement of Recovery of Expenses of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ended December 31, 2003. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

   To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

2. Annual audited financial statements of the Metal Industries Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 2002. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

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

3. Annual report and the annual audited financial statements of the National Insurance Board for the year ended June 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIONS) BILL

Bill to amend certain laws to facilitate the implementation of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community, including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy [*The Minister of Foreign Affairs*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken on Friday, December 03, 2004. [*Sen. The Hon. K. Gift*]

Question put and agreed to.

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Knowlson Gift): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to give effect to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) and for matters related thereto, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this honourable House is to give effect to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the Caricom Single Market and Economy. The intent of the Bill is to give domestic legal effect to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas which was signed on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on July 05, 2001 during the 22nd meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community in the Bahamas during the period 03 to 06 July 2001.

On that historic occasion, the Bill was signed by the illustrious Prime Minister of the day, the hon. Basdeo Panday. So we can see that in effect, Prime Minister Panday at that time, had in mind that the Caricom integration movement proceed with due dispatch.

Trinidad and Tobago ratified the treaty on July 03, 2003 during the 24th meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The ratification of the revised treaty signified the willingness of Trinidad and Tobago to be bound by the provisions of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. It reflects the intention of the member states of the Caribbean Community to progress from a common market with elements of functional cooperation, to a single market and single economy. This is an ambitious task.

The idea for the creation of the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) was first mooted at the Heads of Government meeting in Grand Anse in Grenada in 1989. A single market is a space within which goods and services, people, capital and technology freely circulate, so we can see that going back to 1989, successive governments of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago had signed on to the treaty.

The CSME would create a larger integrated market that would better enable the region to negotiate with other trading blocs such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Mercosur, in hemispheric-wide trading arrangements such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and with larger countries of the region such as the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Colombia and Venezuela.

The CSME is a necessary step to compete in the global marketplace. The Caribbean Community is moving forward on the creation of the Caricom Single Market and Economy. This instrument will result in the complete removal of all barriers to trade within the region in goods and services. The free movement of capital for investment between and among member states, the right of establishment and the integration of the production facilities of the member states. The main objective is to stimulate economic activity within the region and to position it as an entity as a competitive player in the international arena.

The revised treaty contains 240 articles, five annexes and five schedules. The 240 articles are divided into 10 chapters dealing with the following subjects:

a. Principles

b. Institutional arrangements

c. Establishment, services, capital and movement of community nationals

d. Policies for a sectoral development

e. Trade policy

f. Transport policy

g. Disadvantaged countries, regions and sectors

h. Competition policy and consumer protection

i. Dispute settlement

j. General and financial provisions.

The revised treaty incorporates the following nine protocols which were negotiated by members over several years in the creation of the CSME. These are:

1. Organs, functions and procedures

2. Right of establishment, provision of services and movement of capital

3. Protocol industrial policy

4. Trade policy

5. Agricultural policy

6. Transport policy

7. Disadvantaged countries, regions and sectors

8. Competition policy, consumer protection, dumping and subsidies

9. Dispute settlements.

The Caricom Single Market and Economy is not only concerned with trade but impinges on economic, financial and legal administrative issues in the member states and within the community as a whole. All of these issues have a bearing on Trinidad and Tobago's political relations with other member states of the community.

The Caribbean Community has agreed that the CSME is a vehicle by which enhanced development in the region will be achieved. The rights set out in Chapter 3 of the revised treaty namely:

Right of establishment

Right to provide services

Right to move capital in the community, and the

Right of movement of community nationals; constitute the essential building block in the creation of the CSME.

The enactment of this piece of legislation will remove the restrictions now hindering the enjoyment of Treaty rights in Trinidad and Tobago by other Caricom nationals. It would thereby facilitate deeper integration of the markets and economies of member states and the eventual fashioning of a single market and economy within the region.

The Caribbean Court of Justice which will be headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago and will be inaugurated in March 2005 has been invested with an original jurisdiction in respect of the interpretation and application of the Treaty of Chaguaramas as revised by the recently completed nine protocols that will create the single market and economy.

In the provisions of the Bill, clause 2 defines the terms, "Caricom Single Market and Economy", "Community", "Minister", "Treaty" as used in the Bill.

Clause 3 provides that:

"Subject to the Act, the Treaty, the text of which is set out in the Schedule, shall have the force of law in Trinidad and Tobago.

(2) The Community shall have full juridical personality."

Clause 4 provides that:

"The Minister may by Regulations make provision for the purpose of—

(a) implementing any Community obligation of Trinidad and Tobago or enabling any such obligation to be implemented;

(b) enabling any rights enjoyed or to be enjoyed by Trinidad and Tobago under or by virtue of the Treaty, to be exercised; or

(c) dealing with matters arising out of or related to any such obligation or rights."

Clause 5 provides that:

"…any question concerning the interpretation or application of the Treaty or concerning the validity, meaning or application of instruments made under the Treaty shall be treated as a question of law to be referred to the Caribbean Court of Justice where a court or tribunal seized of an issue considers that a decision on the question is necessary for it to deliver judgment."

Clause 5 also provides for the receipt into evidence of a copy certified as a true copy by the Secretary-General of any instrument issued by an organ of the community or of any judgment or order of the Caribbean Court of Justice or of any document in the custody of the Secretariat of the Community, or any entry or extract from such a document.

"Where any instrument issued by the Community is in the custody of a Department of government, evidence of such an instrument may also be given in any legal proceedings by production of a copy certified as a true copy by an officer of the Department of government concerned generally or specifically authorized so to do…"

Clause 6 will permit the Minister by Order to amend the Schedule where the Treaty is amended in accordance with Article 236. An Order so made:

"(1) may contain such consequential, supplemental or ancillary provisions (including provisions amending this Act) as appear to the Minister to be necessary or expedient for the purpose of giving due effect to the amendment of the Treaty."

Clause 7 provides that:

"All sums required to be paid by the Government for the purpose of meeting the obligations of Trinidad and Tobago under the Treaty shall be a charge on the Consolidated Fund. (2) All sums received by the Government under or by virtue of the Treaty shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund."

Clause 8 stipulates that:

"In the event of any inconsistencies between the provisions of this Act and the operation of any other law, the provisions of this Act shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency."

The special importance of the Caribbean Community to Trinidad and Tobago must be emphasized. Successive governments in Trinidad and Tobago have actively promoted the deepening of the integration movement in the Caribbean Community. It was a PNM administration that took Trinidad and Tobago into CARIFTA in 1968 and then Caricom in 1973.

The initiative for the elaboration of the Revised Treaty and the new element in the CSME started under the NAR administration which played a leading role in the elaboration of the Grand Anse Declaration and gave birth to the CSME. The previous UNC administration over the period 1995—2001 participated actively in the work of the Inter-Governmental Task Force that elaborated the nine Protocols that expanded the original Treaty. That administration signed all nine protocols which have now been consolidated into the Revised Treaty. It also signed the consolidated Revised Treaty in the Bahamas on July 05, 2001. I think this is a worthy commendation to the last administration, in the sense that when they see a good thing they can know. The current administration ratified the Revised Treaty in Montego Bay, Jamaica on July 03, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, the policy of deepening the integration movement in this region is not new. It has not been the preserve of any one administration. It is based on a realization that as small states in a globalized world our effectiveness and our ability to improve the socio-economic well-being of the peoples of the region would be considerably enhanced if we faced the outside world as one market and one economy rather than 15.

Mr. Speaker, if we turn now to the objectives of the community, Article 6 of the Revised Treaty enumerates the Community as:

(a) improved standards of living and work;

(b) full employment of labour and other factors of production;

(c) accelerated, co-ordinated and sustained economic development and convergence;

(d) expansion of trade and economic relations with third states;

(e) enhanced levels of international competitiveness;

(f) organization for increased production and productivity;

(g) the achievement of a greater measure of economic leverage and effectiveness of member states and entities of any description;

(h) enhanced co-ordination of member states' foreign and economic policies; and

(i) enhanced functional co-operation, including—

(ii) more efficient operation of common services and activities for the benefit of its peoples;

(iii) accelerated promotion of greater understanding among its peoples and the advancement of their social, cultural and technological development;

(iv) intensified activities in areas such as health, education, transportation, telecommunications.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure everyone here will agree that these are laudable aspirations and I am sure they are all taken on board by those on the other side.

Article 7 on non-discrimination provides that within the scope of application of this treaty and without prejudice to any special provisions contained therein, and discrimination on grounds of nationality only shall be prohibited.

Article 8, which deals with most favoured nation treatment provides that subject to the provisions of this treaty, each member state shall, with respect to any rights covered by this treaty, accord to another member state treatment no less favourable than that accorded to:

(a) a third member state; or

(b) third states.

In Article 9 on general undertaking on implementation, member states are enjoined to take all appropriate measures, whether general or particular, to ensure the carrying out of obligations arising out of this treaty or resulting from decisions taken by the organs and bodies of the community. They shall facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the community. They shall abstain from any measures which can jeopardize the attainment of the objectives of the treaty.

Mr. Speaker, despite the length of the Schedule, this Bill is a simple one. It gives the force of law in Trinidad and Tobago to the provisions of the revised treaty, including those provisions contained in Chapter Three (Articles 30 to 50 inclusive) that are indispensable in the operation of a truly single market and economy.

In addition to the freedom to trade in goods, the CSME confers on member states and their nationals rights and freedoms hitherto not enjoyed in the Caribbean Community. These rights are: established provision of services; movement of capital; and movement of persons. These rights and freedoms are to be implemented in accordance with the overarching principles of non-discrimination and most favoured nation treatment.

In a single market, insofar as the fundamental rights and freedoms are concerned, there is a complete removal of physical, technical and fiscal frontiers. For example, moving goods or services, capital or people from Trinidad and Tobago to Barbados will be no different from moving them across Trinidad and Tobago itself. In the same way that there can be no restrictions or discrimination between residents of San Fernando and Port of Spain within the single market of Trinidad and Tobago, there can be no restrictions or discrimination between nationals of Trinidad and Tobago and nationals of, say, Guyana within the Caricom Single Market and Economy in respect of the rights and freedoms spelt out in the Revised Treaty.

Member states are therefore required to remove existing restrictions in their laws to employment by other nationals of the member states of the community, to the rights and freedoms enumerated in Chapter Three of the Revised Treaty.

Among Caricom member states, Trinidad and Tobago has the fewest number of restrictions to remove from its laws. The removal of these restrictions from existing legislation will be the subject of a separate piece of legislation which will be brought to this House on Friday.

The provisions on subsidies and countervailing duties in the treaty were adopted with minor modifications from the provisions in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement to which all member states of the Caribbean Community are parties. Any dispute arising between member states for which the WTO would normally have competence will now be settled through Caricom organs.

The rationale for the decision of the Community on the free movement of skilled persons as is reflected in Articles 45 and 46 of the Revised Treaty lies in the acceptance of the fact that in order to achieve the objective of the CSME, that is, closer integration of the markets of the member states of the Community and the eventual fashioning of a single market in the region, those factors of production susceptible of movement must be allowed to move within the Community in order to achieve an optimal allocation of scarce resources within the single market. This requirement applies equally as well to labour as it does to capital.

This decision regarding the free movement of skilled persons represents a balancing, on the one hand, of the economic imperatives flowing from the creation of the CSME and, on the other hand, a recognition that economic and social dislocations could arise from unrestricted movement at this stage of development of the economies of the region.

We now turn to the question of free movement, and Article 45 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas provides that:

> "Member States commit themselves to the goal of free movement of their nationals within the Community."

Article 46 provides further that:

> "Without prejudice to the rights recognized and agreed to be accorded by Member States in Articles 32, 33, 37, 38 and 40 among themselves and to Community nationals, Member States have agreed, and undertaken as a first step towards achieving the goal set out in Article 45, to accord to the following categories of Community nationals the right to seek employment in their jurisdictions:
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> (a) University graduates;
>
> (b) Media workers;
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> (c) Sports persons;
>
> (d) Artistes; and
>
> (e) Musicians.

These must be recognized as such by the competent authorities of the receiving Member States."

The objective of the treaty commitment contained in Article 45 is to permit labour to move as freely as the other factors of production. The rationale for this policy lies in the certain knowledge that labour must be allowed to move as freely as the other factors of production susceptible to movement if optimum allocation of resources within the Caricom Single Market and Economy is to be achieved.

The categories identified in Article 46 represent a first step in the goal of free movement of labour within the CSME. In paragraph 4 of Article 46, the conference is mandated to keep the provisions of the Article under review in order to, inter alia, "enlarge, as appropriate, the classes of persons entitled to move and work freely within the Community".

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the object of the provisions of free movement in the Revised Treaty is to facilitate the movement of labour because it is recognized that the economic potential of the Community will not be fully realized if, as important a factor as labour is, it is not allowed to move to those parts of the Community where there may be a demand for particular skills and services. The provisions on free movement in the revised treaty are not designed to be a liberalized work permit regime. The purpose of these provisions is to make it easier for particular categories of persons to move. The provisions on free movement of skilled persons are intended to be facilitatory.

We now turn to the provision of services in the CSME. Paragraph 4 of Article 36 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas dealing with the prohibition of new restrictions on the provision of services provides that for the purposes of this Chapter, the word "services" means services provided against remuneration other than wages in any approved sector and "the provision of services" means the supply of services:

(a) from the territory of one member state into the territory of another member state;

(b) in the territory of one member state to the service consumer of another member state;

(c) by a service supplier of one member state through commercial presence in the territory of another member state; and

(d) by a service supplier of one member state through the presence of natural persons of a member state in the territory of another member state.

The definition of the cross-border provision of services or cross-border trade in services is almost identical to the similar provision to be found in Article 1213, paragraph 2 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

2.00 p.m.

It is apparent from paragraph 4 of Article 36 of the revised treaty that it is possible to provide cross-border services without actually having to move to the territory of the member state in which the service is to be consumed. Only in the case of subparagraph (c) of paragraph 4, it is required that the service provider actually be physically present in the member state in which he intends to provide services.

In examining the issue of the implementation of the obligation on the provision of services, it is important to take appropriate notice of the fact that movement of

persons within the CSME is a right conferred by the revised treaty. There is no right to move by virtue of being a Caricom national. Therefore, in order to come within the ambit of the revised treaty, movement must relate to some purpose of the treaty. In order to enjoy the benefits of the revised treaty, a person must demonstrate that he satisfies the conditions precedent, expressed or implied, for the enjoyment of those benefits.

As in the case of university graduates, media workers, artistes, sports persons or musicians, anyone moving for the purpose of providing a service or, indeed, establishing a business, must of necessity satisfy the authorities at the port of entry of their *bona fides*. That person would need to satisfy the authorities at the port of entry that he or she has the ability and the means to provide the service or establish the business for which entry is being sought. If, in the case of those other categories of persons enjoying free movement, the decision whether to admit is not left within the sole discretion of the immigration officer, there is no rational basis why in the case of service providers the sole responsibility should or could reasonably rest on the immigration officer.

The right to move is expressly made contingent in this case on the intention to provide a service. The issue becomes how is that intention to be made manifest to the immigration officer at the port of entry. Since the revised treaty confers no general freedom of movement on Caricom nationals, a determination would have to be made by the immigration officer whether or not to admit a person who is seeking entry, ostensibly, to provide a service.

There would be need for clear guidelines to inform the immigration officer in the execution of this task. In addition to facilitating proper administration and other measures in furtherance of the realization of the objectives of the revised treaty, these guidelines would have the salutary effect of reducing the incidence of charges of irrational, arbitrary or oppressive decision-making by persons denied entry.

In the absence of the necessary work on this matter by the Caricom secretariat, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago may have to develop its own guidelines and criteria in order to ensure that the movement of service providers is done in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner.

Policies and programmes that strengthen the CSME will redound to the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago and the community as a whole. Trinidad and Tobago is a leading proponent of the establishment of the single market. Caricom is now second only to the United States of America as the preferred destination for this country’s domestic exports. During the period January—December, 2002, 20 per

cent of total domestic exports were consigned to Caricom markets, while 46 per cent went to the United States of America. The next most important extra-regional domestic export markets for the period January—December 2002 were Puerto Rico and Spain, accounting for 3.7 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively, of the total domestic exports. Jamaica alone, with a market of only 2.6 million consumers and a GDP of approximately US $6.7 billion, accounted for 37 per cent of total domestic export to Caricom countries.

Mr. Speaker, economic development in the region is therefore of vital importance to the continued health and vitality of this country's manufacturing sector. The Community has agreed that the CSME is the vehicle by which enhanced development in the region will be achieved. Freedom of movement of skilled persons, right of establishment, right to provide services and movement of capital are essential building blocks in the creation of the CSME.

In conclusion, let me say that as a member possessing one of the most industrialized and diversified economies in the region, Trinidad and Tobago is in a position to benefit economically, politically and diplomatically from acting as host for the headquarters of the CCJ. The new reality of globalization of the international economy, widening and deepening of integration movements and the progressive liberalization of regional and international trade, is propelling us in but one direction—closer cooperation and deepening integration.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago was in the forefront of the creation of the Caribbean community when the Treaty of Chaguaramas was signed in 1973; this country remains a principal beneficiary of the regional integration movement. We are conscious that the dynamics of the international economic environment requires us to deepen the integration movement with some dispatch. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago accordingly submits this Bill for consideration by this honourable House which is intended to provide the legal framework in Trinidad and Tobago for the deepening and consolidation of the regional integration, which we all agree is needed now more than ever.

This Bill is intended to move forward the process of economic integration which began with CARIFTA in 1968 and progressed to Caricom in 1973. Successive governments, as I have said before, in different administrations, have all supported the policy that undergirds the present revised treaty. With the consistency of policy or constancy of position, spanning both time and governments, being a matter of public record, I, therefore, unhesitatingly recommend that the hon. Members of this House support this Bill to give effect to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, including the Caricom Single Market and Economy and for matters related thereto.

Work continues in Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the region on removing restrictions within member states to give effect to Protocol II which deals with Right of Establishment, Movement of Capital and the Provision of Services. I am advised that Trinidad and Tobago has the fewest restrictions to remove. The CSME unit which is established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the Ministry with responsibility for Caricom affairs, advises that this country is at this time 85 per cent ready to assume its obligations under the revised treaty. The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has given an undertaking that we would be ready by January 01, 2005.

I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal *(Oropouche)*: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by indicating that while the measure before us is all of four pages, it certainly is not a simple matter and it is certainly not a simple issue. This Bill before us is a matter of great significance, a momentous occasion that attempts to implement wide-ranging changes to the conduct of our national affairs in the area of business, economic activity, social and political activities.

It is noteworthy that the Minister took the opportunity to indicate that it is governments of the past, particularly the NAR and the United National Congress governments, that participated in no small way towards deepening and strengthening the integration process and participated in all the Caribbean institutions and the institutions of Caricom, to bring to fruition this revised treaty of Chaguaramas. In fact, when the Minister searched for the contribution of his own political party, I think the Minister looked back to the 1960s and early 1970s. The single market and economy first gained ascendancy in the aftermath of the 1989 summit of Caricom Heads of Government in Grand Anse, and then found expression in the 1992 report of the West Indian Commission: "Time for Action". I would look at some of these documents, in due course.

Today, we have before us a measure to bring into effect, and to give the force of law to a treaty entitled: "Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas", including the Caricom Single Market and Economy and for matters related thereto". This treaty we are talking about is all of 270 pages. You can load it on your computer. But we are not sure as of this moment, whether Members received copies of the treaty, which is integral to this debate. The Bill is four pages, but it brings into force, and gives the force of law to a schedule which really is the treaty of 270 pages. It is extremely voluminous, with over 50 articles dealing with the establishment of the

community in all its facets; establishing institutions of the community; processes for financing the institutions, and several matters that the Minister touched upon.

At the outset, one issue that comes to the fore is the fact that there may also be a problem today in terms of the sequence of the Government's activity. We also note that we are asked to meet on a Wednesday afternoon, which is unusual for us. Our normal meetings take place on a Friday, and one may want to ask whether, again, as happened on the last occasion, we are not being asked to meet on a Wednesday because the Government is under some time constraint and has to report to any institution in the Caricom, or has to report to any particular meeting that is due upon them and, therefore, would call out the Members of Parliament on a Wednesday afternoon for such a meeting.

This is the first point, that it may really strike again at the lack of planning and efficiency of the Government in conducting its legislative programme. We have not reached the Bill yet. Because there are occasions when we can handle this measure on a Friday, but it will involve our friends on the other side working after 4.30, or after the tea break, which is something our friends on the other side are not prone to do.

Another issue that comes to the fore before we get into a discussion on the CSME, is the fact that at clause 5(2)—and it regards the sequencing of these Bills—we are asked today to approve a measure into domestic law where there is a reference to an entity called the Caribbean Court of Justice. So we are asked in this measure before us, to bring into domestic law and identify a Caribbean Court of Justice which may not have a legal identity in Trinidad and Tobago, which is not recognized by the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. So we are passing a Bill to give effect to what is not recognizable in law, the Caribbean Court of Justice, and this is a matter that the Minister may want to enlighten us on, as to the status of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

One would have thought that the Minister and the Government would have brought the measures before the national Parliament dealing with the Caribbean Court of Justice and seek the support of the national population and the Members of Parliament to give the force of law to a Caribbean Court of Justice, and after, bring a measure dealing with the CSME, which then relates to referrals and evidence in connection with a Caribbean Court of Justice. But this would give rise to some anomaly, where we make into law a Bill that gives effect to a Caribbean Court of Justice without having any legal identity for a Caribbean Court of Justice in our domestic law.

But this is not surprising, because this is a Government that has been preoccupied with deceit; that has been preoccupied with fooling and attempting to con the national population at every corner. [*Desk thumping*] As I said before, the revised treaty, all of 270 pages, can be accessed through the Caricom Secretariat on the website. But the point I want to make is that I am not sure Members on the other side have read or understand the revised treaty of Chaguaramas. I am not sure members of the population fully appreciate what exactly is the CSME; what exactly are we talking about when we talk about Caricom Single Market and Economy.

In the aftermath of 2001, when those on the other side, in collaboration with the Crown, illegally and unconstitutionally obtained office, one would have thought that this Government would have embarked upon a massive campaign of public education, of information, to enlighten members of the public as to the benefits, the challenges, the opportunities and maybe even the shortcomings of the revised treaty of Chaguaramas and the Caricom Single Market and Economy. But did they do this?

What we saw was a raw and obscene use of the media to promote party symbols and party faces, and one recalls looking at the newspaper and seeing a set of pictures; people who are owing money to the Government, and so on, indicating that if the CSME comes into being, it would benefit me. I do not know how it would benefit anybody. It did not say so in the newspaper advertisement. But that was their approach, to spend millions of dollars on newspaper ads with photographs. Invariably, it is a pictorial, because they are not prone to writing; they show pictures. So they would have a pictorial, people saying that the CSME would benefit them. That was their approach.

So that today, it is not surprising that citizens are not informed of the CSME. Citizens are not clear as to what constitutes the CSME; what is the relationship between the CSME and political union of which the Prime Minister speaks; what is the relationship between the CSME and the Caribbean Court of Justice; what are the institutions of the CSME; what is the budget of the CSME. The CSME and associated institutions would cost the Caribbean taxpayer and the taxpayer of Trinidad and Tobago over US $300 million. We should be talking about funding the CSME and whether the regional development fund that has been established to fund the CSME, whether that is in place now.

These are the issues that the population should have been kept apprised of. But, no. It would come as no surprise that if you type "CSME" on the web—you go on the internet and type "search" for "CSME", you will get several hits. The first one would be the "Catholic Society for Marriage Education", followed by the

related "Canadian Society for Mechanical Engineering". You will not see the Caricom Single Market and Economy. If you go on to the Caricom website, you will get a link to the CSME, and the CSME office out of Barbados. On that website you have several statements and speeches, and so on, by the Prime Minister of Barbados, of course, Mr. Owen Arthur. We do not get any speeches from our very own Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary, His Excellency Jerry Narace, who has been making the dinner circuit, talking about the CSME. There is no mention on that website of our Ambassador and our spokesman on this matter.

It would come as no surprise that you have no reference to the CSME on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, you have no website for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago. After three years in office, the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is under construction, with an animation of a CEPEP worker clearing grass on the internet. You would see that if you look at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website. They condemn us for building an airport; they could not build a website in three years. In three years they cannot fix a website for public education. You cannot find any information on the CSME on a website of the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Foreign Affairs. You have to go to the website of the Barbados-based CSME office to get information. That is their commitment to educating members about the CSME.

So not surprisingly, in a recent article by the Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago, Thursday, November 25, 2004, the *Business Guardian*, headlined: "Making the CSME a reality", the Chamber states, and I quote:

> "It is still worrisome that after a major meeting of the Heads of Government of the region…the general public…seem none the wiser about the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.
>
> This reflects the reality, unfortunate as it may be, that crucial elements relating to the Single Economy are nowhere close to accomplishment."

The need for public education on this matter was highlighted, not only in Trinidad and Tobago by the Chamber of Commerce, but renowned Professor from the University of the West Indies, Political Scientist, Prof. Neville Duncan, conducted a survey in Jamaica and found that over 70 per cent of those surveyed had a low level of knowledge about the Caribbean Single Market and Economy; they had no knowledge about the Free Trade Area of the Americas or about the Caribbean Court of Justice either.

I venture to say that it may be worse in Trinidad and Tobago because when the Chamber—

Mr. Valley: If the Member would give way—

Dr. R. Moonilal: This is the first and the last, eh.

Mr. Valley: Yes. I just want to inform him that the Ministry is looking to engage a researcher and knowing the Member's competence for research, perhaps we would want to consider him for the assignment to determine whether Trinidadians and Tobagonians know about the CSME and the FTAA.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The last time I did consultancy work, they wanted to jail me, now they want to hire me. But I am not taking that mamaguy.

But apart from his amusing intervention, there is a serious point coming here. Every time they are faced with a problem, is what they would do next. So their plans are always in permanent fast-forward mode. They have no plans of today. In fact, I was hoping the Minister would rise and indicate that there has been a survey which has been completed and the results are available. No! The survey is to come. Every time they are faced with a problem, it is next two years, next seven years; 2020. That is their hoax. So after three years, bringing the legislation before the Parliament, they are now thinking about conducting a survey to establish whether or not citizens know sufficiently about the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. It did not dawn upon them to do this two or three years ago. It is only now and they are looking for a researcher.

But the point I want to make is that Prof. Duncan found in Jamaica that over 70 per cent did not know anything about it, and the Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago is saying that they do not have information. Presumably, members of the Chamber are more knowledgeable about matters of trade, business integration, cross-border trading, and so on. So if the Chamber is declaring that we do not have enough information, one can understand what will happen when you do a full survey for the national population.

On the matter of the Caricom Single Market and Economy, an important issue that the Minister may want to reflect upon is the funding. Given the funding to the CSME of over US $300 million, the Minister may want to outline to the House the source of that funding and the commitment on the part of governments in the region to funding, because it may well be that Trinidad and Tobago may have to pay the lion share—may have to pay the bill—for the CSME, as we pay the bill for other things in the Caribbean. We will get to some of that later.

A regional development fund has been established, theoretically, on paper, but whether it is in place or not is the issue, and the Minister may want to reflect on that. As I said in the beginning, what we have before us today is really a

concluding element of a long period of negotiations, meetings, treaties, revised treaties, obligations, protocols, and so on, of over 270 pages, beginning in 1989, finding expression in 1992.

Just for the record, I would like to read from the text: "Time For Action", the report of the West Indian Commission, dated 1992, in which the commission first outlined and examined this creature called the Caricom Single Market and Economy, noting that it is a result of deliberations at Gran Anse, Grenada in July 1989. The initial timetable for the Single Market and Economy was 1994. That has since shifted to January 2005. What is involved in a single market are structures and institutions to perpetuate borderless trading, freedom of movement, goods, services, labour and capital and the supportive fiscal and monetary measures and administrative arrangements. The single economy must be a regional economy closely approximating a national economy incorporating measures to achieve a balance in the distribution of cost and benefits.

In understanding the workings of a single market and economy, a good approach is really to look at one country and to suggest—and this is the people's education approach—that just as you move goods from San Fernando to Port of Spain or from Port of Spain to Point Fortin, you must therefore move goods across countries to Barbados, St. Vincent, et cetera., and remove barriers to the movement of goods, but also remove barriers to the movement of human beings. So if you live in San Fernando and work in Arima, with that logic you can move, for example, from one job in San Fernando to another job in Montego Bay, to another job in Kingstown or St. John's, wherever. That is the intention, to remove all barriers.

But the point is that the single market is not a single economy. It is well established by some of the leading writers on this matter, that whereas we are seeking to introduce a single market, we cannot be introducing a single economy. Indeed, the Caricom Heads have outlined a proposal to introduce a single economy in the year 2008, but the single market by January 2005.

2.30 p.m.

The single market involves the movement of goods and services and labour and so on, but a single economy means much more. It means, of course, harmonization of fiscal and monetary policy, issue of currency and much more. It is not the single economy we are dealing with but a single market.

Mr. Speaker, a single market cannot take place in isolation from other issues; from the social reality, because a human being or a good—whether it is the soap, detergent, labour or whatever—does not operate in an economic trading vacuum,

human beings operate in a social environment; in a cultural environment; in an environment with different work ethics. Mr. Speaker, you cannot separate the issue of a common market from the issue of the social and political ramifications.

There are some people who suggest that when you talk single market and economy you must also talk about some kind of political union. There must be the political institutions to support the economic and trading institutions. Mr. Speaker, a lot has been said on this issue of political union but I want to make a point, that the Prime Minister is now talking about political union but this is a Prime Minister who cannot unify his own country. This is a Prime Minister who cannot build unity within one national territory but wants to build unity outside. The Government cannot build integration in Trinidad and Tobago but wants to integrate the West Indies. The Government talks about integration and union as if the majority of people in Trinidad and Tobago support that.

Mr. Speaker, the other important point related to this political union initiative, which I will come to, is how foreign policy is made. It is the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago who is prone to outline foreign policy, not the honourable and humble Minister of Foreign Affairs. There is a feeling that foreign policy is outlined by vaps! You awake one morning and something seems like a good idea and that would be the foreign policy of Trinidad and Tobago.

How do you formulate foreign policy? The Prime Minister is now speaking about political union. Is the issue of political union in the manifesto of the party? Has it been discussed at the general council or at the convention of their party? Has it been discussed at the Cabinet? It has certainly not been discussed at the Parliament. There is no mandate for political union but a big discussion on political union. One really believes that the Prime Minister is operating outside of any formal procedure of formulating foreign policy.

It is felt by a majority of citizens that the Prime Minister harbours a self-delusionary or "Orwellian**"** ambition to become "Father of the Caribbean", with his official office at the Red House, Port of Spain. The Member may never become father of the Caribbean but he is on his way to becoming Lord of the Ruins. The Prime Minister operates like a Santa Claus or some other fairytale character; maybe a character from Sesame Street. He operates like a rich boy in a school's playground where everyone wants to be his friend because he has money to give away. Without money he will stand alone. Mr. Speaker, you know you had experiences in school where if there was a rich child at the playground, everybody wanted to be his friend. So travelling around the Caribbean he is regarded as a great leader because he has money; money which he will give readily.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that anywhere this Prime Minister goes—at first we taught it was to visit sites of disaster but he is not following disaster; it appears that disaster is following him. He went to Cuba and the commandant broke his hand and foot; he passed through Dominica, earthquake; he went Tobago, it flood. Mr. Speaker, it is truly disaster following the Prime Minister and not the Prime Minister following disaster.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot make foreign policy that way. You cannot awake one morning and give $25 million here; $30 million there; $100 million there. You cannot tell the Prime Minister of Jamaica: "When the hurricane passes call and tell me what you want." That is not how you devise foreign policy. It is certainly not how you spend money. The Prime Minister doles out money as if it is from his personal piggy bank and not from the Treasury—the taxpayers' money. Whilst citizens think that the wealth of our natural resources is our patrimony, the Prime Minister thinks that is his "Pat trick" money. That is not patrimony; that is "Pat trick" money to spend.

It is high time that we put some policy and some structure in place for giving aid and grants and so on to regional neighbours and elsewhere. We cannot conduct foreign policy by vaps and every day invent some kind of mad-cap plan. One minute you awake and you are running a gas pipeline up the islands. When somebody told you that Guadeloupe and Martinique were really the property of France, you said: No gas pipeline again, we would run a submarine cable; a degasification plant in Jamaica and so on. Mr. Speaker, you get one mad-cap plan one after another committing spending of the people's money. We cannot conduct our affairs in that way.

It is high time that the Government consider creating a ministry for development cooperation. These are ministries that exist in developed countries where they have a ministry or a minister of bureaucracy with a policy framework, structures and institutions to deal with giving aid, grants, and loans to different countries based upon an established and accepted policy for regions that you will help. If, for example, we have recognized that HIV/AIDS is the big issue of the day there will be a policy commitment to funding research, drugs and pharmaceuticals and so on.

If there is a particular sub-region that is prone to natural disasters, that will be a policy decision to assist and a budget made. But the advantage of having a ministry to deal with development cooperation is that the Minister is then accountable to Parliament. There would be accountability, transparency and openness, but they do not want that, they want to just wake up and take a jet somewhere in the Caribbean and say $25 million for you and come back and announce it via TV6, and have all their friends running in Trinidad and Tobago talking rubbish.

Mr. Speaker, it is high time that someone tell the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that he must learn to conduct himself. Other colleagues would have told him but I happen to be on my feet. I want to tell the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that he must learn to conduct himself. In fact, this Prime Minister believes that we already have political union because he is around every junction in Trinidad. He is at the cricket match, the football match, in the Trini Posse Stand; he is by a pelau pot; on TV6. In fact, citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines need to call TV6 to talk to this gentleman. He thinks that we already have political union! He must stop meddling in the internal affairs and the politics of Trinidad and Tobago! How dare you come to Trinidad and Tobago and tell the Opposition, the United National Congress, that we will be the principal beneficiaries of any union with St. Vincent and Grenada? And what? We will get a fairer hearing by St. Vincent and the Grenadines nationals than on the East-West Corridor. Mr. Speaker, we have five seats in the East-West Corridor! We are comfortable on the East-West Corridor! We came into power in the year 2000 based upon a mandate in the East-West Corridor! How is the Prime Minister telling us, that we would not get a good hearing on the East-West Corridor, and we are the principal beneficiaries? To make matters worse, he comes now to tell us that he has the permission of the Prime Minister to "bell the cat". Mr. Speaker, whose cat is he referring to? I ask the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines: Whose cat he is talking about? [*Interruption*] I will go no further on that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnath: Did you give him permission to say it?

Mr. Manning: Yes.

Mr. Ramnath: You did? Let the record show that you have said that you gave him permission.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is not about cat or about kitten; I am not concerned about that. I think the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is out of place, and somebody needs to tell him that. I will take it upon myself to get a copy of the *Hansard* and send it to his office—which might be in Port of Spain somewhere. As I said, he is out of place because we do not have the union as yet.

Mr. Speaker, we also want to tell the Prime Minister that he may have told him that over a few drinks and so on but he should separate that type of rum talk from anything serious so he does not make a fool of himself at the University of the West Indies, where students were laughing at him and could not believe that

he is a foreign head of government. When they laughed at him he thought they were laughing with him—this joker.

Mr. Speaker, let me come back to this matter before us. I spoke about education and I made the link to the issue of political union. Mr. Speaker, it is not just the United National Congress but prominent writers in this country. Writers who hold no brief for the UNC would indicate to the population that the Prime Minister may be speaking out of turn and committing our country to a course of political action to which he has no mandate. Prof. Selwyn Ryan, in the *Sunday Express* of November 14, 2004, on page 11, makes the point, and I am quoting sparingly, referring to the Prime Minister:

> "Is he speaking for a Cabinet which has discussed this issue? Is he speaking for the PNM as a party…Is he speaking with the knowledge that the people of Trinidad and Tobago or a goodly number of them are solidly behind him on this matter?"

How does he know what the population thinks about the matter? Prof. Ryan goes on to say that by gaining political office that is not a mandate to put forward such significant policy directions. Prof. Ryan also raised the issue of persons coming into the country for jobs and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, but that is not enough. A former diplomat and former head of the Public Service, Mr. Reggie Dumas, in his article in the *Express,* dated November 29, 2004, on page 11, expressed some misgivings, if not shock at the outpourings of the Prime Minister. He noted—which is a fact—that in the Prime Minister's first incarnation he spoke about some type of political union with Barbados and Guyana. In the second incarnation, I think he threw out Guyana and Suriname and brought in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada.

The distinguished Mr. Dumas asked the question: Does the Prime Minister possess a mandate to raise this matter in the first place? Does the Prime Minister know that changing the geographic boundaries of Trinidad and Tobago, as defined by the Constitution requires constitutional reform? Mr. Speaker, he asked the question: Is the Prime Minister aware that these very countries, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are involved in deepening an economic union within what is called an Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)? So Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are busily participating in another economic union in OECS but also playing some type of game with Trinidad and Tobago for another political union, within the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), of course. Mr. Dumas is asking whether the Government is taking note of these developments in the sub-region. I quote:

> "But, as we know, the OECS includes Grenada and St. Vincent (and the Grenadines) both of which Mr. Manning indicated on November 8 would form part of his 'southern Caribbean' grouping. So it looks as if T&T is advocating 'social and political integration' with entities that are busy pushing 'economic union' with other entities. What on earth is going on?"

Mr. Speaker, that is the exasperation that members of the national community—I will not go far in quoting Prof. Lloyd Best. When confronted with the topic of political union all Prof. Lloyd Best had to say was, that is "just ol' talk and stupidness." He did not go further than that. He said that it had no chance of getting off the ground; that that was just "ol' talk" and stupidness. He did not get into any detail on the matter.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Oropouche for giving way. I wonder, since he is talking about Prof. Lloyd Best, if he would care to tell the Parliament what Prof. Lloyd Best had to say about the parity between the TT dollar and the US dollars, perhaps he should tell us.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister could raise that as a motion of urgent public importance. [*Laughter*] I think it really qualifies, but that is just my view.

The point I was making, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a real risk—and this is the important point—that this initiative of political union will end up like Vision 2020—a joke; something for laughter; something for a light moment. They must take stock now and not treat it as a joke. If you are serious about political union, embark on public education and national consultation on political union. Bring the matter to the Parliament for debate by representatives of the people. Do not allow your political union initiative to end up like Vision 2020. Today when persons hear about Vision 2020 they laugh! Vision 2020, Kirk Meighoo, a member of the Vision 2020 committee had this to say in the *Sunday Express,* dated October, 17, 2004. I quote:

> "Vision 2020 has been betrayed in this budget for short-term electioneering. Two years of promises to the sub-committees that their recommendations would be included in the Budget presentations for the upcoming fiscal years (2003-4, 2004-5) have been broken.
>
> Vision 2020 has been prostituted for Vision 2007, in fact."

Words are from Kirk Meighoo. He is a member of the Vision 2020 sub-committee. He said:

"But government is unashamedly partisan.

The only area seeming to move is the hiring of consultants and advertising agencies, for unknown sums of money."

Mr. Speaker, I think he should be kicked out of this Vision 2020 committee, forthwith. I doubt they would keep him there. But this is what a member of Vision 2020 had to say; not an ordinary citizen. Their initiative of political union, which may have some credibility at some point, will get like Vision 2020—a joke, if they continue along this line.

Mr. Speaker, several newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago, in their editorials made the point that the people must decide; people must get integration choice. Editorials from the *Express* and other newspapers all told the Government that this is a matter for the people, not for the Prime Minister and not even for the Cabinet. Is the Prime Minister willing to say that in the next general election he will call upon the people to support his party based upon joining St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada post elections? He must make the election a referendum on your political union initiative.

Mr. Speaker, he should not play ignorant of the fact that to engage in any political union requires constitutional change. It requires a 4/5 majority of the Lower House and 2/3 majority of the Upper House to bring whatever legislation that is needed. That is not a matter that you jump on a political platform at the nearest Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) meeting and announce that you have political union. Mr. Speaker, you debate it in a serious manner in the Parliament, then take it to the population and get their views and then you make an announcement. You do not go like this father of the nation to announce political union. You change countries everyday; you change the method and when you are caught on the back foot you would say, it is a matter for the people to decide, but you have already committed the Government to a course of action without having the participation of the people. That is what the Prime Minister said when confronted by the press in the aftermath of a function in San Fernando.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side are clear that there are benefits to be derived from the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). In the manifesto of the United National Congress we committed our party and Government to develop an intelligent nation. We spoke of an intelligent nation. We spoke of building trade and investment pillars upon which we will expand business, create jobs.

I will not speak about the UNC's perspective—I do not want to use the word "vision"; they have corrupted that word—on this matter. We supported the CSME.

We believe that foreign policy must be conducted as an extension of local policy and hence all foreign policy initiatives must be directed towards Trinidad and Tobago's economic self-interest and sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, to use the words "national interest" these days is somehow wrong. Those words may become obscene in a while. But there is something called our national interest. Our national interest may on any day be in contradiction with the national interest of Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Jamaica. We have national interest to secure whether it is our security, and I will come to that; whether it is jobs; full employment, as our policy objective; we have our national interest; our cultural diversity; promoting our culturally diverse population, that is our national interest. The UNC was committed to our national interest. The UNC took measures to embark upon an establishment—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members of the House. I was making the point that UNC government spared no effort to embark upon negotiations and to create, draft and bring into fruition instruments to promote trade and investment in Latin America, in South America, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and forth. The Minister of Foreign Affairs knows these agreements we now have with Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, et cetera, are the results of the hard work of the United National Congress.

We committed ourselves to entering into treaties, alliances and trade agreements to protect and promote Trinidad and Tobago's trade, investment, economic and security interests. It was between 1995 and 2001 that we created locally based conglomerates in the Caribbean; multinational corporations headquartered and emanated from Trinidad and Tobago. They got an opportunity to expand under this regime. They are also expanding business; they have sent CEPEP workers to Grenada. That is their export; CEPEP workers. They are exporting our businessmen and women. They cannot control crime so legitimate businessmen are packing up and leaving. That is their contribution to promoting business.

The UNC committed itself to utilizing the regional and international organizations to better promote Trinidad and Tobago; to developing stronger ties with friendly groups of countries. Mr. Speaker, on this matter, I make another

point. I refer to an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* where the Prime Minister has stated that his regional integration policy and his initiative towards political union are really anchored in Trinidad and Tobago's national interest. The Prime Minister is arguing that his initiatives are really connected to the national interest of Trinidad and Tobago and he explains that it is really in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago to promote business and firms in the Caricom region. It is in our interest to have a vibrant manufacturing sector in the region and so on. He is correct.

Mr. Speaker, the UNC had another approach to this problem which was, instead of going into a small market of $5 million or so, and assisting to promote in this way spending taxpayers—I think it is $1 billion—we were aggressively pursuing trading agreements; we were facilitating business and trade in certain hemispheric spheres; we were going into different areas around the globe to promote Trinidad and Tobago's business and we were thinking not only of Miami, Florida; we were thinking not only of Central America but also of Asia.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way again. I am not so sure that I understand him properly. Is the Member saying that it was the UNC's view, and it still is, that the interest of Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of trade arrangements should be promoted separate and distinct from the interest of Caricom? Is that the point being made by the Member?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that the UNC had another approach. In fact, the UNC is committed to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy; committed to a regional integration movement; we still are, but our approach was that if we wanted this economy to expand to increase businessmen; the wealth of our country by way of business, we needed to look at other important hubs of business around the globe. We included India and China, the Mercosur group of countries, the Central American countries like Panama. Mr. Speaker, do you know the United States today is now entering into bilateral arrangements with several Central American countries? That was Trinidad and Tobago's approach under the UNC.

Mr. Speaker, in development circles it is well known in business and in government that China and India will lead the early part of the century as the next industrial centre of the world. The UNC thought that it was quite appropriate to expand our business relationship and our trading arrangements with India and China. But lo and behold the PNM came into power and they sent an ambassador there and the first thing he did was to throw a fete. His first contribution was to have a carnival in New Delhi. The head of the mission did not report to us that 300 businessmen came on a trade mission and out of that mission five new

factories have been established in Trinidad and we have created 400 new jobs in Trinidad, based upon a trade mission to India. No! He reported to us that one year in office he threw a fete and his clowning—Is it crowning or clowning?

Mr. S. Panday: Clowning.

Dr. R. Moonilal: His clowning glory is that they "buss" a wine in New Delhi. Mr. Speaker, that is what he reported after a year.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that is their approach. They are expanding. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago must see China and India as important centres for business expansion/trade facilitation, to develop the appropriate instruments, and to expand. That should be the approach. While the Prime Minister's approach by the billion-dollar spending would seek—whether it does that or not is another story—to protect a market of $5 million, an aggressive approach outside of the Caricom region would get millions into your own trading and business arrangements. There are markets outside with millions and that is where we should be looking apart from helping our Caricom neighbours in their time of need, whether it is a natural disaster or whatever, earthquake or hurricane, one understands that you must help. But should you also seek to facilitate markets outside of the region as well? But what market, where? They are hopeless and hapless when it comes to that type of proactive, creative policy-making.

Mr. Speaker, the United National Congress saw the new global realities; China, India, Florida and so on, and it was positioning Trinidad and Tobago as an intelligent nation on the verge of taking advantage of new spaces that were going to be opening up in the early part of this century. Trinidad and Tobago was described as a "tiger in a sea of pussy cats" by the economists when we were in office, and that term, of course, gained ascendancy when the "Asian Tigers" took off in the 1980s: South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. Trinidad and Tobago was that "tiger" in the Caribbean in the context of trade, investment and businesses. What we would be described as now we do not know, the "kidnap capital", the "murder capital". When you travel around Caricom and you meet friends they would say they would not be coming to Trinidad and Tobago because they are afraid to be kidnapped.

That is our new image, and while that is happening the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—where they should be making creative, proactive policies they have their own scandals to take care of. For the first time in our history, earlier this year, the Ministry was hit by a scandal. They found cocaine in a diplomatic pouch bound

for the United States. That is the type of image that this country captured under this Government.

When we are settling and looking at what is happening at the courts and so on, we heard about refurbishing the home of the High Commissioner in London, the most distinguished, Her Excellency, Glenda Morean, former Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, Senior Counsel under whose watch she commandeered a garbage truck from the EBC. That is how we remember her, the day she commandeered a garbage truck and how she instructed the police to search the garbage thinking there may be some documents in the garbage truck. Off to England and now £10 million to refurbish her home. That is what they are up to.

I want to also address the matter of governance related to the Caricom Single Market and Economy. As I said before, you cannot separate common market and economic activities from issues of society and of politics, but not from issues of law either. Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the movement of human beings, the movement of people but there are different national laws in place, different social security arrangements, different arrangements for entitlement, different types of protective mechanisms in place.

In Europe, before they embarked upon their European Union initiatives and so on, they formulated, ratified and passed the European Convention on Human Rights. In the United Kingdom today they have their Human Rights Act that protects all citizens of the Union through which citizens of the United Kingdom are protected and they can take a matter not only to the Court of Appeal, House of Lords, and so on, but to the European Court of Human Rights. How are we protecting workers with this free movement? And this is a matter that was raised quite recently by the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mr. Owen Arthur, when he addressed the Caribbean Congress of Labour in Suriname in October 2004.

The Caricom Single Market and Economy is also linked to governance issues. How are you protecting labour, while Caricom as an institution, has in place a policy on industrial relations? There is an industrial relations policy of Caricom and it outlines in nice policy language the rights and so forth. To what extent are those rights that are outlined by Caricom given expression in domestic law across the Caribbean? That is the problem. We do not have an equal opportunity commission existing in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not in the interest of this Government to implement equality of opportunity. If they do that they would lose elections; they know that. If they want to be re-elected by the hook or the crook, must do nothing about equality. There is a situation where you create a union with no protective rights for workers crossing boundaries so they can be abused in one

country as opposed to another given national laws and there is no recourse. You have a fancy sounding policy but no domestic law to protect citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the lawyers will really answer the question. If a national of Barbados is working in Trinidad and Tobago under the CSME, and can he or she take a constitutional motion to the courts in Trinidad and Tobago, an interesting question. I am sure the lawyers may want to answer. Can someone who is not a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago go to the court on a constitutional motion to claim that his or her rights have been violated? Because there is no body of law that would deal with these workers when they go from one country to another.

The other matter has to do with social security, whether it is national insurance, unemployment benefits, pensions and so on. Are they transferable? When you work in one country, you collect benefits from another country. Do we have in place in the territories comprising the CSME one health and safety law? First to begin with we passed a health and safety legislation in Trinidad and Tobago but, as of this day—and we are into December 01, 2004—, nothing has been implemented as far as health and safety, one year after the Opposition participated in a historic move and supported them. It was piloted by the Member for Point Fortin. I remember him on that day praising both the Members for Nariva and Oropouche on their good works in bringing to the Parliament the Occupational Safety and Health Bill, but as of now nothing is implemented.

It may be interesting to find out in other territories whether any up-to-date health and safety legislation is in effect and not factory ordinance from 1948. But we are talking about the mobility of workers and crossing borders and unimpeded, you cross without obstacles.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you a story. A journalist in Trinidad and Tobago got a certificate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning working in Barbados, and at Grantley Adams International Airport in Barbados an immigration officer told her, "I never see this in my life. I know nothing about this. What are you coming here for?" That is the reality.

I challenge anybody in the House to get a certificate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and present it to a hostile looking immigration official in any port and hear whether they know about single market and economy, whether they have laws in place or they know whether laws are in place or not. Those are the real problems on the ground. How many citizens know about certificates that one has to seek and apply for at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? How many persons know about that? I do not think anybody in Oropouche knows that they can go to the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by obtaining a certificate and filling it out, go to work in St. Vincent if they so want. They do not but that is a secret and sooner or later we would ask a question to know how many citizens have left and how many Caricom citizens have entered Trinidad and Tobago on this matter.

The point is that you cannot separate common market from social policy, from governance issues. We are quite satisfied that by passing this Bill nothing will happen. This is to satisfy a meeting taking place next week somewhere, where the Prime Minister must report that they came to the Parliament and got approval for this measure—I saw on the website the meeting is coming up in the early part of December—a summit. The Member may have to attend and he does not know. We are convinced that nothing will happen because they have not included the citizens in the process of deliberations, in the process of education, to say what this is about.

One article dealt with establishments, the right to establish business in another territory for persons who are self-employed and are providing services to go into different territories and work without obstacles and so forth, work permits. How many people know about that? And, certainly the Chamber of Commerce does not know. And that is a crisis that this Government must address, otherwise, as I said before, this CSME will get the same image as Vision 2020. A related issue because it certainly deals with trade and business facilitation and economic harmonization and, of course, what we have been hearing about, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). I think the Member for Diego Martin Central has a lot of interest in that. He has been pioneering "our" campaign to get the FTAA headquarters in Port of Spain.

Mr. Speaker, as of now we do not know how much money the Government spent on this campaign to get the FTAA. We do know that we lost a cricket match because of that. We know what they gave up. We do not know how much they spent. We read in the newspapers of missions on their way all over the world, campaigning, and as they go on one mission, the new president of the Dominican Republic pledge support to Florida. They go on another mission, another leader pledge support somewhere else. I think we should stop going on missions. Maybe if nobody knows you, they may support you. Because as you go, you lose support.

Mr. Speaker, they gave up the cricket match in one of the most tragic and amusing turn of events we have ever heard about in our life where they linked the FTAA to the world cup of cricket and gave up possibilities for investments, trade and tourism and so forth, emanating from a world cup. As of now, as the Member for Diego Martin Central knows, FTAA negotiations have remained stalled for

almost one year after the Miami ministerial decision to revisit the scope and content of negotiation.

There is a January 2005 deadline on the way in which it is clear they will not meet that deadline. Ambassador Richard Burnall is now calling for either trimming of the agenda or an extension of time to negotiate. That will continue. We do not know how much money we spent but we know the deadline come and gone. No headquarters close to Port of Spain. That has been suspended. It is claimed that in the aftermath of the results of the United States presidential election—as you know Mr. Bush was returned, Caricom members believe that had it been the other way around they would have had a better chance but the chances look very dim, gloomy that Trinidad and Tobago will host the FTAA. But, how much money did we spend on this?

It is the same with the CSME, a unit has been established at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is an Ambassador Plenipotentiary—before, I think, he was trading in trinkets at Balisier House, he was involved in business but I imagine that was what qualified him, a business. He was peddling ties and PNM balisier badges.

Mr. Speaker, we have an Ambassador, we have a staff. We would like to know whether or not the staff at the CSME, are they public officers or are they party appointees? Are they from the party? They brought in another group of people from the CSME in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Who are these people? They were supposed to be advertised. What is the cost? How much have we spent at this CSME unit? How much money have we spent and why did they get rid of foreign service officers and public officials from the CSME who in the first place were qualified? When they established the units they had public officers. They got rid of them thereafter and brought in others to run the unit. Who is that unit accountable to? The Permanent Secretary, the Minister? Why could they not get a website going in two years and seem to educate the population? The Member could not know about website, he knows about cobweb sites. You do not understand that.

The FTAA is no closer to Trinidad and Tobago than it was two years ago. They have wasted and squandered resources. Today there are new issues dominating the agenda of the FTAA, labour and environmental issues. That negotiation would take another two, maybe three years. At that time, thankfully, the United National Congress would be in office and we can use our skills to bring closure to that as well as we did with the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. We would use our skills to that effect.

While this is happening—and this is linked to a point I made earlier—do you know while they are stalled with the FTAA the United States has pursued a strategy of divide and conquer? They are in the process of establishing relationships bilaterally with Chile, Mexico, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Panama as we continue to talk about the FTAA. While we should be busy seeking to develop trading relationships and agreements in Central and Latin America and Asia and so on, we are promoting Port of Spain for the FTAA headquarters and then we will expose CEPEP as our export commodity. But those of us on this side are convinced that there will be no hope for CSME, FTAA under this regime, because they do not have the political will to concentrate on foreign affairs. In fact, to this Government "foreign affairs" means just that, taking care of the affairs of foreigners. That is why they have all the skilled personnel from T&TEC in Grenada, and you cannot find them in Oropouche. If you have any problem now and you call T&TEC they would tell you one time their linesmen, electricians or whatever the technical term is are all in Grenada. Any problem with the Water and Sewerage Authority, they are in Grenada. So that is what foreign affairs means. That is why people in Oropouche cannot get a hamper after the flooding, because all gone elsewhere.

If they had not been so busy involved in all types of scandal, bacchanal and corruption they would have had more time to concentrate on the affairs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a next hallmark of their governance, mismanagement, waste and corruption and every time you target them there is a problem. One man targeted in Landate. He said: "It is not me, it is my wife." The next one targeted in the health sector and he said, "It is not me, it is my son." That is their approach. The butler did it and you will hear much more about other acts of corruptions. If they would take less time in bobbol and more time dealing with the people's business they might have more to report rather than come to the House when Caricom is upon their backs to sign and to declare that they have passed this legislation in the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, let me say in closing that a single market and economy is not a single economy. But apart from that, single markets and economy are linked to issue of governance, social and political issues and if you do not put in place the infrastructure and the institutions to deal with our social and our political problems all of this common markets will come to nothing. The institutions that the community will establish must be funded and we must know who is paying the bill because there is a history in this region of countries simply not paying and we could well end up having a CSME and a court of justice, and Trinidad and Tobago bearing the brunt of the bill. Thank you.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for what I consider an excellent presentation on a topic that I am aware most people still are not familiar with. I think, given the discourse of the Minister, we have gone a long way to filling that gap. I want, at the same time, to thank the Member for Oropouche for lending support to the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the Member for Oropouche, I could not help but recall a conversation that I had with his Leader some 20 years ago when we both served as directors of what was then the Workers' Bank. I remember as a young public servant one day I asked the Member for Couva North whether he could not find anything about the Government on which he can lend support and he responded by saying, "Boy, if you do that, you have to do it in such a way that they and all would not recognize that you are supporting them because your supporters would kill you. You cannot appear to be supporting the Government." That was 20 years ago and, as I sat listening to the Member for Oropouche really debating a Bill that he supports, he was making such an attempt to put this distance between the concept of his support and what he was saying that one was at a loss at times.

Some people will say that the glass is either empty or half full. And yes, as we make progress slowly, it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. Yes, we do not have all the answers, and if one looks at what happened when one moved into the single economy and look at the length of time it took, we have to know that from 1989 to now it is a relatively short period of time. We should concentrate rather on the end product, why are we doing what we are doing? What do we hope to accomplish? Why do we want to move from Caricom to a single market and economy? Why do we want to move from a situation where we are simply talking about the free movement of goods to a situation where we are now talking about the free movement of services and all the factors of production, where we are talking about supporting institutions, where we are talking about the single economy, the common tariff, the monetary union and all of these sort of things.

We can, make comparisons. We can look at the United States, 50 states not separated by water other than perhaps, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, but look at them. Wherever you are you are a national. They achieve certain economies because of the size, the hinterland that we do not have in Trinidad and Tobago, and the concept of the single market and economy is a movement of enlargement so that we can achieve further economies. That the fact of their separation of water,

notwithstanding we all would be a national of the community and that is what the legislation before us attempts to do. To give us free movement within the community, giving the right to establish a business without let or hindrance throughout the community, to be able to work any part of the single market without let or hindrance, and the Member is right, that is not going to happen overnight.

I am not surprised that one goes to Barbados and the guy at the desk is unaware of the form or the certificate. We have to ensure that two years from today or perhaps even one year from today that is not happening. That is our task as leaders because if we know why we are doing it, if we know the goals that we hope to accomplish we would want to put the thing in place rather quickly.

3.30 p.m.

This is the PNM's manifesto of 1991. On page 7 of this manifesto, under the PNM Economic Vision, it talks about it being "the attainment of the diversified economy, based on the optimum utilization of our natural resources and the fullest development of our human potential". Then we say, "we see". After repeating a number of we sees, we say, "a one economy, one market Caribbean". Under economic policy, we went further, where we are talking about our basic strategy, and talked about a commitment to a competitive, market-oriented, domestic economy, with the Caribbean being an integral part of that economy. That is our commitment.

Why do we want this? We want this because of the recognition, in a country of 1.3 million, that we do not have a hinterland. We use the Singapore model of development. Lee Quan Yew will tell you that because he did not have a hinterland, he made the world his hinterland. That is our challenge here in Trinidad and Tobago and in Caricom. That is why we are so busy on market access agreement.

I heard the Member say that the US is now entering a market access agreement with Chile. They are not doing that now. They did that already. Ten years ago, in 1994, when the big thing was NAFTA, not FTAA, we were positioned behind Chile for a free trade agreement with the United States. After the US entered NAFTA with Mexico and Canada, and Chile was the next country, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago said, "We want in", because we knew clearly the direction in which we were headed; that we wanted the free trade agreement and to be a part of NAFTA and we went ahead with negotiations. We were able to sign the bilateral investment treaty with the United States, as well as the Intellectual Property Rights Agreement. We then got overtaken by the Free

Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the summit of the Americas. The hon. Prime Minister was there in Miami in 1994; that is where it started.

We want to expand our market base, the primary purpose being to attract investors to locate in Trinidad and Tobago and, I dare say, Caricom. In the old days that was where we started. In 1956, Dr. Williams was lecturing and he borrowed the Arthur Lewis model, industrialization by invitation, and he said that what we needed to do was to attract investors to locate here to sell to others, but the whole thesis got all mixed up because they started asking for protective walls and so on. So we built the walls and they came here and started selling to us.

When we got Caricom, their market expanded. So, we are going back to base, but this time we are ensuring that when they come they must come with an export product. They must use Trinidad as a manufacturing platform, as a transshipment hub, but their market must be out. You are right. We are seeking markets in Central America; that is what informed—and I will tell you that the Dominican Republic agreement was started by this Government in 1994.

Yes, it was signed by the UNC and I always say if there is one thing with our trade policy, it is the level of consistency. They started the Costa Rica agreement. It was about to be closed, when we got in, as a Trinidad and Tobago/Costa Rica agreement. We converted it to a Caricom agreement that was signed earlier this year. We are pursuing that market access strategy. Because of our commitment to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), we must do it as part of Caricom. Our commitment to the CSME is unqualified.

Yes, there are problems and yes there are times when we have issues with another Caricom country. The agreement talks about a dispute settlement system. Members would recall the other day, for example, the little tiff with our neighbour Barbados. Members would know how easily that was solved. There were phone calls here and there and it petered out. Like Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados also is committed to the CSME. Yes, we have certain deadlines to meet because, as one of the more developed countries in Caricom, we believe we need to set an example and with Barbados and Jamaica, we have given a commitment that we will be CSME-ready by January 01, 2005. We want to meet that commitment. If Trinidad and Tobago cannot set the example, we certainly cannot expect St. Kitts to do it. That is the reality.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have given leave to the Prime Minister to make a statement.

TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY (ELECTION)

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I merely wish to announce that the Tobago House of Assembly election will be held on Monday, January 17, 2005.

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY BILL

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, that is another part of our commitment to democratic tradition in the Caribbean.

Let me deal with some of the issues raised. I want, first of all, to put the CSME in context. The critical issue is: why we are doing what we are doing. The Minister had an excellent exposition on what the agreement talks about. I am concentrating on the meat—why we are doing what we are doing. It expands our market space. With respect to our overall trade agenda, we see the expansion in terms of concentric circles. There is the CSME and the next circle would be the bilateral agreements that Caricom enters with Third World countries such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Colombia.

The next circle would be the regional agreements such as the FTAA or the ACPEU Agreement and then the outer circle is the World Trade Organization. But then, between Caricom and FTAA, there is an important fund, that is the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). In 1994, when the ACS was formed—of course the headquarters is here in Port of Spain—that is another initiative that has gone on a back burner because of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) initiative, but because of the window of opportunity—that is the difference. When the Member looks at it as losing a year—there were no negotiations in the FTAA for one year—I look at it as a window of opportunity so that we can bring the ACS back to the front burner.

Earlier this year I had the good fortune of being elected, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the Trade Committee of the ACS. We have started moving, on an incremental approach, to ensure that there are trade agreements with all the countries in the ACS. At present, as I have said, we have agreements with Cuba, the Dominican Republic and so on. It turns out that there are few countries in the ACS with which we do not now have agreements—Mexico, Panama and the rest of Central America, other than Costa Rica.

With respect to the rest of Central America, the Caricom/Costa Rica Agreement provides for the opting in of other Central American countries. One of those countries has already approached us to opt in to our agreement. We are

pursuing that because, as I said, the more market space we have, the easier it would be to attract inward investment to Trinidad and Tobago and Caricom.

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, the Minister spoke about a window of opportunity. There was a window of opportunity that we have missed, which is the home port for the cruise ships. You will recall that there is now a link between Spain and Cuba and a new cruise ship line is leaving Spain and starting in Cuba. With this Caribbean Single Market and Economy that we will be getting into in 2005, the last three years would have been ideal to have the cruise ship port at Chaguaramas and people within Caricom could have come here to pick up the cruise ships. The Minister spoke about market access. That would have been one of the major drivers for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the Member did not tell me this three years ago. I do not know everything and I am always willing to listen. Now that he has informed me, I shall look into it. If there are opportunities, my job is to get on to them as quickly as possible.

The Member made the point also that, rather than looking at getting the headquarters of the FTAA—and I want to say a few things about that—we should be looking at trade agreements with China and India. I am looking at China and India, but my focus there is not to sell goods to them or buy goods from them—perhaps I am wrong—but I am looking at those countries to attract investors to Trinidad and Tobago, selling them the concept that, given this platform, they can get to large markets on a favourable basis. They can get to Europe via the Cotineau Agreement; they can get to the United States, Latin America and so on.

I believe that we need to concentrate on the acres of diamonds that are around us rather than try to trade with India and China. There is already some trading, so be it, but the effort is much more worthwhile to look at the markets around us than to trade with China. Already there are imports, but in terms of exports with China, I would guess they are extremely low. What I would want from Asia is inward investment. At this time, over the medium term, in terms of the trade agenda, we need to position Trinidad and Tobago within that Latin American economy.

We go further. We say we want to integrate our economy within Latin America—acres of diamonds—South and Central America, and it is in that context we have to see our bilingual initiative. Spanish is our first foreign language. We say, given our strategic location, we have the opportunity to act as an efficient intermediary between the English-speaking north and the Spanish-speaking south and central. What is keeping us back is the language.

We should consider that we were under Spanish rule for some 300 years from 1498 to 1797—of course, because of that the French were here also—and it is only in the last 200-plus years that we have been English. We were Spanish, now we are English and in the future we must be Spanish and English. Ask any banker; ask my friend, the Member for St. Joseph, how profitable intermediation is.

That is a quest in the medium term and it is in that context also one must see our initiative in respect of air transport. We are paying for service with BWIA going into the new markets of Costa Rica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic because it makes no sense to sign an agreement and we cannot get to the markets. We have to provide the infrastructure.

We have to do some restructuring at the EXIM Bank because when we have our manufacturers going to new markets there must be finance. Someone must take the export credit and the EXIM Bank is structured and is able to do that. We are dealing with an overall policy position, as we pursue the strategy of integrating our economy within Latin America.

It is in that context also one should view our initiative to be the headquarters of the FTAA. I say it openly. It was not started by us. This was an initiative started by the last Government. That is why I was slightly amazed to hear the Member for Oropouche making some pointers, critical of the initiative of the Government. He was criticizing how much money we are spending on seeking the headquarters.

The UNC government started the initiative. It is a wonderful initiative, if I may say so. It fits in with what we want to do. If we want to integrate our economy with Latin America, their being headquartered here assists us in that overall positioning. It is a critical strategy for the achievement of our ultimate objective. I continue to say that as long as there is an FTAA the headquarters will be in Port of Spain. That is the reality.

We have 17 committed votes and there are other countries—the leader of the initiative for this Government is the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is just that the Minister of Trade speaks too much. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is leading the charge. When you hear about missions and so on, it is the Minister of Foreign Affairs doing that and there are some other countries in South and Central America that are saying they are behind us. I cannot call their names because it is not right, but the public vote is 17.

The Dominican Republic was never supporting Port of Spain for the headquarters. The last government was supporting Panama because of friendship, we were told. Yes, we were there. We were campaigning to see whether, with the

change in government, they would support Port of Spain. Yes, we were saddened when they decided to support Miami, but Mr. Speaker, if you have 17 votes, you cannot begrudge a competitor four.

If the Member wants to know how much money is being spent on the campaign, he should really ask Miami. We are up against a giant. What he should really be concentrating on is the pluses it will bring to Port of Spain, if we were to be successful in our objective. We will continue to pursue our objective, Mr. Speaker, not as an end in itself, but as part of the strategy to integrate the economy of Trinidad and Tobago within that Latin American economy.

There are some other critical initiatives as we go forward. We mentioned CSME and that we are 85 per cent ready. We know, because it is our main market. This was the other point the Member spoke about—the cost of the CSME. Yes, Trinidad and Tobago at present contributes roughly 25 per cent of the budget of Caricom. We would expect to contribute roughly the same amount for the upkeep of the CSME because of our size and because of our population.

We contribute just as much as Jamaica because of the formula used in determining contributions made, but the reality is that we are the main beneficiary of Caricom. We account for some 60 per cent of intra-Caricom trade. Our manufacturing sector is the most important market and that is the reason we have to try to give them other markets other than the United States, and you know that the United States is merely energy-related, LNG and so on.

Caricom is our main market and because it is our market, a part of our commitment to the CSME is some TT $100 million, US $16.6 million to assist countries in Caricom to build capacity. That is our Caricom Trade Support Programme. It makes no sense if things continue to be good in Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of Caricom go under. If it is our main market, we have to use some of our surplus resources in the energy sector to help them build capacity. So, God forbid, if energy goes at some point in time, we can still earn some keep within Caricom.

The Member scoffed at the concept of the gas pipeline. I want to let him know that it is still very much on. It is not overtaken by any other initiative. The preliminary feasibility has already been done and it is shown to be workable. Work continues on that. The concept is that, to the extent that we can get natural gas to the other islands, we would be lowering the cost of power to these other countries, allowing them to attract inward investment to their countries, building capacity. That is what we are about in our main market.

Perhaps I should comment also on the LNG agreement that seems to be making the news. We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Jamaica, a sister country in Caricom. It is to do a feasibility study with respect to providing LNG from 2008, but it must be of a certain minimum quantity. Under that level, it makes no sense. It is at a price above the price at which the plant is deemed to be economic. People are taken in by the fact that gas prices are high in the United States, but here we have a country asking for a 20-year contract and if one is looking at a 20-year contract, you do not pay a spot price for that, you look at a long-term price. If you are negotiating, you will want a price above that at which you deem you can make a profit.

While it is at a discount from today's price, it is an economic price. It is a price at which the plant is making money, but it is a long-term price. It is a 20-year price as against a current price. Nobody knows what the price of LNG would be in the United States five or ten years from today. Here you are talking about locking price every 20 years.

So the CSME is important to us. The market access agreement is extremely important to us because we use that to attract inward investment. We said in the budget debate that the Government has now gone micro. It is a fact that at the macro level of the economy everybody would admit the fundamentals are extremely good and, therefore, what we need to do now is to look at different industrial sectors to determine the capacity constraints and to come up with solutions.

Early this year the committee on industrial development was established by the Prime Minister to look at sectors. They were mentioned in the budget debate—the marine sector, fish and fish processing, yachting and so on. They are about to report because these are areas in which we believe we have an opportunity to attract inward investment.

We are also looking at the area of transshipment. They would tell you that the port at present is doing three times its amount. It has been stretching its capacity long ago. It was designed to do about 100-plus and it is now doing 360 TCUs in terms of transshipment. Right now, the manufacturers as well as the stakeholders are asking that we look at reclaiming further lands so that they could continue to grow. I do not know whether Members are seeing it—I was about to say slowly, but I do not think it is slowly—because I like to think that Port of Spain is the product, the same way Miami is the product, not the US, in the short term. It is being positioned in a particular way. The connotation of Port of Spain widens at times.

Just recently, we had the World Energy Ministers here. We had the mayors here and on a continuing basis we are seeing businesspersons and so on looking at

Trinidad and Tobago to hold their conferences. We hosted earlier this year the Caribbean/Latin American Euro Money Conference where we had a number of potential investors coming here for a look-see, as it were. We are hosting it again in April of next year when we expect, again, a number of investors to be looking at Trinidad and Tobago. The story is out that this is the location in which one can invest; that one can come here and one would receive national treatment; that there is an absence now of corruption; that there is the rule of law under which one is guided and so on.

4.00 p.m.

As a matter of fact, sometime ago someone told me, on the radio programmes, we are now listed as the eighth best country, in terms of a place in which to invest. That is the context in which I would like to see this legislation. I am aware that as we go forward, there will be challenges and testing times. If we do not have those, then they do not need us. We are there to ensure that when the tempest comes we can go around it, under it, deal with it and manage it, because that is why we are there. We would have it. Again, I made the point that we simply have to look at Europe to see what has happened.

The Member—I would just quickly comment on some of his points—commented and wanted to know why we are sitting on Wednesday, when our normal day is on Friday and that it is the lack of a legislative agenda. Nothing can be further from the truth. When the Parliament opened, the Attorney General spelt out clearly a legislative agenda for the Government for this session of Parliament. If one were to look on the Order Paper, one would see at present there are 18 Bills on the Order Paper. I simply want to put the House on notice. To be able to complete our agenda, there will be quite a few Wednesday sittings. That is the reality. Members should be prepared for that.

The Regional Development Fund is in the treaty. It is not established as yet. Now that most of the countries would have legislated the revised treaty, I think they will move towards that. In the interim, I made the point that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has already committed to the Caricom support programme. We told them at the Heads of Caricom Conference that whenever that Regional Integration Fund is established we will simply convert our funding to that.

A very interesting point was made by the Member. He then immediately started arguing against it, it appears. He said when you talk single market and economy you must also speak about political union. At the same time, he was attempting to take the Prime Minister to task for saying just that; that we need to

start looking at some level of political union. He argued convolutedly, as it were. If the Member, a young politician, knows anything about politics he ought to know that you attempt to condition the environment. [*Interruption*] I really should not tell him. You attempt to condition the environment before you go for the kill. You must tell him.

Mr. Speaker, this is the PNM's Manifesto from 1956. This is an old copy. This must be the original manifesto. Under this are the aims and objectives of the PNM. Under "c" it talks about dominion status. That tells you how old the Constitution is. It talks about dominion status for a British Caribbean Federation within a period of not more than five years after its establishment. Under "d", it talks about collaboration with all Caribbean countries, to promote the more effective use of Caribbean resources for the benefit of Caribbean people. It also talks about collaboration with progressive peoples everywhere and especially those recently emancipated from colonialism, to achieve the abolition of colonialism and racialism throughout the Caribbean area and the world.

I am making the simple point that our commitment to some type of political union was in the Caribbean. It goes back to 1956. This is not a new thing. We were in the forefront to the federation. When the Prime Minister speaks about political union he is speaking on the authority of the PNM. When the Member can see, as any intelligent person will see, if we are really talking about single market and especially single economy, there must be some type of political undertone. When he can see that—I cannot see how in the same breath he can attempt to criticize a movement towards political union.

Dr. Moonilal: I think the Member understands clearly what I was saying. I did not speak for or against political union. I was merely making the point that the process the Prime Minister chose to introduce the issue would bring his initiative into disrepute. Now that you have confirmed that you are kite flying. That was my point. By doing it in that way, it would become like Vision 2020, a joke. I was not speaking for nor against on this occasion.

Hon. K. Valley: Therefore, you would agree that, as leaders, we have an obligation to generate debate on issues which we consider important.

The Member quoted Dr. Meighoo, a member of the Vision 2020 Planning Committee. He said for two years they were doing work and it is a jibe-job, words to that effect, and that we are not taking them on or making any allocation. If the Member is quoting Dr. Meighoo correctly then I suggest that Dr. Meighoo listen to the Chairman of the Vision 2020 Planning Committee. The chairman is making the point that it takes time and we need to get it right.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. K. Valley: Thank you very much. I thank the Member for Caroni Central. The Government was aware, when we established the Vision 2020 Planning Committee, that they would need some time to develop the strategies and plans. That is why, in our manifesto with which we won the 2002 election, we said clearly, in this five-year period, we will concentrate on providing and building the infrastructure. We said that we would concentrate on human resource development, education, wellness and well-being, poverty eradication, housing our people; the provision of affordable housing, personal security and safety and we would do all that with equity.

We believe that this was critical underpinning: to give the Vision 2020 Planning Committee five years to do their work. We knew that it does not matter what they come up with, these were critical ingredients for planning. That is what is happening. We are not wasting any time. If you go back to the budget speeches of this year and last year, you would see that we have been true to our manifesto. We are spending on education, health and the poverty eradication issues. Just recently, in the last budget, there was an increase in old age pension. We are putting a plan in place so that we can move forward. Member for Oropouche, please tell Dr. Meighoo to continue his work, it is critical and important work. Only last week I got two volumes dealing with trade and industry aspects. They would be coming to talk with us to tell us what they are coming up with. While they are doing their planning we have to continue working. We know what we have to do. We have to provide what we consider critical infrastructure. On that foundation we can build.

The Member made the point—let me go to this one first—about the trade agreement with Mercosur. As Minister of Trade and Industry in Trinidad and Tobago within Caricom, I am the lead spokesperson on bilateral agreements. At the last COTED, I was mandated to start talks with Mercosur with respect to bilateral agreements. We have communication. As a matter of fact, two weeks ago the Minister of Trade in Brazil sent an envoy to meet with me to talk informally on the ambits of the agreement; making the point that they had sensitivities and there must be some level of asymmetrical relationship, given the OECS countries.

We expect that sometime earlier in the new year formal talks would be started with respect to the Mercosur Agreement. At the same time, I got communication only yesterday from my manufacturers telling me, no, leave Mercosur for the time being and let us concentrate on our acres of diamond close to home in Central America. It is a balancing act. There are different stakeholders with different needs. Of course, the job of the politician is to try to satisfy all of them, without getting his neck cut off. The Member could learn that.

The other point the Member raised was when he said the Prime Minister is doling out money to the Caribbean neighbours as though it is from his piggy bank. I could not help but think; when they were in government they thought they had a piggy bank. They were not giving it to people in need such as Tobago, Grenada or Jamaica, who are just coming out of a disaster. They were taking it and putting in their pockets and running all over the place with it. How can I say that? I am just speaking after what I see. Just this morning I saw further charges coming out of the airport. I do not like to go back to those things because it is negative memory. I saw it in the newspapers. Persons are before the court. That is the reality. I want to make the point that they are saying when your neighbour's house is on fire wet your own. I think it in that context, once they view what the Prime Minister attempted to do with Grenada and Jamaica. I think that the majority of Trinidadians and Tobagonians, as well as most of our Caribbean neighbours, appreciate that act of generosity. I think that is a fact. [*Desk thumping*]

If I am to believe the pollsters, that is the fact. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Winston Dookeran (*St. Augustine*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must first of all compliment the hon. Member for Oropouche for a very wide-ranging set of proposals which he laid before this House. I do hope that the Minister of Foreign Affairs will consider some of these proposals which he has put forth. I recollect him talking about the Ministry of Development Corporation. I remember him talking about a programme for public information. I remember him talking about a single market versus a single economy. I remember him talking about the interference of the Prime Minister of St. Vincent in the political union debate that is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago. I remember him talking about the extra Caricom markets, the issues of governance and the FTAA. It may have prompted the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central to outline what is really a multi-track trade policy that is being pursued over the years, for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs piloted this Bill before us he essentially contained himself to the issues of the legal governance of the single

market and economy that will apply in the Treaty of Chaguaramas. Needless to say, the legal governance must be constructed in the context of the economic governance, as well as the political governance. Therefore, this debate allows us an opportunity to focus on all aspects of the Treaty of Chaguaramas. The Treaty of Chaguaramas was a far-reaching endeavour on the part of the previous governments of this country. It was far-reaching in the sense that it projected, at that time, what appeared to be the panacea of our economic problem, widening our economic space within the Caribbean context, so as to provide better investment opportunities for foreign and local investors. The world has changed dramatically since then. Now we are talking about new economic geography that goes beyond the national borders. We must be cognizant of the new reality of this economic geography that crosses national borders. We must be cognizant on the issue of political integration, not because it is an idea that was promoted in 1956, but because it will provide us a real opportunity in creating new economic space. It is in that context, I believe, some of the comments that were made on the issue of political union and its shortsightedness have been raised in this debate so far.

Let me, therefore, start with a few comments on the issue of economic governance. I would argue that the regional and international trade arrangement of which the Member for Diego Martin Central spoke, the concentric circles and the multi-track trade policy is only an institutional response to our problems, in the sense that it creates the institutional framework from the creation of market space, as he calls it, or new economic space. What is missing in this whole agenda is the economic incentive and infrastructure programmes that will make the economy a very competitive one. Therefore, his suggestion at the end of his deliberations, that he was in fact building a new Trinidad and Tobago, could not stand the test of credibility when we looked at it in greater detail.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs talked at great length on the issue of nondiscrimination in the single market and economy. It is true that the provisions in the treaty before us and in the single market and economy's proposals do involve nondiscrimination. I wonder and I ask myself the question when the Government recently announced that they were establishing a grant fund for Caricom countries and Caricom investors at no interest rate, whereas that did not apply to investors from Trinidad and Tobago—whether or not that will fit the Bill of nondiscrimination.

For a while we talked about nondiscrimination in the context of our legal framework. In practice, we have already seen examples where such nondiscrimination is not adhered to. Many business people in Trinidad and Tobago and investors have

been quite upset about the absence of a similar fund that could be established in Trinidad and Tobago, in order to create the opportunities that the Minister spoke about. Is this consistent with the provisions of the single market and economy?

He spoke at great length about the movement of skilled persons. This has been on the cards for some time: the movement of skilled persons. In that context, we might want to view the proposals that were raised on political union. The political union debate, at one time initiated by the Prime Minister, sought to bring about a union between Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. That was a stillborn idea. It got nowhere. Today, the Prime Minister speaks about a union between St. Vincent, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago. The essential reason for political union is to create political space in a hemispheric and global economy. This Mickey Mouse approach that the Prime Minister speaks about does not fit that test. Therefore, there may be other reasons he is promoting this, if only as he and the Member for Diego Martin Central said, to sensitize the people or to fly a kite, as the Leader of the Opposition said. Is this what public policy is all about today? We are now admitting that we are flying kites and we are taking the public trust without establishing a procedure and a process by which we can discuss that particular important debate of a political union of the Caribbean countries. Is it still a viable option? Is the new economic geography, where the northern Caribbean is faced with market forces that are pushing them into North America, going to make a political union of the Caribbean at all feasible?

As the Member for Oropouche pointed out, when we talk about the single market and economy, we are not talking about what has been described as the common economy. To reap the real rewards of an integrated economy, one must move towards the single economy, sometimes referred to as the common economy. Mr. Speaker, it is in that context of the changing economic geography of the world—the need to establish more political space for countries like ours, or to search, at the same time to have a wider convergence in the economic countries of the region—that this debate should be located. What is therefore missing is the substantial policy framework and initiatives to make the institutional framework work. That is fundamentally missing. The institutional and legal framework and the legal governance of which the Minister speaks, will not work if there is not an environment based on incentives, infrastructure and competitiveness, that allows us to use and utilize the opportunities that will be created by this framework. I was therefore disappointed when the Member for Diego Martin Central skirted that issue and talked essentially about the multi-track trade policy of the Government.

I would argue that other regional and international trade arrangements, as well as private sector developments in the region, have overtaken the creation of a

single market and economy. Some years ago I was asked to give a talk on the future of Caricom. At that time I argued that Caricom had its limits and we are near to reaching that limit. Are we, therefore, engaged as if we are engaged in some great quantum leap into a new economic horizon, when these are the ideas of the 1970s? Is the Government inspired by the ideas of the past or will they be able to take on the challenge of the ideas of the current global economy?

I would even argue further that the multi-track trade policy is already an old policy. All the countries in the world are following that procedure. They are establishing concentric circles because the world is not quite sure what the new economic geography is going to be. What the Member for Diego Martin Central spoke about is already seen as an old policy framework. Here we have the Caricom framework on one hand and the trade policy framework on the other hand being promoted as panaceas of some kind of new economic liberalization thinking, when in truth and in fact, it is far from that. That is why most people will expect that this Parliament will pass this Bill and nothing will happen. Most people will expect that the new institutional framework will not be supported by the reality of the new global environment. Most people will, therefore, be very skeptical as to what this Parliament is doing.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for tea and will be resumed at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, before we took the break I was making the point that two ideas have emerged in this debate from the Government's side. One is dealing with Caricom Single Market and Economy and the other is the multi-track trade policy of the Government. They are both ideas that have been with us for a long time, particularly the first. It is not quite clear exactly how these new policy initiatives can be considered to be new in any sense of the word and whether they will bring about real economic benefits for the nation.

Let me say a few words about the single market and economy and the common economy. Perhaps, it is time we should have reached the stage where the Caribbean region, as a region, would have established a common economy; going way beyond the single market and economy. It is true that we need to do this in stages, so it will be argued. But, Caricom has its limits. To some extent, we have already exhausted those limits. In order to break the barrier for new economic space, it will be necessary to go to the common economy where there will be

coordination of policy measures. I noticed that the Member for Diego Martin Central said the single market and economy dealt with the Caribbean Monetary Union. I do not think that is quite correct. The Caribbean Monetary Union is separate from the single market and economy. That will form part of the common economy, if we were to move in that direction. I hope it is in that context—

Mr. Valley: For my own edification, I wonder whether the Member would enlighten me. What is the difference between a common economy and a single economy?

Mr. W. Dookeran: I am using the word interchangeably.

Mr. Valley: What is contemplated right now is a single market and economy; in other words, a single market and a single economy. If you are using it interchangeably, the same thing you are saying about a common economy holds for a single economy.

Mr. W. Dookeran: No. The single market and economy does not mean a single economy. There is another concept. We moved from CARIFTA free trade into the customs union and into the common economy, which is what the Member for Oropouche was talking about. He was referring to a single economy, which goes beyond the single market and economy.

Mr. Valley: That is why he was saying, while we are looking at the single market on January 01, 2005, the single economy is now postponed to 2008. It is a single market and a single economy but they are moving forward with a single market for January 01, 2005 and they have postponed the achievement of the single economy part of it to 2008 because they realized the monetary issues.

Mr. W. Dookeran: We are not in disagreement because what we are saying is that what we are dealing with is not a common economy. We are not dealing with the Caribbean Monetary Union at this stage. We are not dealing with that issue. That issue is to be dealt with in the next stage. There will be one monetary union. There will be one set of policy measures. Is this a realistic thing to look at? The way the world has moved now, where the northern Caribbean sees their interest as being linked towards North America, will you really be able to have a single economy at all? Or are we just simply creating a situation where we are offering promises without really expecting to have the fruits of those promises? Fundamentally, I am asking, are we debating a serious economic change, or are we debating a bureaucratic process? We have to put in place the necessary bureaucratic procedures to have a single market and economy but we will not necessarily, in so doing, create economic space.

The key objective of foreign policy is to protect the nation's vital interest. The conduct of diplomacy must acknowledge that as its bottom line. I was somewhat astonished by the Prime Minister's question when he said: "Is the Caricom interest not equivalent to Trinidad and Tobago's interest?" It was possible that you could have common interests, but your foreign policy has to look at Trinidad and Tobago's vital interest. At times, you may have to make tradeoffs between the Caricom vital interest and your vital interest. Therefore, it was astonishing to get that argument coming as if we are now giving up the conduct of a foreign policy to a Caricom framework. In that context, the Caricom framework that he is talking about, in terms of political union, deals with small islands such as St. Vincent and Grenada. What we should really be looking at is the bigger political union of the entire Caricom region and whether or not that is feasible in the circumstances.

There is no doubt that the Caricom market accounts for 24 per cent of total domestic exports and 60 per cent is non-energy exports. I believe the Minister made mention of that. In addition, there is also the question of trading, manufacturing and services owned and managed by Trinidad and Tobago companies in Caricom countries. Inputs for the construction and hospitality industries of Caricom are sourced from Trinidad and Tobago and Trinidad and Tobago firms have major equity investment in companies in the regions. In other words, you have already Trinidad and Tobago being positioned, by virtue of private sector developments, to reap the rewards of a single market and economy. What we are doing here is simply putting the rules in place in order to facilitate this process which should have been started long ago.

Trinidad and Tobago's total exports to Barbados, Guyana and Jamaica were US $92.7 billion, US $20 million and US $332 million respectively, in 2000. Over the last five years Trinidad and Tobago has maintained a significant balance of trade surplus in these countries. In addition, Trinidad and Tobago's investment in these states, over the last five years, has been considerable. The point I am trying to make is that the events are ahead of these measures. Already the economy is functioning in this context and these measures which we would adhere to—there is some difficulty as to whether all the countries in the region could adhere to them. That is another issue we have to face in due course. Would there be reciprocity in the arrangements between Trinidad and Tobago and the smaller islands in the Caribbean? Or would there be no reciprocity in the circumstances? In that case, are we pursuing the vital interest of Trinidad and Tobago?

There is no question that Caricom's space is still too small in today's world, to be able to sustain the recreation of a level of income to which Trinidad and

Tobago can aspire. If Trinidad and Tobago is to realize its vast potential it must, in fact, become competitive in the global arena.

The Minister of Trade and Industry talked about China and India, not as trading countries, but rather as investment possibilities. But today, China is in fact expanding its product all over the world including the Caribbean. I do not see how we can escape trading with China, at least in terms of importing. The premise which he made that there should be investment linked to China and India, not necessarily a trade link, does not stand up to the test of what is exactly happening in the new world geography. What is clear, however, is that you need to build a capacity of Caricom. It was during the period 1996—2001, when a number of very specific steps were taken in order to build the capacity in the region. I am hoping the Minister of Foreign Affairs will tell us what has happened to these steps. The UNC was in government when we joined commissions within Trinidad and Tobago and the OECS countries were agreed upon, with the view of developing an assistance programme for the OECS. So far, these commissions have not met. So too has the Inter-ministerial Coordinating Committee for Caricom. Both are recommendations that have come forth during the period 1996—2001. A number of other proposals were put forth in order to build that capacity. When we talked loosely about building capacity—

Mr. Valley: What year were those two committees formed: the joint commission between Trinidad and Tobago and OECS and the other was the Inter-ministerial?

Mr. W. Dookeran: I do not have the exact year but it was agreed to during the period 1996—2001.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about building capacity, we need to build the capacity in accordance with these recommendations that were already outlined. It was suggested:

> "(a) a resident diplomatic mission in Georgetown, Guyana, be reopened, with concurrent accreditation to the CARICOM Secretariat in Suriname; this office should have a number of specific mandates pertaining to trade and investment and should be a conduit for the business community in Trinidad and Tobago;"

What is the status of that proposal? Secondly, it was suggested:

> "(b) a mission located in Barbados should be reopened with concurrent accreditation to the Secretariat of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean

States and the individual members of the OECS; the mission should also have the role of monitoring and or overseeing any official assistance programmes established for the OECS and its member States;"

In other words, we need to deepen the bilateral relationship in the OECS countries; so we do not have the kind of thing happening, where some Prime Minister on the basis of some individual personal agenda decides that he wants to form some political union. This should be done in a very systematic way as outlined in the proposals that are before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was also suggested:

"(c) the Trinidad and Tobago High Commissioner in Jamaica should be accredited to Belize and the Bahamas;"

I already spoke about the joint commissions that were agreed to and the Coordinating Committee for Caricom affairs. So when the Member for Diego Martin Central talked about capacity building in Caricom, I must ask these very relevant questions as to whether or not the Government is embarking on a programme to build this capacity in a serious way or are we just hearing words that sound well, but we are not putting into place the necessary structures to make it work.

What should, therefore, be the premise of foreign economic policy in a Caricom context? The groundwork has been laid and now it is necessary to put into place these measures that I have outlined before. In this context, I wonder what has happened with the Prime Minister's proposal, at one time, to establish political union between Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us whether anything has happened with that, whether it is still on the cards or whether or not it is simply one of those kite-flying exercises? Is foreign policy a kite-flying exercise set of proposals?

My first suggestion is that bilateral arrangements between individual countries in Caricom, and Trinidad and Tobago should be strengthened in order to be able to build the capacity we are talking about. Secondly, we should focus, with some urgency, on the creation of the common economy; this, in fact, would be a quantum leap into a new area of economic cooperation. Thirdly, the competitive structure required to participate in hemispheric and global markets must be constructed. These are the economic pillars upon which we must build the integration movement. I would be happy if the Minister, in his reply, could outline exactly whether he is doing that or what precisely are the pillars they are using.

I want to talk for a few moments on this concept of the Caribbean political union. A lot has already been said by the Member for Oropouche, in which he

looked at the comments of a number of scholars on this issue. The critical issue here is the process by which one should consider this proposal and, secondly, what is in the economic interest of Trinidad and Tobago in pursuing this proposal. Those two questions must be answered early on in this debate or else it becomes simply the dream of individuals. If the economic interest is not being protected and if the process by which the integration decision will be made cannot be determined, we will be doing our country a great disservice.

In fact, some of the commentaries on this issue talked about voices rising in Tobago as to the need to fix the constitutional arrangements between these two islands as a prerequisite to the entire issue of political integration. There has also been the domestic issue of constitutional reform in Trinidad and Tobago, which has been raised as another issue that needs to be placed on the agenda. We cannot go about changing our entire framework without dealing with all the issues that are relevant to us.

Another article talks about political union:

"Let the people decide"

A third article in the *Express* editorial reads:

"Trinidad and Tobago union first"

What we hear is a lot of proposals made by the Prime Minister for pipeline construction in the region and political unions. The Prime Minister claims that this is mandatory.

Prime Minister Patrick Manning, in making a plea for deeper Caribbean integration, told members of his San Fernando East constituency that integration is no longer optional in Trinidad and Tobago, but mandatory. We have not agreed on the principles upon which we will discuss this issue, which is the process for integration to take place and, secondly, the issue as to the economic interest that will be involved. This Mickey Mouse approach to Caribbean integration is likely to lead to serious debate into great disrepute, in the circumstances which I am talking about.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the legislation before us, we must look at the legal governance that will apply, the economic governance that will be required and the political governance that will apply to the Treaty of Chaguaramas. It is in that context that this Bill should be viewed. I hope we can shed some light on these issues and that the debate started on this particular Bill will lead to some serious thinking on the issues that I have raised here with respect to constitutional

reform, with respect to Trinidad and Tobago reform, with respect to bilateral arrangements with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States countries and so forth.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker:

> "An Act to give effect to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas including the Caricom Single Market and Economy and for matters related thereto"

could turn out to be a piece of paper, if it is not put in that general context and if we do not devise an overall process by which we will deal with all the issues that are before us. I wanted, specifically, to get a response from the Minister on the issue of nondiscrimination, which he spoke about, and whether or not the convergence of the Caribbean economies is moving in the direction to encourage that common economy of which I spoke about.

Let me conclude with a comment that has been made by the Prime Minister on more than one occasion, that Trinidad and Tobago is now the financial capital of the region. He said it in the budget speech and I note that he has said it on a number of other occasions. The truth of the matter is that we are far from being the financial capital. What we are doing is supplying foreign exchange and investment to part of the region, but a financial capital requires much more than that. It requires the trading of financial products and derivatives and the ability to raise bonds of a corporate nature as well as of a public nature. I make this point so that we do not get carried away. I note that the press keeps saying it as well, that we are now the financial capital. We need a real plan to become the financial capital, so we can be able to claim that we are, in fact, the financial capital.

I notice that in debates many of these terms come out loosely and are accepted as if these things are a reality when, in truth and in fact, they do not reflect the reality of our times. I conclude by making a plea to get an explanation from the Minister on the question of loans granted to Caricom investors and the preferential arrangements given to them and to ask whether or not such arrangements cannot be considered to be contrary to the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, as he outlined today. With these few comments, I thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned to Friday, December 03, 2004, at 1.30 p.m. I inform Members that we will continue debate on this Bill on Friday and, in addition, the Bill that was introduced today, which the Minister indicated will be dealt with on Friday.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: If the Minister would give way. I have been looking at the Caribbean Community (Removal of Restrictions) Bill, which we got when we came to the Parliament. We have been in the House all afternoon, so it means we only have tomorrow to prepare for debate. There are some very, very serious clauses in this Bill dealing with over five different statutes. You are dealing with the Tourism Development Act, the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skills National) Act, so in order to appreciate what this Bill is doing, we need to get those five other statutes, plus all their amendments. That cannot be done tomorrow to allow us sufficient time to have a proper debate on Friday. I ask you to reconsider.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I will consider it, but I must inform the Member for Siparia that I gave the Chief Whip a copy of the Bill since last Friday. As a matter of fact, it was supposed to be debated today. He has had a copy of the Bill since last Friday and we indicated then the Government's intention to take it through all its stages this Wednesday.

As I said, I shall consider what you have said and see what we can do, but I did make the point when I made my contribution that we are working with some deadlines, as a fact, and I think it is in the country's interest to meet those deadlines. With these words, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.30 p.m.