

*Leave of Absence**Friday, March 04, 2005***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, March 04, 2005*

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 Member for Laventille West (Hon. Eulalie James), requesting leave of absence from today's sitting of the House of Representatives. The leave of absence which the Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation for the period January 01, 2002 to September 30, 2003. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation for the period October, 2003 to September, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Report of the Statutory Authorities' Service Commission for the period October 01, 2003 to September 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. The Education (Local School Board) (Amdt.) Regulations, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

**Industrial Accidents
(Recent Deaths at Ports)**

Mr. Harry Partap (*Nariva*): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter as a definite matter of urgent public importance namely: the recent deaths due to industrial accidents at the nation's ports.

The matter is definite since it refers to specific incidents at the Point Lisas and Port of Spain ports which claimed the lives of three persons: Shivam Harrylal, Marcus McDavid, and Sangeev Rampersad.

Definite Urgent Matter
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The matter is urgent since, if corrective measures are not immediately put in place, there is the possibility that more accidents will occur and more lives will be lost.

The matter is of public importance since the Government's failure to implement the Occupational Safety and Health Act, No. 1 of 2004, has left workers, particularly those in industrial establishments, at serious risk of accidents, injuries and death.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the matter raised by the hon. Member for Nariva cannot be accepted under Standing Order 12, but will most certainly qualify under Standing Order 11.

May I also suggest to hon. Members to look carefully at Standing Order 17(1).

**HERITAGE AND STABILIZATION FUND
(ESTABLISHMENT OF)**

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, I am pleased to announce that the Cabinet has agreed to the underlying principles which relate to the enactment of legislation governing the establishment of a new Heritage and Stabilization Fund. The aim of the legislation will be to establish an operational mechanism which will ensure that our oil and gas resources which are depletable assets, are prudently and judiciously managed for the benefit of our current and future generations.

Mr. Speaker, within a well-conceived operational and management framework, we are ensuring that our oil and gas resources would catalyze wealth creation and deliver a consistently comfortably standard of living for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. This objective underpins our drive to achieve developed country status by the year 2020, if not before.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that our petroleum, oil, and gas resources are not unlimited and inevitably, those resources could be depleted. Moreover, as Members of this honourable House are aware, and indeed members of the national community, income from our hydrocarbon resources for the past three decades has been less than certain and with the fluctuations derived from volatile prices, economic management has been severely tested and, indeed, Trinidad and Tobago has not been able to avoid the resulting recessionary conditions during that time.

Mr. Speaker, it is an imperative this Government has supported in ensuring that through this mechanism, the mechanism of the Heritage and Stabilization Fund, Government will provide the right balance between those expenditures required to deliver economic growth and social services and those expenditures required to support a sound and sustainable economy over the medium term.

In September 2000, the then government established an Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund (IRSF) under the provision of section 43(2) of the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01. Since its establishment, and under the guidelines formulated for its operation, the Ministry of Finance has been making appropriate deposits to the fund. By the end of the last financial year, September 30, 2004, resources in the Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund stood at TT \$2,775.6 million or US \$440.6 million.

The estimates of expenditure for fiscal year 2005, provide for up to 100 per cent, or approximately \$1,356.9 million, to be transferred to the fund. This would bring the balance outstanding in the fund, including interests and earnings, as at September 30, 2005 to TT \$4,209 million or US \$688 million.

Mr. Speaker, it is intended that on the establishment of the Heritage and Stabilization Fund, the Interim Stabilization Fund will be retired and all the proceeds therein will be transferred into the Heritage and Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the less than adequate economic and fiscal management prevailing in many other resource-endowed countries, whether they be oil and gas producing, or copper producing, or diamond producing. We are also very much aware that many other resource-endowed countries like Trinidad and Tobago have long been able to adopt a sustainable and sound fiscal policy framework which ensures that the country saves a substantial proportion of its output.

This is necessary to finance investment requirements in particular, in human capital infrastructure which, as Members of this honourable House are no doubt aware, are extremely important for delivering sound and sustainable economic growth, improved employment opportunities and reliable and affordable public social services.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, this Government has pursued a long-run fiscal strategy which places fiscal discipline at the core of our economic and social agenda. Our fiscal objective is to ensure that our budget is always in approximate balance or in surplus.

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We recognize that in the context of the buoyancy of oil and gas prices, consistent surpluses will be generated thus creating public savings to finance those strategic and tactical investments which are required to transform a country into developed country status.

Mr. Speaker, we are now establishing the operational modalities of the Heritage and Stabilization Fund. We have had the benefit of the implementation experience of many other resource-endowed countries with such funds. In November 2004, we had extensive dialogue with a number of academics, policy makers, and officials of international institutions who participated in a forum on Commodity Funds jointly hosted by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and the World Bank which was attended even by some hon. Members on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, as we began to design the fund, we were confronted with two major issues: the first is related to the finite nature of the depletable resource, and the question is how much oil and gas income should be spent on the present generation and how much should be saved for future generations.

The second is related to the uncertainty of the revenue flows from oil and gas. How should Government adjust its spending to cushion the domestic economy from variations in oil revenue due to sharp and unpredictable variations in oil prices?

Mr. Speaker, the technical aspects of these issues could be reasonably overcome, but the difficulty of determining a long-run equilibrium oil price and predicting whether price swings were temporary or permanent certainly posed substantial operational and practical challenges.

Mr. Speaker, in our design of the Heritage and Stabilization Fund, we have overcome these challenges and intend to put in place a fund which would:

1. have an economic stabilization function by sustaining public expenditure capacity through periods of revenue downturns stemming from declines in oil and gas prices;
2. ensure that there is a balance of interest between current and future generations by sustaining public expenditure in the face of the inevitable revenue decline from the depletion of the non-renewable resources, namely, oil and gas; and
3. contribute to the transformation of Trinidad and Tobago into developed country status before the year 2020 by undertaking such

strategic and tactical investments in established private sector, or public/private commercial business ventures and strategic assets which would be acquired in ventures in which the private sector might be unwilling to commit resources.

Mr. Speaker, these three objectives of the fund would be met through appropriate design mechanisms among which would be the following:

1. Number of Portfolios—Two portfolios will be established; the financial investment portfolio, and the strategic investment portfolio.
2. Number of Accounts—The financial investment portfolio would only hold assets which are easily negotiable and those assets would be assigned to two accounts:
 - the Fiscal Sustainability Account; and
 - the Heritage Account.

The strategic investment portfolio will hold only liquid international assets and debt and equity positions in companies or other types of investments considered to be strategic or tactical and those assets will be assigned to a third account:

- the Strategic Account.
3. Management of the Accounts—In order to assure that the management of the accounts meets the best international practice, the three accounts would be managed by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Minister of Finance in accordance with the established norms to meet budgetary commitments and liquidity needs.
 4. Governance Structure—The fund will be managed by a Board of Trustees subject to the general direction and control of the Minister of Finance, and would comprise five members to be appointed by the Cabinet; three to be officials of the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance. The Chairman of the Board would be an official of the Ministry of Finance.
 5. Responsibility for Establishing Robust Governance Systems—The Board of Trustees would be responsible for developing the structure; governance, operational and investment procedures of the fund, and delegate the management of the fund to the Central Bank by way of a management contract that would stipulate fees, policies and strategies

of the fund, benchmark portfolios against which performance will be measured, the levels of liquidity required, the quality of financial assets and the target levels of return.

6. **Composition of Oil and Gas Resources**—The resources of the fund will include all energy revenues from oil and natural gas exploitation and refining with the exception of unemployment level. The resources of the fund will include Supplemental Petroleum Tax (SPT), Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT), oil impost, royalties and signature bonuses.
7. **Allocation of Annual Deposits for Stabilization Intergenerational and Strategic Considerations**—The annual deposits to the fund, if any, will be allocated to the three accounts as indicated hereunder:
 - 60 per cent of the deposits be set aside for the Fiscal Sustainability Account and the Heritage Account, the proportions to be determined by the trust managers on the basis of investment criteria relating to the need to balance liquidity for short-term financial considerations and longer term assets on which financial returns could be greater;
 - 40 per cent would be set aside for the Strategic Account, the resources of which would be initially invested in short-term liquid security pending its investment in tactical and strategic assets.
8. **Medium-term price of Oil and Gas**—Oil and gas taxation revenues would be determined on the basis of the medium-term prices of crude oil and gas. Crude oil and gas prices would be determined on an annual basis within a medium-term framework involving five years. The medium-term price of crude oil would be based on a standard formula utilizing no more than three classes of crude, while the medium-term price of gas would be based on such formulae as are utilized by the principal gas publications.
9. **Determination of Shortfalls and Excesses in Oil and Gas Revenues**—The calculation of shortfalls and excesses in oil and gas revenues would be determined by computing the aggregate amount of oil and gas revenues received from operations during the year, less the aggregate amount of revenues projected in the annual budget from oil and gas operations. The gains or losses resulting from exchange rate movements will not be included.

10. **Trigger Benchmark for Making Deposits**—Deposits in any financial year would be made when oil and gas taxation revenues for that year exceed the budgeted medium-term oil and gas taxation revenues by at least 10 per cent. A supplementary estimate showing an amount to be charged to the Consolidated Fund equal to a minimum of 60 per cent of excess oil and gas taxation revenues received during the year would be included in a Supplementary Appropriation Bill to be laid before the House of Representatives.
11. **Trigger Benchmark for Withdrawals for Stabilization Purposes**—Withdrawals in any financial year would be made when oil and gas taxation revenues received for the year are at least 10 per cent less than the revenues anticipated in the annual budget for that year, in which case the withdrawal from the fund would be undertaken for stabilization purposes and be guided by fiscal sustainability rules including expenditure-reducing measures and be the lesser of:
 - 60 per cent of the amount of the deficit of oil and gas tax revenues; or
 - 25 per cent of the balance standing to the credit of the fund at the beginning of the financial year. The lesser of the two.
12. **Withdrawals for Strategic Investments**—Withdrawals to undertake strategic and tactical investments would be authorized by the Board of Trustees on the instructions of the Minister of Finance. In making a determination as to the portfolio of investment, the Minister of Finance would be guided by professional advice to be provided by reputable financial advisors.
13. **Reporting Requirements**—The Board of Trustees would submit an annual report on the operations of the fund to the Minister of Finance. Within three months of the end of the financial year, the Board of Trustees would be required to prepare financial statements in respect of the fund in accordance with international accounting standards, such statements to be laid in Parliament.
14. **Accounts of the Fund**—The accounts of the fund would be public accounts for the purposes of section 116 of the Constitution and would be audited annually by the Auditor General or by an auditor authorized by the Auditor General and would be laid in Parliament.

Heritage and Stabilization Fund
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Mr. Speaker, this country has become increasingly integrated into the international economy from a trade and investment perspective. This country benefits substantially from foreign direct investment. In the last five years, 2000—2004, foreign direct investment flows have averaged over \$700 million annually. This has been possible in large part due to the skillful economic management of the country which resulted in an impressive economic performance and even more positive economic outlook over the medium-term.

Mr. Speaker, as a result, one of the prominent international rating agencies—Standard and Poor's—upgraded this country's long-term sovereign rating in June 2004 from Triple B minus (BBB-) to Triple B plus (BBB+) continuing our investment grade status. The agency confirmed a positive medium-term outlook which we are confident would result in a further upgrade.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with international practice, this country has always had two ratings from the most respected international rating agencies. In 2002, Moody's Investor Services maintained the country's investment grade sovereign rating of Ba1. Accordingly Mr. Speaker, in keeping with our practice, the Government is inviting Moody's Investor Services to undertake a review of the country's debt rating, the consequence of which we feel confident would lead to a further upgrade in the sovereign debt rating of the country.

Mr. Speaker, these two assessments would reaffirm to the international financial community, including our major investors, that this country remains committed to sound macroeconomic management which the establishment of the Heritage and Stabilization Fund would clearly support.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is of the view that we have established the right long-term policy framework. While we intend to save our oil and gas surpluses in a manner which would benefit both current and future generations, this Government will always ensure that our expenditure remains appropriate, sustainable and prudent.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure this honourable House that within this general expenditure plan, we would continue to provide the national community with those goods and services which are required to meet the needs of all our citizens as we chart the course to achieve developed country status before the year 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**IMPORT DUTIES
(EXEMPTION OF)**

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Hon. Eric Williams): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in the name of the Minister of Trade and Industry:

Whereas it is provided by section 56(1)(a) of the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01 that the House of Representatives may from time to time by resolution provide that any class of goods specified in the resolution shall be exempt from import duties of customs if such goods are imported or entered for use by any person for any purpose specified in the resolution during any period to be fixed by the Minister in each particular case not being a period terminating later than the date prescribed in the resolution as the last day on which such exemption shall be operative, and subject to such conditions as the Minister may impose:

And whereas by Legal Notice No. 45 dated March 28, 2003, the last resolution in respect of the class of goods specified in the first column aforesaid expired on January 01, 2005:

And whereas it is expedient that the said class of goods be exempt from import duties of customs as of January 02, 2005:

Be it resolved that the House of Representatives in accordance with and subject to the provisions of section 56 of the Customs Act, exempt from import duties of customs the class of goods specified in the First Column of the Schedule hereto, being goods imported or entered for use for the respective purposes specified in the Second Column of the Schedule hereto for the period prescribed in the Third Column of the Schedule hereto but that this resolution shall cease to have effect in respect of any class of goods specified in the First Column that is manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago:

SCHEDULE

FIRST COLUMN	SECOND COLUMN	THIRD COLUMN
Class of goods	Purpose(s) for which goods are to be used	Period of exemption
Equipment, material and supplies	Imported for use in off-shore petroleum exploration and petroleum operations	From January 02 2005 to December 31 2007

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Mr. Speaker, the background to this Motion is that in presenting the 1969 Budget Speech to the House of Representatives on December 06, 1968, the then Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development noted as follows:

“There was a tapering-off in the upward trend in crude oil production in 1968. It also noted a declining trend in drilling activity which was of concern to the government since it impacted, not only on the level of employment, but also had negative implications for maintaining the level of production in the industry.”

He further noted an increase in the level of crude oil imported for refining, and industry plans to expand refining capacity to improve viability. The then government had granted permission under certain conditions to import crude oil free of customs duty.

2.00 p.m.

He noted:

“The Government’s thrust was to stimulate the search for new sources of indigenous petroleum and was directed in the main to the marine areas. Natural gas had been found on the east coast and although the limits of the find were not yet determined, the prospects for commercial quantities were good. On the north coast, the results of the seismic survey were being evaluated and the Government had already received offers from large international companies to do further exploration work on what was then deemed to be a promising area.”

There was a context to all of this. The history, then, of the measure was that prior to the commencement of oil exploration operations in the marine areas off the east coast, the then Pan American Trinidad Oil Company, which subsequently became known as the Amoco Trinidad Oil Company, and the then Dominion Oil Limited, were granted exemption from the payment of customs duties on all equipment, material and supplies brought into the areas licensed to the respective companies for the entire term of their licences, a period at that time of 45 years.

In order to regularize the situation and place all companies carrying out marine offshore exploration in a similar position, it was agreed that petroleum equipment, material and supplies, when imported for use in offshore oil explorations, should be exempt from customs duty during the exploration phase of the marine operations. The certificate of the then Minister of Petroleum and Mines provided that such equipment was not manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago.

It was therefore against a backdrop of tapering local oil production, increased importation of the commodity and the need to stimulate the search for new sources, that the Government of the day introduced this fiscal measure to regularize the granting of duty free concessions to all companies operating in the offshore environment. It should be noted also that the Government had also seen it fit to import crude oil free of customs duty to enhance the viability of the refineries. Meanwhile, further negotiations with the then Amoco Trinidad Oil Company had resulted in the grant to that company of import duty exemptions on any equipment, material and supplies which were brought into the licensed areas up to June 1980, instead of the entire period of their licence, which was a period of 45 years, as had been previously agreed.

In 1970, at the request of the companies involved in the north coast exploration operations, it was agreed that customs duty exemption on equipment, material and supplies, would be granted, not only in respect of those items to be used in exploration operations, but also in respect of those items used in offshore petroleum production operations, and that the period of exemption should be extended to December 31, 1999. It was also considered that the word "petroleum" which qualified "equipment, material and supplies" in the original resolution of March 13, 1970, was too restrictive, as such items as helicopters, which were used in exploration and production operations but could not strictly be described as petroleum equipment, would also be eligible for exemption from customs duty. Therefore, it would be necessary to amend the resolution by the deletion of the word "petroleum" appearing before the words "equipment, material and supplies" in column one of the Appendix to the said resolution.

It was also at that time agreed that in order to provide for the deletion of the word "petroleum" before the description of the classes of goods to be exempted from customs duty, for the inclusion of petroleum production operations in the column of the resolution which describes the purposes for which the goods would be entered or imported for use, and for the extension of the period of exemption, a resolution should be presented to the House of Representatives amending the resolution passed on March 13, 1970 and published as Government Notice, No. 47 of that year.

Cabinet approved the policy which the then Minister of Petroleum and Mines proposed to adopt in exercising his discretion under the terms of the above-mentioned resolution, in, first of all, not granting exemption in respect of food and drink, cooking equipment, television sets, radios, wearing apparel, personal items and the like, except where those items are necessarily required in field operation,

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for example, safety hats and boots, special work clothing and special types of radios, and so on. Secondly, in granting import duty concessions, not only in respect of equipment, and so on, for use in licensed areas, which would be marine areas solely, but in respect of equipment and materials essential to offshore exploration and production operations, even when such equipment must necessarily be used on land in connection with the offshore operations; and thirdly, not granting any exemptions in respect of goods available from production here in Trinidad and Tobago.

The House of Representatives extended the resolution in the year 2000 and again in the year 2003. The latter extension was for the period January 01, 2003 to January 01, 2005, and confined the grant of licences to bona fide exploration and production licencees and production-sharing contractors certified by the now Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. What is the role of the agencies involved, in particular the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the customs department—indeed, the Comptroller of Customs and Excise? With the passage of this measure, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the Comptroller of Customs and “Exercise” have critical roles to play in its administration. This role involves, first of all, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries’ assessment of applications for duty free licences from operators working in the offshore operations environment and communicating the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries’ decision to either recommend or refuse the grant of the requested licence to the Minister of Trade and Industry. This decision is made on the basis of knowledge of the operators’ offshore development projects, which would have been first time approved by the technical division within the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

Secondly, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries’ duty is to have a review of the duty free entry forms, which are purchase orders, a customs form C84, and other invoices and such, and certifying that the goods to be entered, which are equipment, material, and so on, are directly, necessarily and exclusively required for use in the specific offshore operations and that the operator is actively engaged under a Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries approved project.

In this regard, the licensee or the production-sharing contractor must supply the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries with a full description of the goods being imported before the anticipated date of arrival of the said goods. Thirdly, the Comptroller of Customs and “Exercise”, must certify that in his opinion—

Mr. Ramsaran: Customs and Excise.

Hon. E. Williams: “Excise”, I beg your pardon. A Freudian slip. This is a good example of cooperation across the floor.

The Comptroller of Customs and Excise must certify that in his opinion the said goods or reasonable substitutes thereof, are not available from local manufacturers. In fulfilling these roles, various departments serve to provide the needed checks and balances, without which the system could be open to abuse.

So then, what are the general benefits of this measure in a qualitative sense? It should be noted that the costs associated with oil exploration and production operations in the offshore environment are almost always higher when compared to similar land-based ventures. This measure then, has served to reduce costs associated with offshore exploration and production activity and has acted as an incentive to increase the attractiveness of Trinidad and Tobago as a destination for foreign direct investment. The national community could stand assured that since 1969 when the measure was introduced, exploration activity has increased in the marine environment, and when taken in tandem with other fiscal packages, we have witnessed increases in the reserves of both oil and natural gas.

This measure, among others, has resulted in the identification of incremental reserves, of approximately 20 trillion cubic feet of natural gas since 1991, the earliest year for which reliable figures are available. In the case of oil resources, the incremental reserve discovered post-implementation of this offshore duty free concession, between 1971 and 2004, amounted to 1,451,000,000 barrels or 1.45 billion barrels of oil.

In conclusion, we need to reiterate that this measure has aided in the development of the country’s energy sector and, of course, our nation. Careful observation will show that we now stand at a point in our development where the outlook, indeed, appears bright. Oil production is poised to increase; natural gas production is on the rise and prospects for downstream activity could not be better. Furthermore, as was noted in the 1969 Budget Speech, the country is still dependent on the income which accrues from the energy sector to sustain our standard of living. The energy sector is also central to our thrust to achieve developed nation status by or before the year 2020. Indeed, our challenge is to convert the revenues which are going to be derived from the energy sector, to leverage growth in the non-energy sectors of our economy.

In an effort to maintain the momentum gained in the energy sector and provide an environment of predictable cost, I have no hesitation in supporting this

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Motion before this honourable House to allow for the continuation of exemptions of import duties of customs to industry and to the offshore petroleum exploration operations sector under the provisions of section 56 of the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01, for a period of three years.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Member for Port of Spain South as he gave us the background to this Motion before us this afternoon. But I am a bit concerned. So many years—1970 to today—duty free concessions have been given to the multinational corporations, and when you look at the taxation system in this country and what has been taking place with the tax free holidays, I wonder from time to time, what does Trinidad and Tobago benefit from these tax holidays. I was listening eagerly to hear if anything was done to look at the classes of goods imported and how the whole question of Caricom would come into play. Because when you look at the resolution, it talks about goods manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago, but if you look at Chap. 78:01, the laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago pertaining to the Customs and Excise, you would see that with the coming of Caricom, goods of Caricom origin are supposed to be treated as goods manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago, and nothing was said about this in moving the Motion. Would goods manufactured in the Caricom also be exempt as goods manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago?

I want the Minister to look at that carefully and amend his resolution. It is important since this Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago are expecting so many things to happen with the coming of the FTAA and the strengthening of the CSME and, indeed, all the trade blocs in the Caribbean. When we pass legislation in this Parliament at this time, we are supposed to think exclusively. At lunchtime I was speaking to a pilot from BWIA and I understand that the hon. Prime Minister will be importing his jet very, very soon. He has seen himself as the “father” of Caricom and he would be flying from island to island supervising his charges, like the “Godfather” of the Caricom. With this in mind, I ask the hon. Member for Port of Spain South to think carefully about Caricom because, indeed, if the Prime Minister has his way, Caricom would be under his purview. That is the first point I want to make.

Again, the Minister talked about tax exemption, and so on. Although I questioned the tax breaks for the multinational corporations, I believe that the multinational corporations will now come on par with other workers in Trinidad and Tobago, to be treated equally, and they should be taxed according to the law. But, again, this Government is about tax holidays, and they would continue with their tax holidays. As I said in the beginning, I have a problem with that.

Having said that, we have been reading about tax breaks and the maxi-taxi drivers in this country have been asking for tax breaks to ply their trade in Trinidad and Tobago. I ask the Minister: What is the cost of these tax breaks? How much money is not collected because of these exemptions? Because when we exempt these goods, according to section 56(1), it would mean that goods to the value of billions of dollars would be brought into this country and would not be taxable. That means that we are foregoing taxes. I want the Minister to tell this Parliament what is the sum of the moneys collected over the last two years. How many billions of dollars are not collected? Why come back to Parliament to ask us to continue encouraging people to come in this country to invest?

I believe that here we are on a 2020 vision course, or collision—I call it a collision because when I see what is happening with 2020 on the ground and with the head of the Government, the Prime Minister's head, it makes me wonder what we are doing. We are still giving the multinational corporations billions of dollars tax free, but yet in our own country our people have to clamour; they have to protest. Just outside, we have a protest going on, about houses, water and roads, yet we give away billions of dollars to multinational corporations.

How do Trinidadians and Tobagonians benefit from these tax breaks? My colleague would tell you there is a minimal number of people employed in these industries. I have been stationed in a couple of these places and I know about the tax free breaks to all these multinational corporations and others who would come to Trinidad and Tobago to do what they have to do. And when I look at this Order before me, I cannot help but wonder what has changed. Change is constant. But has the Government really looked at this? Could it tell this Parliament what is the amount of money? That is my big question.

We have to look at Trinidadians and Tobagonians. I did not copy the revenue the Member talked about because he was reading so fast, but I know it is billions of dollars in revenue coming into this country. Are the Trinidadians and Tobagonians benefiting from this? I ask that question with all sincerity, because when we look at the areas from which these people would get all these tax breaks,

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and so on; you look at the people who live around Point Fortin; you look at people in La Brea; Mayaro, unemployment in these areas is about the highest in Trinidad and Tobago. This begs my question. [*Interruption*] I know that; I did some investigation. That is why the Mayaro Council has been established. It was done by this government.

Poverty and unemployment in these areas are among the highest in Trinidad and Tobago, yet the multinational corporations are given all the encouragement and all the incentives. I, for one, have a problem with that. The Member for Point Fortin had to resign his job recently because of conflict against multinational corporations who, again, today, are being given billions of dollars. But what do we get? The Minister had to resign because he wanted to ensure that certain things were done.

We have deaths in this country; we have the whole question of a minimum wage in the Point Fortin area, and what are we hearing? Now that the Member for Point Fortin has been fired from his job, everything has gone silent on the other side and nothing is happening. Yet we come here today to talk about giving more exemptions. If you read the list of exemptions for these multinational corporations, it is very exhaustive. I would not want to read clause by clause or word for word, but what I want, generally, is to ask this Government to let us consider sharing the wealth across Trinidad and Tobago.

The time has come when we must not look at the offshore sector and onshore sector as two different paradigms, but, indeed, to see how we could get the offshore sector to influence the development of this country in a more meaningful way. When we look at the wealth of the people who work in Trinidad and Tobago—I am not saying they do not deserve their wealth—it is at the expense of the Trinidadians and Tobagoanians. I believe as the Government of the day and as a people, we should see more activity in that area. I would like to see the media investigate this whole question of the multinational corporations. Now they are spreading into other fields. They are coming into our country to work, through the Ministry of Health. I understand the Minister of Agriculture is bringing people from elsewhere to work in Trinidad and Tobago. What about the people here?

The whole question of this inflated employment rate has me confused, because we have the Government talking about 7 per cent unemployment and yet when we go around the country we see so many unemployed people asking for jobs. Maybe they are asking in the wrong places. People are frustrated in this country. Where do they look for work? If you go to the URP, you are turned away.

What do we have? We have no Caroni (1975) Limited. So the whole question of multinationals coming into our country and reaping the benefits, I would like to see some negotiations taking place where we talk to these people and let them understand what is happening.

In Customs and Excise we have this anomaly of these goods coming in. I raise this question seriously again. When these goods come into this country, they are imported for two years as per order, and after that period they could be sold, transferred or re-exported. I know that goods come in today and for some reason they are shipped to Venezuela or another oil-producing country, and this is against the law and against what is being passed here this afternoon. There are no controls for these multinational corporations. It is as if the Customs and Excise and the Government of the day are afraid to deal with these multinational corporations. Goods come in and goods go out as they see fit.

As a matter of fact, sometimes the goods would come straight to the rigs offshore, which, of course, are within the territorial waters of Trinidad and Tobago. But there are no controls and the revenue, again, runs into billions of dollars. These goods come into this country and before the specified time for the goods to be used, they are re-exported. I know. We see the paper work. But that is all you see, the paper work. We know that when goods are temporarily imported in the country, duties are prorated and if goods stay one quarter, and so on, the duties are charged according to the period of time the goods spend in the country. I know there are no controls of the actual goods that were brought in this country and used here.

When we talk about 2020 vision, Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island state surrounded, of course, by water, with very open shorelines. I heard the question this week—as a matter of fact it was yesterday on Station 102—I hope I got the station correctly—when I heard somebody screaming that, “Yes, bring in the guns in Trinidad and Tobago; let the guns flow into Trinidad and Tobago; let the arms and ammunitions flow in Trinidad and Tobago and kill black people”. They used another word but I do not want to be so brash here this evening. But, “Kill one another because the Government of the day is allowing guns to flow into this country”. Therein lies one of the dangers of duty free concessions, because when duty free concessions are allowed, it means, by and large, unless certain information is coming forward, that goods would come in without examination. They would come into the country—[*Interruption*] That is the folly of this Government. The Member is asking if duty free goods are to be examined. For your information, every piece of goods imported in this country, whether duty

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free or not, is subject to being examined. Again, we have the people on that side who do not want to understand the laws of the country. They break it with impunity.

The Member for Port of Spain South talked about “exercise”—customs and “exercise”, twice, and he said it was a Freudian slip. This shows the disregard of the Government of this country. Let me put it on record—and the Member would learn and find out—every piece of equipment and goods that are brought into this country are subject to customs examination, whether duty free or not. Again, the folly of the Member for Arouca South; you have to examine duty free goods. This is what I am talking about. All right, let me agree with the Member for Arouca South—

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: You said that. You said duty free goods are not examined. That is what you said.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, so goods are not examined and brought into this country. That is how the arms and ammunitions are coming into this country, because people would abuse that privilege. The evidence is there. Forget the ol’ talk from the Member for Arouca South or any Member. The evidence is there. Guns are in the country. Almost everybody could have a gun.

We talk about the laws of this country and 2020 vision, and the Prime Minister spoke about changing the name of the stabilization—heritage fund—yet, I was looking at television this week and if the volume was not on I would have thought this was not Trinidad and Tobago. There were bodies lying all over the place, as if Trinidad and Tobago has gone mad. Maybe the whole question of the Customs and Excise, the whole protective services, need to be looked at. When the UNC was in office we had radar systems being employed to have people under surveillance. This has stopped. We have equipment worth \$61 million from Israel. What are these pieces of equipment used for, if not to protect the shoreline of Trinidad and Tobago?

So when we hear 2020 vision, maybe the Government has really fooled itself by its own propaganda by saying that crime is in control. They would believe their own propaganda, but the people outside there are hurting. The Member for Port of Spain South read through this and gave the impression that this is a simple piece of legislation. It is definitely not a simple piece of legislation. I want to see stricter control being placed to deal with goods imported into Trinidad and Tobago. Cranes, and so on, are not examined. At some time something must be done to make these people—I am not being careless to say that the multinational

corporations would bring arms and ammunition into the country, but in this world we have the terrorists using various means. They would use normal, legal transactions to do their dirty work, so we have to be careful.

We have to make raids sometimes, as my colleague, Mr. Ganga Singh, last week spoke about the whole question of the intelligence services in this country. I believe the time has come when we could pool all these resources together and have an intelligence unit to deal with these problems and to, maybe, have sporadic raids in some of these multinational corporations, because it might just be the captain of the ship; it might be a member of a crew; it might be somebody who, because of his low pay and the need for more money, would be encouraging the illicit trade. This is something we have to be careful of. That is why the Customs Act is packed with laws for the crews of vessels to be under stringent security so that they would not abuse their power and office.

How can this be done when it is a known fact that the customs is now operating with less than 50 per cent of its work force? We have the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Public Service Commission Annual Report and we see officers acting in higher positions. Again, when I talk about what is taking place in the customs, the Prime Minister would always ask me about race, but for the last three years, Comptrollers of Customs were appointed on seniority, but my understanding is that the next Comptroller according to seniority, would not be one of their favourite sons and they have now asked the Public Service Commission to advertise the position of Comptroller. So they would use a legal means to get the Comptroller that they want in office. I hope that the people in Customs and Excise would now follow the lead of other public servants in the country and get the services of Anand Ramlogan and others, to deal with that.

Again, it shows the discrimination. When we destroy the psyche of the customs, we are going to have problems. The Government is in office for three years and 200 or so guards and officers are short, and nothing is happening, yet they are bringing back some people who have retired after age 60, to do the work. I do not understand it. We have so many young, bright public servants who would want to go into customs, but they hire people who have retired. The funny thing is, I have been told—I am not aware of who the 12 persons are—that they were the laziest of the 12 people who worked in the customs over time, but they have friends in the right places so they are being brought back because of their political affiliation. This is the problem we have.

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Another question I want to ask the Minister—maybe the Prime Minister would answer this—when *The Cat* was brought into the country—

Mr. Ramnath: The what?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: *The Cat*, or whatever you want to call it. This is the vessel that operates between Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Ramnath: Okay. You mean the boat.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Yes.

Mr. Ramnath: I got worried, man. [*Laughter*]

Mr. M. Ramsaran: When a vessel is brought into Trinidad and Tobago, it must be duty paid. It is not duty free. Even if it is duty free, it must be approved by the Cabinet of the day. My understanding is that *The Cat* came into the country and started to work between Trinidad and Tobago without proper clearance. As far as I am concerned, it is an illegal operation of an uncustomed boat operating between Trinidad and Tobago. If you check Chap. 89:04 you would see the duties of a boat. A boat attracts very high rates of duty.

This shows that the Government is now breaking the law and I want somebody to investigate for me how this could happen. If any other person would import a vessel into Trinidad and Tobago without proper registration and have this vessel operating, it could be forfeited and the person charged three times the value of the vessel. Yet we have the Government, with the Prime Minister and his 2020 vision, importing a vessel into Trinidad and Tobago, and not having it properly entered. And the Minister used that term this evening. I wonder if he understood the meaning of the word “entered”. When you say something is properly entered, it means when goods come into this country, all the necessary documents are passed and processed and the goods are allowed by the customs for use in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what “entered” means.

Let me repeat for the Minister of Trade and Industry. Investigate how *The Cat* came into this country and how unlawful it was to have this boat operating between Trinidad and Tobago—all done for political expediency. The THA election was in the air, so you break the law. “Nobody could do me anything”—the big, bad wolf.

There is another question I want to ask and this is more for safeguarding the revenue. As I mentioned, billions of dollars would come in over these two years. I would like the Minister to look at section 37 of the Customs Act. In this section it

talks about goods re-exported and the control of duty free goods and how they must be kept in consignment, and the procedures that they use to have these goods cleared. I would ask that even the multinational corporations operate within section 37, because we cannot allow one person to operate that way and another person operate another way. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West would tell you that when customs officers supervise his private warehouse, they are very strict. Yet with the multinational corporations, billions of dollars—sometimes the figures cannot fit in the total line, but they have no controls.

We talk about neo-colonialism; about being enslaved in the past; we talk about colonials, but here we are, our own Government since 1962, yet we have this sort of—the multinationals can do no wrong but we in Trinidad and Tobago can do all wrong and we have to treat each other with a big stick. I want the big stick to be shared equally.

Mr. Ramnath: “Fellas” outside have a big stick waiting for Rowley, you know.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: The period of exemption, according to the Minister himself, was supposed to end with the last one, January 02, 2005. From January 02, 2005 to March 04, 2005, what has happened between this period? Have goods been imported into this country? Because if you read carefully what the Member said:

“Whereas it is expedient that the said class of goods be exempt from import duties of customs as of January 02, 2005.”

January 02 to March 05, what has happened to these goods? Did the multinational corporations stop importing goods? Were they waiting on the Government to pass this Order, so they told their vessels to hold strain, wait out in the Gulf or the Atlantic Ocean because Parliament has to approve this Motion? What has happened in the meantime? How were these goods imported?

I want to tell you how they were imported: business as usual. Do you know why? Nobody dare touch the multinational corporations. I want to put another wager, with the permission of the Speaker—you could get up and ask for the wager—I dare say in the Parliament that it was business as usual. Goods came in and were used in some kind of crazy way. But I want you to tell how. What happened between January 02 and today? Because when this is passed today and the proper procedures are done; it is signed by the President, it might be another week or so. The Member for Port of Spain South allowed the Member for Diego Martin Central to set him up and he read this Motion and supported it. I thought he was introducing it, but he was proud to support it. I do not know who started it, but he supported it.

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This is what I call government by “vaps”, slipshod, just hoping that you do something and it falls in the right place. But when you are dealing with the revenue of a country—and in this case, billions of dollars of revenue—it must be handled in a more efficient manner. I remember—looking at section 37 with the prohibition of goods and so on—in the early days of customs, an officer made a mistake by importing saccharin—now I think they have removed that restriction—and that officer had to resign, because he allowed a few packets of saccharin—some soft drink industry at that time attempted to make Diet Solo. That person was forced to resign. But listen to what we have today. The Member for Port of Spain South and the Government of the day would allow billions of dollars to come into this country without supervision and it is business as usual. As the Member for Chaguanas I represent a constituency that depended on the sugar industry. We did not know too much about the whole industrial area, and we see this happening in the rest of the country and the little livelihood that we had in our area has been taken from us, yet we allow the multinational corporations to get away with murder.

Let us give the Customs and Excise, the coast guard, and so on, the authority, the manpower and equipment to really man the coastlines of Trinidad and Tobago. Because whenever I hear somebody being shot—and I heard a member of the media talking about people being allowed, and big shots importing the guns and giving them to the poor people to do what they have to do—I believe that we are living—well, we are already experiencing it—on a keg of gun powder, a keg as large as Trinidad and Tobago, because anybody at any time could walk into this country with any amount of ammunition.

Let us face it, the coast guard in this country cannot overrun a good fishing boat, much less the powerboats that we see at the powerboats races. We cannot out-sprint these boats, yet we talk about developed country status. We have to equip the preventive officers, the people who are supposed to deal with the coastlines of this country—and that is only one small spot. You talk about 2020 vision. I am still waiting to hear somebody get up and say 95 per cent of the coastline in Tobago is unprotected, and there are good ports where small boats could enter and do whatever they have to do at any time, sometimes even in the day. What is being done? Nothing, but talk.

I am one of the persons who consider themselves very unhappy with the way this Government is running the affairs of this country. I was not at all surprised to read in today’s *Guardian* the Member for Fyzabad bringing 18 Government Ministers to book, to question about their performance, because we are not seeing

it; we are not feeling it. Do a survey now in Trinidad and Tobago—and not a bogus survey that was done recently—and ask people what is happening in this country. It is the wild west. I went to a doctor on Monday and he said: “Boss, leave or not to leave?” I could not answer. He said he was not feeling safe, and that was some hours before Dr. Rahaman was kidnapped, in the West. I want to tell you that what I am saying here is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I spoke with this doctor from San Fernando—I would not call his name—and he asked me the question. But how could I answer? I am still a Member of Parliament. But then I am sure he would have heard the news tonight and say, “Well, Manohar did not say this, but, boy, I have to leave”.

This is happening. What will happen to this country if all our professionals leave Trinidad and Tobago? Do we ever think about that for a moment? It will happen, you know, because if they are not being the targets of illegal guns, arms and ammunition, they are the targets of kidnappings, of crime. How could a person who could afford to do better, stay in this country? Look at the calibre of people who are being targeted.

I want to warn Ministers opposite. I know sometimes they wear their balisier ties and feel very protected. I want to tell you—and my colleague, Nizam Baksh and I were discussing this on Wednesday—that people do not know you in the country. It is only the Prime Minister who is on television, so they know the Prime Minister. Whether he is asleep or awake, he is on television. The rest of you are not known, and you could be the next person to be kidnapped. When last did you see a television programme featuring the Member for Tunapuna, to let the country know who he is, or the Member for Arima—a hardworking Minister—or the Member for Tobago East? People do not know you. Thank God, because of the little affair in Tobago recently they know Keith Rowley, but other than that, we do not know people.

Dr. Rowley: What you calling my name for?

Mr. Ramnath: They are demonstrating against you outside.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: So we have to be careful. And I am not putting “goat mouth” on anybody, but we all have to be careful, because recently there was this lull, this feeling of being safe. The Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago felt safe and that was justified when Abu Bakr and his boys pleaded that they were the ones kidnapping. They felt safe for a moment. But two out of the last three kidnappings have been people of the Muslim faith; and an Imam, a devout Muslim from the West who I happen to know. His wife was working at the Treasury.

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So nobody is safe. That is the point I am making. When you come here in Parliament and talk about this Motion allowing—it did not say so—multinational corporations to walk through the ports of Trinidad and Tobago and to bring their goods to this country, I am asking this Government in the year 2005, let us re-examine this. The Member tried to read some exemptions of what are not allowed. That is common sense. He talked about some clothes, and what have you, coming into the country. But we have got to be serious.

Do you know what I understand? These multinational corporations take us for granted. Whether we like it or not, they take us for granted. To show you how these people operate—and if you go to the Second Schedule where Customs and Excise allows people to bring in personal and household effects, the declaration is quite clear; it is not for resale or exchange. Yet every day, if you work in the offices at Galeota, you would see signs all over: “Mr. So and So, having completed his stint in Trinidad and Tobago, is having a garage sale”, and he would sell all his imported foreign goods that he signed a declaration on. The fine is a huge one, treble the value of the goods, and nobody does anything. It is as if the multinational corporations have all the say in the world. If a Trinidadian tried to do that—we are travelling officers—it is the same exemption. For two years you cannot dispose of your motorcar. If one of us—36 Members here—attempts to do that, he would be dragged before the courts of Trinidad and Tobago. Yet, on the other hand, we have people coming into this country and treating us as if we need their services. Yes, we need their services, but the time has come in—

Mr. Bereaux: If the hon. Member would give way. Hon. Member, I really do not like to interrupt you, but, in fact, the goods of which they speak are not the personal goods of those persons working in the industry, but rather the material and supplies utilized in the offshore operation. So maybe if you do not know—although I know you were a customs officer before, but I worked in the industry and I know that is not what this means.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, apparently the Member was not listening to me. What I said was, under the Second Schedule. We are debating the Third Schedule. So I moved to the Second Schedule. Let me read it for you. Apparently you never did this. All the Ministers on that side know is to walk through the customs. Page 318 of the Act at section 3(a) it states:

“Baggage and household effects:

The accompanied baggage of a passenger being wearing apparel, articles of personal adornment...

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- (1) wine...
- (2) tobacco...
- (3) cigars,...
- (4) cigarettes,...

Exemptions under this item shall not apply to arms and ammunition, except service weapons...

- (b) Household effects, admitted as such by the Comptroller, which accompany a passenger and are for his personal use and not for sale or exchange and have declared to have been in the use and possession of the passenger for at least one year.
- (c) Baggage and household effects, imported within two months before or after the arrival of a passenger, or within such further period as the Comptroller shall in the circumstances deem reasonable, provided that the articles would have been exempted from import duty had they been imported under subparagraph (a) and (b) hereof."

Of course, it goes on to say: "shall not be for sale or exchange".

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Member would be kind enough to give us some examples of the items referred to under that schedule.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: The examples are there: stoves, refrigerators, television sets, washing machines, dryers, carpets—household effects. Maybe he does not understand the word, "effects". But it is everything used in a household. These are indeed high duty items. I do not want to belabour the point but what I am saying is that the people who come to work in the country for six months or a year, break the Customs and Excise laws as if it is nobody's business. That is the fact.

Mr. Ramnath: They exercise the laws.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: They exercise the excise laws. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, can I go back and start my contribution all over?

Mr. Ramnath: No—

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, the controls are not there. As I said before, when the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and Development in 1970 read into law this whole question of encouraging foreign input into our petroleum industry, maybe at that time it was necessary, but we are here now 35 years later and we have now seen that maybe the decision he made then, whether it was right

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or wrong, we would have seen that by now. What are the effects of these multinational corporations operating in Trinidad and Tobago? Did it result, in these areas where we have these industries, in an improved quality of life, improved employment for our locals?

This did not happen. It was only recently the people from the Mayaro and Point Fortin districts decided to take things into their hands and they agitated and are now receiving some more employment and some sort of satisfaction. But the fact is, we allow these people to write off billions of dollars over time. I would like to ask the Minister to give me the sums foregone over the last two years.

We have Cricket, 2007, and I would crave your indulgence because it has to do with revenue foregone and where our money should be spent. We sit here in this country not aware of what is taking place. Of course, we got a brown paper package. Maybe we deserved that. We did not bid for anything better, but I understand that Trinidad and Tobago is now the weak link. Imagine that! Trinidad and Tobago that could afford to write off billions of dollars to the multinational corporations cannot see it fit to spend some money to hire a Chief Executive Officer to deal with the whole question of the World Cup of 2007.

As a person who played—cricket against all the foreign multinationals in those days, Brighton, and so on, we know that they had quality grounds. The Member for La Brea could tell you that; the Member for Tunapuna could tell you that. But now they neglect to maintain their grounds. Mayaro's grounds are no good; Brighton gone through. They have even lost interest in the cricket. But I have not lost interest. I want to get from this Government, where are we going with World Cup, 2007? Who would be the CEO?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, that may be the subject of a different question. The question before us deals with something else.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, maybe I have failed, but what I was trying to do was to link the fact that we in Trinidad and Tobago could allow the multinationals to get away with billions of dollars but at the same time the moneys that we could have saved had we charged those people duty, could have been used to uplift our country, maybe in sport, maybe in football, wherever. But what do we have today? It is as if the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs is a beggar in his own Cabinet.

I want to say seriously, with your leave, let the country breathe. Tonight we are hearing rumours that Brian Lara would be fired as the West Indies Captain—

Mr. Speaker: I am telling you that is the subject matter of a different question. I know you are passionate about it, but leave it for the time being.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I know it is a very important issue. It is in my heart and I wanted to say it. So I would like to hear an exclusive statement from the Prime Minister about World Cup Cricket, 2007. I end my plea there.

The whole question of customs exemptions, I would like to put it in its context that we have to be very careful of what is taking place in this country when we look at the importation of arms, ammunition; when you look at the availability of the wrong equipment. Maybe if I went there and said import bats instead of guns, they might have allowed me, but the fact is we are not importing bats and footballs; we are importing guns and ammunition.

I believe it is time to stop and look at the whole question of covering the loopholes; protecting our coast guard. When we were in government, the Prime Minister of the day ensured that we put certain regulations in place; we had certain equipment in place to deal with protecting our coastline. Today, these have gone. Where? I do not know. Maybe the multinational corporations said to move it out of the way. I do not know.

So I end my contribution by asking the Government to please tell us the sum of money that has been forgone over the last two years; tell me what goods came into this country over the last two months and how they were accounted. When you come to this Parliament with legislation, I would like to see that you come with this type of explanation so we on this side would not have a problem in supporting it. Again, let us look at this very carefully and I think it is time to tell our multinational corporations, let us build Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (Couva South): Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate my honourable friend for Chaguanas for such an incisive contribution; a gentlemen who has had the distinction of serving in the customs of Trinidad and Tobago and was described as one of the best Sports Ministers this country has ever had. [*Desk thumping*]

Prof. Ken Julien, speaking at the energy conference in Trinidad, asked the question: What will happen to Trinidad and Tobago when gas runs out?

Mr. Manning: He said, “what if”. Do not try that.

Mr. Ramnath: If Vijay Naraynsingh were not freed, you would have been happy. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Do not interfere with me. If and when gas runs out is one of the most important statements for us to ponder on at this time. We are dealing with an oil price of \$52 a barrel, West Texas intermediate crude at this time, and the market forecast that oil can be fetching in the very near future is US \$60 a barrel.

3.00 p.m.

The more oil and gas we produce, is the greater the disparity between those who benefit directly from such operations and those who are demonstrating outside the Parliament against the Member for Diego Martin West. I do not know if that demonstration was set up by those who want to see him arrested and charged, but demonstrations indicate that there is disaffection and dissatisfaction with the quality of life being experienced by the poor in the country.

The legacy of the PNM, Mr. Speaker, has been Laventille, where the highest number of murders per capita exists. After 30 years of executive rule—I know many of my friends across the Chamber like to disassociate themselves from the rule of Williams and Chambers, but they have to recognize that the poverty and the lack of upward social mobility of the people in many areas of the East-West Corridor, is as a direct result of the political abuse of those people. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, they have been in Government and they have presided over the oil and gas industry. They used those people to gather votes, introducing all kinds of variables into the elections equation and yet they remain the poorest sectors of the population with oil price, once again, at its highest. [*Interruption*] I am not going to talk about what part of the national patrimony gets into people's land development and so on. I am not going to discuss that. It might very well turn out that having regard to the climate that exists within the PNM today that the investigators might be directed to prosecute. So be quiet and listen to what I have to say.

I am simply learning from the recent statements emanating from the Presiding Officers Conference and their desire to have better behaviour in the nation's Parliament. So if you are quiet and listen to me, you will understand how, together, we can help the people of La Horquetta, Maloney, Bon Air, Laventille

and the people in the hills, who are now coming down to protest that they do not have water, jobs, electricity and roads, when oil prices are at the highest in the history of the world.

The point made by the Member for Chaguanas had to do with the disparity in incomes. Up to today, Mr. Speaker, Mayaro—in spite of all the publicity used during the campaigns of recent elections, supported by certain multinational corporations and those who are now leading this campaign of principles of fairness, setting up all kinds of gimmickry—is still considered as the backwater of Trinidad and Tobago. Billions of barrels of oil have been extracted offshore Mayaro and Manzanilla. Trillions of cubic feet of gas have been extracted offshore Mayaro. Dilapidated roads still exist, poverty exists, unemployment is growing, and were it not for a visionary UNC government they would not have even had water. I want to congratulate my friend from Caroni East. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, when they come to Parliament to ask for exemptions, they simply cannot get up here and say that these exemptions have resulted in the trillions of cubic feet of gas that have been found in the East Coast, which is now between 18.8 trillion and 20 trillion—to quote my hon. line Minister, the Member for Port of Spain South.

The entire taxation system that governs the oil and gas industry has to be overhauled. We have been hearing for a long time that we are going to look at taxation on natural gas. I am awaiting the opportunity to appear before such a committee, because at this time while we are exporting trillions of cubic feet of natural gas, royalty is almost non-existent. We are talking about one and a half cent per thousand cubic feet. When we look at net back from LNG exports and we take into consideration shipping and handling; the actual liquefaction process; the transportation to the East Coast, the net back price of the well head is very low.

What we need to do with the multinational corporations, which we have no problem with, is to make sure we get a fair share and they get a fair share.

Mr. Valley: Tell that to your colleague, the Member for Chaguanas.

Mr. K. Ramnath: My colleague from Chaguanas knows that very well. [*Crosstalk*] But when there is this huge disparity in income and people cannot get water to drink and they cannot get sustainable employment, then you must ask yourselves whether you must not seriously consider what Prof. Julien said.

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He is not my best example but when he makes a good point we must listen to him. He is probably getting frustrated with the present PNM Government. He outlined an approach for development. After the boom in the '80s this country took a nosedive. After experiencing US \$40-a-barrel oil in the '70s and early '80s, we went into a tailspin, so much so, we had to go to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). When we went to the IMF, some of them on that side—I think there was just about one of them in the Opposition at that time—criticized us for going to the IMF, when they were responsible for the criminal profligacy which took place in the country. [*Desk thumping*] They are the ones who wasted the national patrimony! They are the ones who spent money as if it were going out of style! I just want to remind my hon. friends that in spite of their efforts to destabilize the Judiciary, there are still wise people sitting on the Bench in the country.

Dr. Rowley: We hope so.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I hope so, because you are next! [*Laughter*] When the Attorney General and the Prime Minister are finished with you; you will be before the courts before anybody on this side. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: But you are before the courts already.

Mr. Speaker: Member, let us leave matters that may or may not go before the courts outside of the debate. I know that you have much to say on what is before us and I am willing to hear you.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, you know in the cut and thrust of debate, when you get these things hurled at you; you have to respond. They wish that they could control the Judiciary. Let the process take place; what are you worried about? Nobody on this side is afraid of the courts in Trinidad and Tobago! Perhaps the Member for Diego Martin West is!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You are before the courts already.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Those who have gone before the courts will allow justice to prevail—whatever is left of it—and then finally we would go to the Privy Council where “God Save The Queen”. [*Laughter*] If we have to leave our future in the hands of these neocolonialists, we would be dead! I rest my case, Mr. Speaker. Just tell them do not provoke me, please.

Mr. Speaker, you understand that there is widespread poverty in this land in spite of all the efforts to re-colonize their supporters by giving them \$8 an hour to engage in certain cleanup process; the recipients know very well that there are ordinary homes in the western peninsula which are fetching a minimum of \$4

million, and that is small. They know that they cannot buy a house in any decent development in the country for less than \$1 million. They know that in spite of all the boasts about Government housing that they are not going to be the beneficiaries because that is for friends in the ruling elite in the PNM. *[Interruption]* You see how they get worked up?

They have impoverished their own supporters! They have impoverished the people who believe in them! That is why they will turn against you when the next election comes! Mark my words; no matter how much gerrymandering is done.

This Motion is really about providing continuous support for offshore explorations and petroleum operations. I am asking the question: Have not these industries matured enough in the last 35 years, since 1970—Pan American discovered oil and gas in the East Coast—to allow them to be self-sustaining? Why must we continue to provide support for a mature petroleum industry? I am not saying that we do not. I am asking the Minister to say what percentage of the cost of exploration and production these exemptions will constitute. There are many people in Trinidad and Tobago who are involved in the oil industry, who are not receiving any support from the Government. These are the small oil producers known as lease operators.

I am surprised that the Member for San Fernando West and Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry—I should not really encourage her to speak—has not continued her campaign that she had when she was the head of the South Chamber of Commerce and articulated the concerns of a number—*[Interruption]* I do not read what losers write. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mr. K. Ramnath: The problem with that “fella” is that he is suffering from severe “tabanca” of all types. *[Interruption]* Do you understand the difficulty I have, Mr. Speaker? I think I will just talk to you?

Mr. Speaker: Just talk to me. *[Laughter]*

Mr. K. Ramnath: The Member for San Fernando West is on record as articulating the concern of the small oil and gas producers in the country. They call them lease operators. These are people who are producing five and ten barrels of oil per day. These are people who need assistance in the form of exemptions; in the form of an amended taxation system that will not impose the onerous taxes on them, having regard to the extent of the operations. Mr. Speaker, up to today, the Government in spite of pleadings from all quarters, has failed and refused to

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amend the taxation system so that it would encourage more and more locals to become involved in the industry. Prof. Julien said that in his address.

He also said that people should become more and more involved in external financial activities so that we could bridge the gap in the event that oil and gas were to run out. You would have thought they would have listened to him, but people are beginning to understand that there is no direction, and there is no vision coming from the leadership of the ruling regime.

I am asking again today, why is it that we could not have legislation in this Parliament which would assist the small producers? There is a tremendous amount of potential to work over old wells and drill new shallow wells, and increase the economic activity among local entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, you would have thought that was a thrust which the Government would pursue. Instead, we are renewing this provision without assuring the Parliament that something will be done. These are the people who create employment. When you are doing an exploration exercise, like the ones we are doing on the East Coast, you are talking about very small numbers of persons, if any, employed in such operations. We are dealing with highly technological operations; we are dealing with computerized rigs; we are dealing with studies which have been done in Huston and elsewhere—very little local input. Nothing is being said about those people who create employment in Trinidad and Tobago.

You will recall the issue of Exxon Mobil and their failure to meet the financial obligations or work obligations, with respect to their lease offshore. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars which were not spent. Then we were told that arrangements had been reached with Exxon Mobil to get involve in Petrotrin for 3-D seismic, directional drilling, and for major exploration activity. Up to today the Minister has not made a public statement to allay the fears of the members of the public about that transaction, which was incomplete and which violated the terms of agreement between Exxon Mobil and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

I understand a permanent secretary was removed from the ministry as a result of the views he expressed with respect to that particular issue. It is quite possible that the Minister has been sidelined in matters of energy policy as a result of his own position on that matter. We have not heard a word from the Government with respect to what is the work plan for this Exxon Mobil in our Trinmar operations in Soldado. I want a public statement made so that people could feel that the Government is serious when they say that Exxon Mobil is going to carry out this

work in lieu of their financial obligations with respect to drilling exploration wells in the East Coast. We are talking about over \$200 million.

Mr. Williams: Would the Member please give way? I remember making a comprehensive statement on the programme of activities for the Exxon Mobil activities in the Trinmar acreage in this Parliament. If I recall correctly, you were here. I would therefore direct you to the *Hansard* to get the entire statement I made on that programme and which, of course, this being a public place, was also reported in the press.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I have heard, in my political career spanning from 1976, many statements and nothing has been done. While I might concede that the Minister made a statement—

Hon. Members: Might concede.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Might concede. I am not as dishonest as some people who might say they have not said so and so. The point is nothing has been done for over two years—[*Desk thumping*—]with respect to what the Minister claimed to have said.

Mr. Williams: Would the Member please give way again? As of now and, indeed, Members know that you have special knowledge, being as you introduced into the debate that I am your line Minister. The reason that is so is because you are a senior employee of Petrotrin and you should know and you are well aware, that programmes have been ongoing. There is a team of people who are currently working on prospects in the area. You are also aware of the 3-D seismic programme and all the activities that have been taking place. Please, let us not mislead the House.

Mr. K. Ramnath: As an elected Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, I am only interested in what exists in the public domain. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame! Shame on you!

Mr. K. Ramnath: That is why I am not really interested in whether Emile Elias transported sand and gravel to Dr. Rowley's Landate project. [*Interruption*] When it comes in the public domain I will deal with that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, please! Order please!

Mr. K. Ramnath: I am not privy, Mr. Speaker—for the benefit of my line Minister. Let me say I have no opportunity to choose my line Minister. [*Laughter*] I am simply saying, I had no opportunity to learn of these developments, nor have

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I any interest in discussing what transpires in Petrotrin because you are dealing with a very vindictive Government! You are dealing with a Government which instructs certain people in Petrotrin to issue warning letters to me!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And yuh still there? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. K. Ramnath: I have not admitted today, but I will say to you that when I made a statement, which was covered by privilege in this Parliament, I was issued a warning letter threatening dismissal! I know where it came from! [*Interruption*] They own Petrotrin! Their fathers left Petrotrin in a Will for them! They own it! They feel they own the Judiciary! They own the magistrates! They have judges going in the middle of the night advising the Attorney General and then the Attorney General having to say: "I make this statement on the advice of a judge." That is what this country has come to! [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I pay taxes. My father and my mother were born here and I am entitled to all the rights and privileges of a citizen! [*Desk thumping*] Some of them came here with pirogues from Grenada and St. Vincent. I do not want to get up here to discuss the internal affairs, on the basis of principle, as an employee. I am asking the Minister in his capacity as Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to state why it is he has not kept the public informed about the activities which are supposed to take place in lieu of hundreds of million of dollars forgone by Exxon Mobil in the country? People are concerned whether you have made any deals with Exxon Mobil, Mr. Minister. I know that you are a man walking with the Bible in one hand; I do not know what you do in the other hand. I could ask the Prime Minister about that because he knows about your nocturnal perambulations. "All you doh interfere with me today eh."

Mr. Speaker, I know where the instructions came from to threaten me that if I were to make any other statements in Parliament that disciplinary action would be taken against me. [*Interruption*] I have no faith in the Privileges Committee; it is a bias committee; it is not representative of this Parliament and that is why we have to take matters to court. [*Interruption*] Do you think the Privileges Committee would find that loquacious Member guilty of anything? Do you think the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) would prosecute him?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Couva South, no. Whatever matter is before the Privileges Committee you cannot comment on. Whether you like or dislike the composition of the Privileges Committee is irrelevant for the purpose of this debate. Please, concentrate on the question before us.

Mr. K. Ramnath: If I am continually provoked, I have to respond.

Mr. Speaker: I appeal to Members, please. The Member has some expertise in the area under discussion, so let him make his contribution. Do not provoke him, please! No!

Mr. Valley: He is not showing the expertise.

Mr. Speaker: Continue, Member for Couva South.

Mr. K. Ramnath: You know I can handle myself here and outside. I am only seeking the protection of the Chair so that I would not get involved in this crosstalk; I am not afraid of them. I am not as decent as the Member for Fyzabad. I would have never taken that! I would have never taken that!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: What would you have done?

Mr. K. Ramnath: Darling—Oh, sorry.

Mr. Speaker: You see, hon. Member, when you get along the way you are going with this intimate crosstalk, that is what will happen. [*Laughter*] Please address the Chair and forget Members on the other side.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I find her extremely charming these days, Sir. I was not referring to you as “darling”, Sir. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, there is a deliberate effort here to derail me but I want to return to the issue at hand. I am saying that as a result of the failure of the Minister to keep this House informed about the activities of the multinational corporations people are concerned about the transparency of the arrangement between Exxon Mobil and the Government.

3.30 p.m.

The Prime Minister, having returned to the country, set up a hurried press conference at the airport when it was reported that certain directors of Petrotrin and from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries were opposed to the arrangement, and certain persons found themselves out of the board and out of the Ministry because these were the ones who protested the sweetheart arrangement between Exxon Mobil and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. That is why they lost their jobs on the board and that is why they lost their jobs in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. They can deny that. I know that as a fact.

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When they are dealing [*Interruption*] I am not talking about what is going on at Petrotrin. I am talking about what information is available in the public domain. I have nothing to say about what goes on in the boardroom of Petrotrin. I am not there. I am a worker under the Industrial Relations Act. I am a member of a trade union, and a worker and I work every day.

We want transparent relationships between governments and multinationals. It is a well-known fact—in fact, I read in the newspaper where Minister Christine Sahadeo recently returned from a meeting in Great Britain where there was a discussion about transparency in the oil extractive industries, and I asked myself whether we do have transparent and arm's length transactions.

When there was a gas shortage in the United States, liquefied gas from Point Fortin LNG was diverted from its route to Spain into the United States because of a higher price on the Henry Hub market. And I know as a fact, that for the purpose of taxation, the price attracted in Spain was used as the price for calculating profits while they were diverting the gas and getting up to US\$8 million Btus. These companies are very well advanced in terms of what they want from economies like Trinidad and Tobago. I am not saying what they are doing is illegal. What I do understand is what they are saying is in accordance with the bogus agreements Third World countries enter into with multinational corporations.

Mr. Williams: I wonder if the Member would give way on that particular point. The Member would be aware that this Government has said very publicly that we wish to re-open the contracts that are associated with the manufacture and export of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Trinidad and Tobago, signed and negotiated by the administration which preceded us, which allows per contract the diversion of those cargoes of which the Member speaks. So that the f.o.b price in Point Fortin reflects all the things as the Member quite rightly said, that are legally in the contract.

We wish to re-open them because we are aware of the implications of the diverted cargoes, and the lack of resource to Trinidad and Tobago, which the Member for Chaguanas cries about that is not coming to his constituents. [*Desk thumping*] It was done by the previous administration, and we intend to address it.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please, I am on my feet. One of the risks in giving way to another Member is just what has happened. But I would ask when a Member gives way, the Member must not be too long.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Being an extremely polite politician, I do give way. I do not think, that by giving way, one could speak for—I ask the hon. Minister whether the agreements signed between his Government and Atlantic for Trains 1, 4 and 5 were signed by the United National Congress. [*Crosstalk*] The Member for Diego Martin West cannot fight elections in Tobago. The Member might do well by being a little quiet to be able to listen to what I have to say. There are about 100 persons outside demonstrating against him.

I am very happy that the Minister has conceded that there is a flaw in that arrangement that allows diversion of tankers. And, I am also aware, there is abuse of that—it was signed by their government or who represented them. I am not suggesting that subsequent negotiations would have been on similar lines because when one is dealing with complex matters such as liquefaction and exportation of natural gas, one depends on certain experts. The tankers were diverting cargo from their destination in Spain to the United States at a price not with respect to what they were receiving, but was contracted. We are now talking about considerable expansion in the natural gas business having regard to increased reserves caused by astute exploration activities started under the UNC when they met 12 trillion cubic feet as proven reserves and took it up to 20 trillion cubic feet; when it entered into the first production sharing agreement for oil with BHP, the credit for which they wish to take. We demonstrated that there was an exploration programme in place, one which would have encouraged multinationals to continue exploitation and exploration.

When one hears the Member for Port of Spain South, who is not really given much opportunity to speak, one would believe that the exploration thrust only started when he became the Minister. And while we are very happy that the exploration activities are resulting in new finds, we are concerned about continuing to give benefits without the Government saying what those benefits total in terms of, let us say, 1,000 feet of well drills. Do we really need to give those exemptions and do we give exploration on land the same treatment? Or, should we not give better treatment to exploration and production operations on land? The Minister knows very well. He is informed on a daily basis that our land production is declining at a very rapid rate. Today, land production is about 20,000 barrels per day if that much, and we continue to struggle to make 20,000 barrels per day.

A few years ago, one of the companies was making 20,000 barrels per day. They have been holding discussions with respect to increasing production on land, and what is very interesting is that they intend to “CEPEPize” land production in

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the country. There is a silent plan to bring CEPEP contractors, their friends who finance the PNM, who cut no grass, who do not operate a brush cutter, who have nothing to do with environmental clean-up; their friends are now listed. When the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries decides that it is his Ministry that will give out leases—he is already in the process of taking back leases instead of encouraging the development of those leases that are unused purely because of economic circumstances. He has a secret plan to give those leases from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to his friends in the People's National Movement. And you will see that happening very shortly. Why is the Member taking back the leases?

Mr. Williams: Would the Member like to give way to understand why?

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Thanks, hon. Members, for your generosity. I do not know how much longer we will have another 30 minutes. Normally, I would have given way to the Minister but he makes a speech every time I give way. Let him take the time that is given to him for response. He should take notes and then respond.

I am not interested in hearing from him during the course of my contribution why he is taking away the leases. He is taking away the leases, which he calls unused leases, and they have a plan to ensure that those leases are granted to friends of the PNM. [*Interruption*] If I am allowed to stop you, yes.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Couva South for giving way. The purpose of taking back the unused leases is for the conduct of a comprehensive three-dimensional seismic (3-D) survey over all of South Trinidad, and which had not been done before, and which we anticipate could lead to new prospects of oil and gas exploration and, perhaps, production increases in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. K. Ramnath: You understand how—that does not make any sense. If you are doing a comprehensive 3-D seismic across the southern basin, you will be conducting seismic in leases now held by persons and companies. There is no reason to take away any lease to conduct the seismic. What you should be doing is giving the support to current holders of the leases, which include Petrotrin in the

main, to continue exploring for new oil and Petrotrin can do it if they get the support from the Government. Just as they are giving support to the multinationals to drill offshore they should be giving support to Petrotrin to continue its exploration efforts on land. I will tell you what the UNC did. It is unfortunate the Prime Minister cannot take the jamming so he is leaving. I will tell you what we did as a government.

I was not in the government when that loser from Oropouche was in. We encouraged participation so that a lease on the eastern block—for example, there is a joint venture between Petrotrin and Taliban and I have no doubt when we begin to do exploration drilling on that block that we will find prolific oil. The UNC wanted to have joint ventures between the owners of the leases and new developers so that it could have shared. What happens out in the East coast is not going to benefit us because we are not shareholders. We may have a very small percentage but our thrust was how to get equity in those programmes. What they are doing, by taking away the leases, and they have no good reasons for doing that—They say Petrotrin cannot mind a lot of these unused leases.

We inherited these leases from multinational corporations such as British Petroleum, Shell and Texaco, and because those wells were drilled in the early 1900s. Drilling started in Guayaguayare in 1905, and in those days we were using very archaic methods of drilling. We were not penetrating deep reservoirs so that what is needed now is data and money. If we get the data from the 3-D seismic, we can go to the bank with that data and as a State-owned company, we can expand our operations.

This Government has no interest in Petrotrin being a major exploration production company. Left to them, they will sell everything out. We should have kept those leases and conducted the 3-D seismic, but nobody is going to conduct any 3-D seismic across such a vast acreage. I wished the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro were here because he was involved in the exploration work for the central block, which today has been bought by British Gas—the portion which was formerly owned by Vintage Oil. British Gas has bought that out and the 3-D seismic was run, and the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro whose company was involved in that activity will tell you that the best way to handle these is in discrete areas. Where is the Minister going to find a company to come to Trinidad to run a 3-D seismic across the southern basin unless, of course, he is prepared to tell them in advance that he is going to give them certain leases in the event that they find oil or structures that may produce oil?

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I am saying to this House, they have absolutely no plan for the oil industry. They are devoid of any ideas. They continue to operate an industry as was operated in the 1940s and 1950s. They do not understand that in today's world we are better poised if we own certain equity as far as our natural gas and oil assets are concerned. They believe that what they will collect as taxes will be sufficient for them to promote their political programmes.

The Prime Minister knows that our premier markets are our English-speaking Caribbean friends. He knows that it was important to set up the special fund because we benefit from our premier markets. But one cannot hear a word from the Government in terms of its long-term projections, a plan to deal with refining the bottom of the barrel. They have no plans.

Mr. Speaker, you are talking about 34 to 40 per cent of your barrel of oil which sells cheaper than the price of crude oil. So your product prices are being sold less than the raw material. Now that we are benefiting from oil windfall the Government should be actively pursuing a programme to maximize revenues from its barrel of oil through the refinery. They have no plans. In fact, they are faced with a serious crisis, and that is, there should be cleaner fuels to meet the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) standards. They are going to spend US \$400 million to clean up their act but that will not result in further refining of that barrel of oil that is being refined. We are in a situation where, because of our lack of vision and foresight, we cannot take advantage of the windfall.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Couva South for giving way again. The US\$400 million upgrade, in fact, improves the gassed-in quality. To improve the quality of your total product slate, that is to say, to destroy the bottom of the barrel—a delayed caulker that is required to do that costs US\$700 million, and it is the judgment of this Government that it ought to proceed in that direction on the basis of appropriate joint venture arrangements which is what we are pursuing at this time.

Mr. K. Ramnath: One understands who is the real Minister of Energy now. I congratulate him. Why did they not come to the House and say that? Why did they not stand before the nation at the energy conference and say that? That is an initiative that the country needs to hear about. If you say that—you believe the country is your Cabinet and your retreat. I am talking about this Parliament. You must show more respect for this Parliament. Come and make statements under “Statements by Ministers” and let the country know what you are doing.

Prof. Julien, if I may return, suggested a course of action. If we do not have oil to feed our refinery—we do not refine any oil produced by BP for good reasons. We are trying now to refine BHP oil which is coming in at this stage, but we do not know whether it is a good product for us to refine because of the configuration of our refinery.

If for any reason our oil production were to decline at a rate and we have to import all of our oil at \$50, \$60 and \$70 per barrel we are going to lose from the moment a single drop of oil enters the refinery. That is why, regardless of the statement made by the Prime Minister, we should be ready to meet the challenges that can face us 15 or 20 years down the road. And that is what planning is all about.

I am sure that the former Prime Minister is probably rolling in his grave when he talked about planning had lost its mystique. No planning whatsoever! One cannot simply come here to solve the problems of oil and gas exploration by saying one must continue with the Third Schedule to give a duty-free concession to helicopters coming in to Trinidad, to oil pipes used for drilling, exploration and production, for platforms, for compressors and all the equipment used in the production of oil and gas when we have in our hands a wonderful opportunity to expand the local petroleum industry which we own. It is a dangerous thing for this Government to enter into that arrangement with Exxon Mobil without working out the details of such a programme.

Mr. Speaker, my understanding, based on what I have been told here and elsewhere, is that there are certain production horizons that Exxon Mobil will keep for themselves, and there are certain horizons which would be shared between Trinmar and Exxon Mobil. It is a complex matter but I would like to hear the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries saying that to the Parliament.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries does not take the opportunity to come to Parliament to make statements for the nation to hear. Is it true that there is an arrangement between Exxon Mobil and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago so that certain horizons will be Exxon Mobil and other known horizons would be shared between Trinmar and Exxon Mobil?

Mr. Williams: The short answer is no.

Mr. K. Ramnath: And, if you asked what is the real position they will say we will make a statement which would never come. There is need for this taxation review. There is need not only for natural gas taxation—Trevor Boopsingh, who is well known in the energy circles and an advisor to the Prime Minister; I do not know if they still work together—Trevor Boopsingh has been saying for the longest while that we must have a natural gas taxation regime.

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I heard the Minister in the Ministry of Finance say we are going to have such a regime, or there are going to be discussions, especially when we are exporting such large quantities of natural gas. We are not hearing anything about a plan to deal with the local producers. I support the local businessmen; involvement in oil and gas production. There are many opportunities on land. Large companies like Petrotrin will find it totally uneconomical to go after very low-producing wells because of the high cost of labour. Many of these small operators are doing extremely well. Well Services is an example of doing extremely well in the business of shallow well drilling and making money as a result. Many people could have been making lots of money with oil prices as they are today, and creating employment if there were some kind of strategic initiative coming from my friend from Port of Spain South. And I do not know why. He sits as a Minister and people do not even know that he exists.

All we hear coming from my hon. friend is local content, and I think local content is important. We have been, for a very long time, trying to improve local content. All those tanks one sees being built in the oilfields and elsewhere, are as a result of the work of local people, and their concept of local content is bringing in equipment and parts from abroad, putting them together at an assembly plant in Brighton to justify the existence of the Labidco Estate, to say we have considerable local content and we are contributing to the industry.

4.00 p.m.

While that is acceptable, the point is that there is no comprehensive plan. We do not hear anything about the energy policy. There is no debate in this House. One thing the Member for Couva North, the Member for San Fernando East and I have experienced in this House is that when the government in the 1970s and 1980s wanted to build a steel mill, a methanol plant and an ammonia plant, they came to the Parliament with a motion to support the decision of the government. The Member for San Fernando East was in the government. Today they behave as if the public should only find out when they are opening the plant. There is need for a debate on the energy sector. That is the lifeblood of Trinidad and Tobago. It is owned by all the people.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, for some time now, we have wanted to put together a committee of this Parliament on energy policy. I wonder if the hon. Members opposite are prepared to sit with the Government on such a committee to discuss, on an ongoing basis, the evolution of the energy policy in the country.

Mr. B. Panday: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, you do not wait until we have a debate on the Third Schedule to make that offer. There are opportunities. There are Members on this side who serve on parliamentary committees, so if the proper approach is made in the right place, we will give him an appropriate answer. I am simply saying that an industry which contributes such a large percentage to our GDP has to be discussed, not only at some conference, but has to be debated in the Parliament, so that people would understand what is happening with our energy resources.

They shut down the sugar industry, laid off 10,000 persons, sent home another 60,000, who had dependents, and put them on the breadline and these people are now asking: What do we have to benefit from the national patrimony from the oil industry? People are asking: Why should you continue to give allowances to companies when we are on the breadline? They should be able to explain to the country that the oil wealth that they are getting is sufficient; that we are not cheated in any way and that the oil wealth would be used in such a manner so as to provide sustainable, long-term employment in the country.

If they want to build an aluminium smelter, as they have indicated, that is a matter that should be debated in this House. They know they have a majority. Out of respect for this Parliament and the country, we should hear why we are embarking on such a project—if it is a good project for the country. It might very well be that we would have to divert a tranche of gas that would be bought by the aluminium smelter for a much lower price than what is normally paid, if there are inputs as raw materials in other companies. But we ought to know that.

We ought to know the benefits that would accrue to Trinidad and Tobago in the long run or whether or not the risk of environmental pollution would be mitigated as a result of the benefits that would come our way. All we hear are political statements about going to the peninsula and developing two industrial estates, without having a discussion in the nation's Parliament about these important issues that have to do with our natural resources.

Nobody would come here unless they were going to get cheap gas to generate power to make their industry worthwhile. The opportunity has come for us to revisit the need for public education, starting with the Parliament, by discussing some of these major exercises. They should not come here when they discover that something has lapsed and ask for the Parliament to approve it, until such time as they find a way to deal with the larger issues.

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Mr. Speaker, I suggest that immediate steps be taken to overhaul the taxation legislation; that immediate steps be taken to look at all of these concessions and that immediate steps be taken to look at resuscitating production on land. What has happened to our secondary and tertiary recovery projects? Almost all of them have gone into abeyance, leaving quite a lot of oil underground because the industry has found it difficult to invest money in secondary and tertiary operations. However, with the price of oil today and with the right incentives, I think that we could begin the resuscitation efforts. The price is not the only incentive. When one runs a company in which 52 per cent of expenditure is on wages and salaries, there is very little money left to invest in long-term operations. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, you notice that we were having a very good discussion. Before I lose control, let us just say that we are looking forward to some immediate steps. In the meantime, I suggest that we revisit the incentives that were made to companies for secondary and tertiary operations on land and for drilling operations and that we provide more tax incentives to Petrotrin and to the small operators, so that we could get land production up again and keep employment at the level to which we are accustomed.

Many persons have lost their jobs in the industry, in spite of high prices, because the level of activity is not there. While they are doing this offshore, there is need to look at what obtains onshore and to modify the system in the shortest possible time, so that workers and communities—the communities around our oilfields are dying, despite what my friend, the Member for La Brea, wishes to telegraph in crosstalk. The communities are dying.

When we look at all the camps in Penal, Barrackpore, Santa Flora and Cruise, they have all been destroyed—beautiful homes and parks. They have left the constituency of La Brea in a state where it rates as having perhaps the highest unemployment in the country.

As a result of the work I am doing, I am now collaborating with my friend, the Member for La Brea, in doing a major clean-up of the Parry Lands stand and I will invite him to the formal opening, where he will cut the ribbon. Remediation work is taking place in Los Bajos and in Bernstine and so on, but those have virtually disappeared.

Forest Reserve, one of the most pristine areas of Trinidad is now a jungle. People in Fyzabad, Erin and Santa Flora and all these places are not benefiting from the industry. We need to increase the level of activity so that we can keep

them employed; so that we can keep the sporting facilities going in Goddard Park and our stadium in Santa Flora and so on. If they do not have the level of activity to sustain those things, these people will not go anywhere. They are depressed areas. It is amazing that the areas from which all of our natural resources have come are the most depressed in the country.

I am not attacking the Member for La Brea. He knows what I am talking about. He is hopeful that the industry at Union Estate would create employment; so am I. However, there are no immediate plans and the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) will not solve that problem. It is the resuscitation of the industry on land.

I thank you.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Both colleagues on this side have spoken at length about the failures that this Government brings week after week. In looking at this Motion, it cannot be done in a vacuum. We have to look at the larger picture of what obtains. The Government gives the impression that these matters add value to the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Both the Member for Couva South and the Member for Chaguanas clearly indicated that such does not obtain.

We must revisit what obtained earlier and a good starting point is to look at what obtained under the Panday administration. When we make a comparison with the Manning administration, we will see that under the Panday administration, we brought into this country a lot of investment. Oil prices were a lot lower—in fact, it was less than 25 per cent of what obtains today—and we were able to create more employment. We were able to keep the crime down. Today, we have a murder every day.

As we entered this Parliament today, people were protesting for water and roads and every electronic and print media news item talks about murders, rapes, kidnapping, high food prices—failure of the government.

During the Panday period, many oil companies came to the country and we treated with them. It is not that the Opposition is not in favour of the companies coming, but certainly they must pay their due.

The PNM government has a history of selling this country for a few dollars; selling it at a cocktail party. One good observation is that the National Energy Skills Development Centre started under the Panday administration, more than 100,000 persons were trained under that programme in computers and other

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related areas. In fact, what the Government converted overnight to the University of Trinidad and Tobago was what we started and all they did was to put up a name tag.

When we look at the Motion, under “Be it resolved”, the third column of the schedule:

“...this resolution shall cease to have effect in respect of any class of goods specified in the First Column that is manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago.”

This is how the PNM sells out. It should read—and I want to ask the Minister to consider:

Any good that is manufactured, available, assembled or sourced in Trinidad and Tobago.

Very little is manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago, so that the country cannot benefit. There are people who are assembling goods, importing goods and sourcing goods here, but they are not considered under this. So, who will benefit from this Motion? Certainly not the national community.

In recent times, many local business people have been complaining that they are getting very little opportunities from the oil company to provide goods and services. In fact, a number of registered contractors are not being treated with. People have been removed by a number of national companies, including Petrotrin, and are being replaced by friends of the PNM who have come overnight with hamburger stalls and become contractors and are getting \$100 million contracts. This Motion is in no way intended to add value to the lives of people in Trinidad and Tobago.

When the Minister talked about the goods to be exempt from import duties, the Member for Chaguanas indicated—and the Minister in presenting the Motion also argued—that this started some 35 years ago. What obtained 35 years ago has changed now. The Member for Chaguanas identified a number of areas—fridge, stove, etc. Most of that is available, so why are we allowing that importation? It is against the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. It means that the local manufacturer of, for instance, stoves, refrigerators, television sets or computers cannot be facilitated because the Motion does not allow it. It allows the companies to bring in those things. The goods are too much to call when you look at the schedule.

The second area is that in the rural communities—I argue for Fyzabad and the Member for Couva South spoke about La Brea—in the southern part of the country, Mayaro included, where there are oil companies, we are not seeing any investment in the areas. For instance—and Prof. Julien has raised it—there is the question of training—making sure that, whatever comes to Trinidad, there are opportunities for training in the first instance and, secondly, that the skills be passed on.

In the area of equipment, for instance, very little training is given to the operators of this equipment. If we look at what obtained on the port during the last 72 hours, we have had two deaths. That is two too many. It is across the oil industry. There are too many accidents and the Government sits back. The bill to which the UNC gave birth has not been effected to this date. Again, the PNM administration does not care. It says that it will treat with it at some later time. So they are inviting people to come to the country and they are not providing training in the first instance for locals. The Minister has not argued how this will benefit. He is only talking about tax exemptions.

I have noticed that in PNM constituencies, the oil companies are always eager to do some social programme, be it a basketball court or to sponsor a football team. That is the payback, but we do not see that across the board. In Fyzabad, I do not know of a single team that has had a basketball court lighted up or anything, but you see that in the PNM constituencies. This is why the PNM brings this Motion—to facilitate its own selfish desires. It does not benefit the national community. We see this over and over—every week.

The question that comes to my mind is: What legislation has this Government brought into this House, in the year 2005, that has really benefited the majority of citizens? More than 50 per cent cannot feed themselves under this PNM. This did not happen under the Panday administration. Less money was available; more people were fed.

Today, school children do not have a school bus to go to school. Under the Panday administration, it obtained. What has happened? This is a government for the minority. This is not a government for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Governments must treat with all its citizens or, at least, the majority should benefit from any motion or any legislation that comes to this House. They cannot hope to obtain the Opposition's support for bills of this kind. It is happening week after week.

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Under the schedule, we talk about machinery, equipment and all materials except items following within headings 44, 25, 96. My point is that in recent times—and this started under the Panday administration—we were able to get a number of people to go into manufacturing, who were able to use local components and who imported components to assemble equipment in this country. We went one step further. We were able to encourage nationals of Trinidad and Tobago, whether living in the United Kingdom, the USA or Canada, to source equipment. How were they considered? I want to make a case for them. I come back to the third column of the schedule hereto:

“...but that this resolution shall cease to have effect in respect to any class of goods specified in the First Column that is manufactured...”

which is what obtains now. I want to add to that:

“that is available in Trinidad and Tobago, especially available by local business people here assembled,”

because you have to look at job creation.

The Prime Minister has been arguing, and the trade unions are not in agreement, that the unemployment level is at a particular percentage. We are of the opinion that it is much higher. If we just assemble here available sources, it would create more employment and give opportunities to all those people in business now to employ more people.

The other aspect is the question of funding for those people who might be available. I saw recently where the Business Development Company has created a Caribbean Leasing Company. I want to argue the case for business people in Trinidad and Tobago to benefit in the first instance. The only way they can benefit is if the legislation accommodates them. They cannot create the Caribbean Leasing Company and treat with nationals in business and then tell them they cannot supply because they come under assembly or sourcing. We must make sure that every piece of legislation we bring here benefits the national community in the first instance.

Mr. Speaker, under equipment, material and supplies, there is concern about the quality of material. Many years ago there was the Oil and Water Board in Trinidad and Tobago. Under the PNM, that was removed and has not come back, so a number of people, especially farmers and gardeners—and I can tell you of a number of cases that have come to this Parliament where we looked at compensation—very little money is paid to them. In fact, the Minister of

Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources argued, on the last occasion, that because of his schedule—the PNM is a very convenient government. For the poor farmers, the schedule pays 25 cents for a plant, but the material to minimize the oil spread is not available. There is no concern by this PNM Government about that.

I suggest that the material that comes in, especially for oil spills and for gathering oil, be treated with to make sure that farmers are not affected. In addition to that, when the oil spills, because of the lack of equipment that they bring in—because there is no check on the equipment—those who are involved just indicate that they want to bring in a piece of equipment and the Government does not ask why and how it would add value. They do not ask the oil companies what materials they are bringing to minimize the spread of oil or what they are bringing that is environmentally friendly.

There is great concern about damage to the climate, for instance, and nothing that the oil companies do is questioned by the Government. In fact, the EMA is very limited in this context. Only today we saw a brochure from the Environmental Commission of Trinidad and Tobago and when you look at what it is treating, it is: What is the Environmental Commission? How are the members of the Environmental Commission addressed? How is an application made? This is an application to treat with any environmental concern. The ones we have to treat with the most are coming out of the oil companies. It asks if you need a lawyer. Can you imagine the poor farmer who, because of an oil spill and because of the equipment brought in—whether it is defective or not—whether it is suitable for use over here, because there are no checks and balances—now has his garden covered with oil and in order to seek assistance, he has to obtain the services of a lawyer. How does the commission make a decision? It goes on to say that the commission's objective is to make a fair and impartial hearing at which all relevant evidence and principles would be considered.

Again, when we look at the equipment that comes into Trinidad and Tobago, we are not told—and the Minister has not demonstrated whether this equipment is ISO 9000 or whether it is in keeping with the norms and standards. One of the things the Government argues is that this equipment is in use in the United States, so it must be good; or it is in use in a particular place, but there is no local consideration of what obtains.

The Member for Chaguanas is arguing that the companies are benefiting tremendously and rightfully so they were making investments and, based on investments, profits would be had. However, when you look at the social input

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from these companies that make hundreds of millions of dollars, for instance in the rural communities of La Brea, Fyzabad and parts of Penal, some of the companies are winning drinking water—they have water in the oil companies—but those people who live right around the oilfield areas do not have access to the water. There is enough water to service their installations, but an extra supply can go to the poorer rural communities and nothing is being done and the PNM Government does not encourage it.

Under the Panday administration, there was an agreement that once there was excess water, there would have been a joint approach and much of it took place in La Brea, Erin, Fyzabad and Penal where there was an approach like self-help to make sure the water went there. It was much cheaper to take the water from the oilfield installations to 20 or 30 homes.

We are not seeing that, so the Member for Chaguanas indicated that we have to look at how the companies are benefiting and how they can give back—and the way they have to give back is that the Government must encourage it as obtained under the previous administration. The same thing can be argued for the recreation facilities. The Member for Couva South identified Chaguanas, La Brea and Penal. We see that in a number of areas.

Again, we are giving to the companies. The Government feels it owns everything and it is theirs to give how they see fit, whether given rightfully or not. It is not in their power to negotiate.

Mr. Speaker, we are not in competition with the Government. We are in partnership with the national community of Trinidad and Tobago and we must make sure that when we advance arguments; when we advance any legislation, that citizens, wherever they are, whether in Laventille, Toco, Tobago, Fyzabad or Barrackpore must say that the legislation is good because it benefits the national community.

Only on Wednesday, at the last sitting, we advanced the argument for broadcasting the sittings of Parliament that would give citizens the opportunity to participate and to become more involved. There is a high level of frustration and when the Government brings motions of this kind, to the House, it adds to that frustration. The average citizen cannot see how he will benefit from this. We have to make sure that whenever we bring legislation—

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, since we are so close to the tea time, there is the question of supply and pollution which has been attracting attention globally, not only in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, you would remember that at one time Oropouche was the food basket of Trinidad and Tobago and today that does not obtain simply because a large acreage, thousands of acres, have been polluted by the oil companies and Government has been doing very little about it. Today, as we speak, the chemical content in the lands have to be increased every so often because of oil pollution.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest we take the tea break and when we come back I continue. Again, the Minister has a responsibility; he has an obligation, when presenting motions of this kind. It is not just to come and rubberstamp here and say he is saying this and that is what obtained 35 years ago and it must continue today.

Thank you.

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. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I give way to my colleague, the hon. Minister, I just want to remind the hon. Minister that the Motion reads in the first paragraph:

Whereas it is provided by section 56(1) (a) of the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01 that the House of Representatives may from time to time by resolution provide that any class of goods specified in the resolution shall be exempt from import duties of customs if such goods are imported or entered for use by any person for any purpose specified in the resolution during any period to be fixed by the Minister in each particular case..."

This was thought out in the context of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, in particular, Chap. 4, which talks about the resources of the country should be such that it could be accessed by all persons. Whenever we bring legislation to the House, one must not forget the context in which it is intended. Once we debate matters here, there must be a clear measurable appreciation that what is being asked to be supported in this House would add value to the lives of people in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Hon. Eric Williams): Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you. I must confess that I was not quite sure, throughout all of the debate, just what I needed to answer to. It seems to me that Members opposite have strayed as far as the land is wide, and never really sought to deal with this Motion that is before us. However, they did go into a number of areas and asked a number of questions, and the answers to those questions have been in the public domain for sometime, both in this Chamber and in the press. The Member for Couva South, in particular, sought to turn the debate into a debate on energy policy.

Suffice to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, apart from some of the clearly subtly incorrect things that the Member talked about and which we were able to point out in his contribution, there really is not much to answer to at this time. Indeed, they did ask some questions about local content; they asked some questions about the land production; they asked a couple of questions about equity in the use of our energy resources; and they also went into some degree to talk about taxation, overhaul and the LNG industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, let me remind this honourable House that this is not the first time that this particular Motion is before this House. Indeed, this Motion was before this House, most recently, in the year 2000, when Members opposite were on this side of the aisle and we were opposite. I do not recall hearing all of the concerns being expressed then of the historical antecedents at that time from Members opposite, granted that the Member for Couva South was not here but, certainly, the Member for Chaguanas and the Member for Fyzabad were here. It really bothers my mind to have heard some of the things I heard here today.

Let me deal with some of the questions that were raised with respect to the upstream industry. The Member for Couva South is not here, but for the benefit of the record, if you will allow me the latitude, I will simply address some of the issues that were raised. This Motion, again, does not specifically cover Land exploration, and the production has, indeed, been falling. The Member raised the question of the removal of some of the leases that Petrotrin has for land exploration. The reality is, Petrotrin has a number of leases now, and before we started to embark on this Land Exploration and Production Programme, it turned out that Petrotrin was not certain of the exact number of leases they have, or the duration of life of the leases they had.

I recall at one time there were senior lawyers at Petrotrin who would have ensured that these records were in order, but it turned out that there was a fair amount of uncertainty as to the life left on some of the leases. In fact, we discovered that they were operating on one or two leases that had expired.

As part of the Land Exploration and Production Programme, we are now seeking to bring sanity to the land tenure and lease situation of Petrotrin. In fact, what we have asked them to do—in fact, we have already come to an agreement on just how it will be done—is to surrender all of the leases. I said that before in this House, and we will re-demarcate an area to be known as Petrotrin's core area of business with a new exploration and production licence with new and modern terms and conditions of operations. That is how to do it. As the Member insinuated, it is not to take it and give it to someone or something or the other. I really do not know what he was talking about. I do not know what energy industry he operates in. The reality is, if you redefine a core area in which Petrotrin will focus its activities, and then we will move away from a situation that we are faced with—this hodge-podge of leases that have in fact been inherited from previous companies over the years, we are now rationalizing everything into one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, beyond that, the Member talked about the 3D Seismic Programme, which will be an integral part of land exploration and production. Of course, he concedes that the 3D seismic data are required, and he went on to talk about the fact that whether Petrotrin should be doing it or not.

We all recognize that bpTT has become a very successful company, in terms of its operations here in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] What bpTT has done over the years is acquired a number of 3D Seismic Programmes over fields and over different areas as they explored. They have now come to the conclusion that what they really needed was one continuous 3D Seismic Programme across the area, to properly understand the geology. To accomplish that, they either acquire from other neighbouring companies, or use all their surveys together, and with the technology of today, they have merged them all into one survey, which they are now using in their visualization software rooms to analyse the entire basin offshore as one.

What we are seeking to do onshore Trinidad and Tobago is to capitalize on what we have already learnt from the multi-nationals in their analysis offshore Trinidad and Tobago, and seek to come up with a mechanism to acquire a carpet of 3D seismic data across the island so that we could properly understand the geology onshore Trinidad.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, indeed, the data would be acquired in such a way that Petrotrin would have access to the data; they will be part of it. What we are seeking to do, having defined the core area of Petrotrin's interest, there would be areas outside of that laterally but, in addition to which there are horizons to which Petrotrin drills for oil, but they do not tend to go much deeper than those because those are the current sweet spots, given the level of geological understanding that we have today of the basin.

The 3D seismic data will allow us to go deeper than that, but to do that survey across the island can cost anywhere upwards of US \$200 million or US \$300 million, and it will take some time. Therefore, we require joint venture arrangements to do so. So we will be seeking to go out to form a consortium of companies to acquire the seismic data, and to explore for oil and gas onshore, and the State will be a partner in the consortium outside of what is known as Petrotrin's core acreage. That membership in that consortium would be assigned to Petrotrin, so that Petrotrin will be a part of it. In the core areas of Petrotrin, Petrotrin will retain 100 per cent of its ownership. So what the Member for Couva South was seeking to suggest is entirely wrong. We are making sure that we find a way to get the technology that is required onshore, to properly understand and manage the reservoirs that have been there historically. There are reasons for this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, worldwide, when 3D seismic data or new technologies are applied to old fields you tend to find in the order of 10 or maybe 20 per cent more oil that you bypassed. These fields onshore are already giant oil fields. We stand to gain in the order of about 200 million barrels of oil from the existing fields. As a country, we cannot afford to put US \$200 million or US \$300 million to go after such a programme.

We are constantly requested by several multinational companies to get involved onshore Trinidad and Tobago, to take another crack at onshore Trinidad, given what they have learnt elsewhere in the world. The Member wants to know who will come and do that but the list is long. I will not go into the list now, but the list is quite long, and the names are of the pedigree that you will expect from the major multinational companies globally. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member said that there was no plan. The Member for Couva South, in his other incarnation, is involved heavily in the health, safety and environment (HS&E) activity. In a 3D seismic programme, you acquire the data on lines, that is to say, traverses along the surface that are probably 300 to 500 metres apart, across the entire area that you are going to acquire this survey. Of course, that

area is all of the southern half of the island. I would have thought that someone who is involved in the HS&E business, and who understands that we have a legacy, in terms of our oil sector, would understand the opportunity that acquiring this data would present.

If we have transects across the island of 300 to 500 metres or so apart, for the first time, in recent times, this will allow our technical folks, particularly our environmentalist, to traverse along each of those areas across the entire island and obtain for the first time what is called a Baseline Environmental Impact Assessment Study of the onshore of Trinidad and Tobago. This will also allow us for the first time to go back and properly quantify the oil and other junk that is on the ground that is there historically from the activities of the energy sector, over the more than 100 years that we have been involved in the energy sector.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, clearly, such an activity can only involve the employment of quite a number of persons in all of the areas in which such a survey is being conducted—throughout the villages, hills, dales that are across there. It is in any government's interest to ensure that locals of the area are employed. That is only all the persons in the southern half of our island, at the very least.

Mr. Speaker, this is a holistic approach to gaining a proper geological and geophysical understanding of the basin onshore, which we expect will lead us to a properly renewed and better focused Exploration and Production Programme, which will bring us much more sustained benefits.

The lease operator and farm out pokes that the Member talked about, or the desire to go and poke additional holes in the ground, we have been there and that was done. What we need to do is to properly guide where they go by a better understanding of how the reservoirs trend. To give a good picture, some of them may have been laid down by what were in the past rivers, and it is quite common here in our environment, as, indeed, in others, to drill a well here and find a sweet spot and go just a little further away and find nothing.

Mr. Speaker, if you could think of a river, a river meanders along, and if you did not know how it went then you will miss on every occasion. We are seeking to gain a much better understanding of what it is we are dealing with. For the first time, we have the opportunity to revolutionize how we explore onshore Trinidad and Tobago having learnt from other parts of around Trinidad and Tobago. That is one aspect of it.

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Mr. Speaker, there is the whole business of the returns from our involvement downstream in the LNG. We have been very clear on that matter. We are not getting the returns from LNG back to this country that we expected. When we looked at the price in the market where the freight on board (FOB) price was, we were seeing cargos diverted and they were being diverted per the contracts that were signed when they were in government when they negotiated. [*Desk thumping*] We picked up with it and went public and said that we have to renegotiate those contracts. We recognize fully that the value of the LNG train, while in our previous paradigms—do you like that word *Tabaquite*?—has been to take the revenues at the wellhead from taxation.

We have been very clear that we intend to become involved in investments everywhere along the value train; up and down the place. We have said so for quite sometime now. A lot of the value of the LNG is in the marketplace; it is in the swings around the posted prices; it is where you go into areas where there is a peak demand and you are able to supply into that area at a price that presents a premium above the published price; and it is in being involved in the marketplace.

There is a utility rate of return in the shipping. The shipping is not going to be such a fabulous business; this is a tight market to be in. In the re-gas terminals and pipelines in the United States of America, there are tariffs that are fixed by statute in the United States of America, so there is a utility rate of return on them, but the re-gas terminals and the pipelines present a keyhole into the market place. Therefore, it is in our interest as a country, to be involved everywhere along that market place so that we can get to be involved in the market itself. We have assured our trading partners that we are going to do that.

You would have heard the hon. Prime Minister mentioned in his statement that we are setting up our funding arrangements, so that we can balance our portfolio in such a way to make some of those strategic investments. Do we want to go 100 per cent in ownership in these things? Not at all, but we would want to seek strategic partners to do these things and, therefore, bring a better return on the country's patrimony—our oil and gas—back to our citizens.

I have to say that I was really baffled and a little saddened by some of what I heard coming from the Member for Couva South. Again, I will continue to say these things in the public domain; I will continue to make the speeches that I have been making almost from day one, since I became the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, because I have been saying these things from the start.

We are pointed to opportunities in every part of the value train; both onshore in and around Trinidad and Tobago for local content and local participation, and we have always pointed out that the value is in investments outside or beyond our shores. Those are the things that we are doing. We are setting up proper systems to deal with those things.

We have recently finalized a local content policy, and we have been working with the energy companies to do, so that we would get more involvement of our local energy sector. We are working to close a number of gaps that we have learnt exist in the system so that we can bring a better return to our country.

Mr. Speaker, do not forget that there is indeed a gap, as we have these big projects with foreign direct investments—a growing gap between our gross domestic product (GDP) and our gross national product. I was advised that in 2003 the gap was of the order of TT \$4.1 billion. We have to close that gap. We are seeking to do so in our energy policy as we move along.

The measure to have exceptions from items, which go offshore for the energy sector, as far as I know, this has nothing to do with fridges and televisions. In fact, they are specifically excluded under this particular provision that we are talking about.

I heard Members on the other side talked about local—this is not about that; this is about the heavy pieces of kit and equipment that are for offshore, to enhance and encourage the production and exploration activities offshore. What has this benefited us? This has only benefited us about 20 trillion cubic feet of natural gas; it has only benefited us billions of barrels of oil.

Mr. Speaker, today, Trinidad and Tobago is the largest exporter from a single site of ammonia and methanol. [*Desk thumping*] We are the fifth largest exporter of LNG from a site. [*Desk thumping*] We will be moving forward like all the other gas-exporting countries to have ownership in the ships that move our products and in some of the facilities on the other end where those products are taken to market.

This year, towards the end of next month, we will be hosting the Gas-Exporting Countries Forum where all of the gas exporting countries will come here for our annual forum. Who are those countries? They are: Iran, Egypt, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Norway, Russia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Venezuela, Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago. We will then assume the presidency of that group for the next year after that. There is where Trinidad and Tobago is going. [*Desk thumping*]

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We are taking our place on the world's stage. In fact, we have already taken our place on the world's stage in energy, and we are continuing to take a leadership position. We are setting our local economy and our local entrepreneurs—all of them without fear or favour—in parts of the country in a position to take advantage of these opportunities. [*Desk thumping*] We are seeking to ensure that we have intergenerational wealth in our Heritage Fund; we are seeking to preserve for the next generations to come; we are seeking to set up and arrange our business so that exploration and production will ensure that we keep our reserves picture at an optimal level which will allow us to selectively choose those downstream projects and investments that we will get into. That is what this is all about. This is one piece in the puzzle of long-term economic growth that this country has experienced and will continue to experience, and we are seeking to do it correctly. [*Desk thumping*] We are doing it right. [*Desk thumping*] They say measure twice and cut once. We have been measuring so that when we cut we will be cutting it properly. This measure is one small part, but a necessary part of evolution of our energy policy and our growth as the sovereign nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, again, there is quite a number of other questions and really, I think this is not the place to answer them because they have already been put into the public domain. I thought that I would just clear up some of those issues. With those few words, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the House of Representatives in accordance with and subject to the provisions of section 56 of the Customs Act, exempt from import duties of customs the class of goods specified in the First Column of the Schedule hereto, being goods imported or entered for use for the respective purposes specified in the Second Column of the Schedule hereto for the period prescribed in the Third Column of the Schedule hereto but that this resolution shall cease to have effect in respect of any class of goods specified in the First Column that is manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago:

SCHEDULE

FIRST COLUMN	SECOND COLUMN	THIRD COLUMN
Class of goods	Purpose(s) for which Goods are to be used	Period of exemption

Import Duties (Exemption of)

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Equipment, material and supplies	Imported for use in off- shore petroleum exploration and petroleum operations	From 2nd January, 2005 to 31st January, 2007
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RELATED BILLS

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to amend the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act, 1979 be now read a second time. Mr. Speaker, in moving the second reading of this Bill, I seek the leave of the House to discuss along with this Bill, the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill since they are interrelated.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the wish of the House for the Bills to be taken together?

Assent indicated.

PESTICIDES AND TOXIC CHEMICALS (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Madam President, I beg to move,

That a bill to amend the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act, 1979, be now read a second time.

The Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill seeks to amend the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act to strengthen the regulatory framework, as it relates to pesticides and toxic chemicals. The Food and Drugs (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill seeks to amend the Third Schedule of the Food and Drugs Act to provide greater control in the distribution of certain chemical substances used in the manufacture of illicit drugs.

The Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act regulates the importation, storage, manufacture, sale, use and transportation of pesticides and toxic chemicals. The Government is aware of the importance of precursor chemicals to the production of illicit drugs and psychotropic substances. As a result of the perpetuation of the illicit drug trade, accordingly, that illicit drug production would be greatly handicapped without precursor chemicals. This Government is committed to controlling the import, export, use and diversion of these chemicals in an effort to suppress the illicit trade in precursor chemicals and, ultimately, illicit trade trafficking.

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The commitment of the Government is founded on the country's involvement in the International Coalition Against the Abuse of and Trafficking in Illicit Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances and its agreement to the 1988 United Nations Vienna Convention. This Convention is a statement of 1971 United Nations Convention and the 1961 United Nations Convention as amended in the 1972 Protocol. The Convention is the template document governing international cooperation between countries that are parties to it, in the area of illicit drug trafficking, and it is related to crime such as money laundering. It also provides measures that countries should implement in order to counter these crimes. Amongst these measures is the suggested control of the manufacture, import, export of precursor chemicals.

A "precursor chemical" means any substance which can be used in any of the chemical processes involved in the production, manufacture or preparation of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or substances having a similar effect and it incorporates a molecular structure into the final product making it essential for those processes.

These chemicals, many of which have legitimate commercial uses, are used to manufacture cocaine, heroin and synthetic drugs. In the manufacture of cocaine and heroin for example, acetone and ethyl are essential chemicals. These same essential chemicals are widely used in legitimate industries for the manufacture of legitimate products such as nail polish remover and detergents.

Mr. Speaker, because precursor chemicals are vital to the manufacture of illicit drugs, this has led to the diversion of substantial quantities of these chemicals for illegal use. A survey done by the Chemical Action Task Force determined that the important links in the chemical distribution chain were being used to give effect to the diversion process. The Task Force identified the following methods as the most common diversion methods: theft, smuggling, misusing or abusing opportunities afforded by international trade, substituting one chemical for another, creating false documents and changing ownership after shipment and so forth.

The demand for these chemicals has in fact resulted in the creation of a new criminal industry. The profit generated, while by no means comparable to the trade of illicit drugs, is substantial enough to make monitoring and enforcement essential.

The Strategic Services Agency was established under the Strategic Services Act, 1995 and began operations in 1996. The Act establishes the structure and functions of the agency.

Mr. Speaker, I pause to also remind Members of this honourable House that these Bills were in fact presented to this honourable House sometime ago, and they lapsed in the Lower House. So, some of the things that are being said, obviously, would have been said at that time, but this is to ensure that we re-indicate exactly what it is that we are doing so that it would be properly stated in *Hansard*.

One of the main functions of the Agency is to act as an office for centralizing information that would facilitate the detection and prevention of illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and chemical precursors. In addition, the agency maintains a database of manufacturers and suppliers of chemical precursors and other substances used in the illegal production of drugs in Trinidad and Tobago and internationally.

Although the agency is new, it has worked very hard to fulfill its mandate to prepare a drug interdiction strategy, and to stimulate action towards implementation of the strategy. This agency has developed a national coordinating mechanism for a programme to reduce the supply of dangerous drugs. The mechanism consists of a matrix that monitors the progress of Trinidad and Tobago with regard to the implementation of the supply reduction strategy and compliances with international instruments. The agency is also responsible for disseminating information among the agencies involved in drug abuse control in Trinidad and Tobago through special documents and publications.

It is evident that the control of precursor chemicals would require an effective legal framework supported by stringent administrative and enforcement measures. Trinidad and Tobago has made efforts to establish an effective precursor chemical control framework with the help of international and regional organizations. Today, we are taking another important step as these Bills seek to strengthen the present legal framework.

Mr. Speaker, clause 3 of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill seeks to amend the long title of the Act to extend the scope of the Act to include the export of toxic chemicals.

Clause 4 provides for a new expanded definition of the term, "toxic chemical". This Bill seeks to define "toxic chemical" as any chemical other than a pesticide which, through its chemical action or life processes, can cause death, temporary incapacitation or permanent harm to humans or animals, and includes all such chemicals irrespective of their origin or method of production.

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An exporter is defined as any person, whether an owner, consignor, agent or broker, in possession of the article or, in any way, entitled to the custody of it.

Clause 5 seeks to enlarge the composition of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board by three members and to increase the number of members who will comprise the quorum.

The Bill also provides for the enacting of subsidiary legislation to complement the provisions therein. Of note, are the subsections which are intended to act as controlled mechanism: prohibition and control of the manufacture, importation, sale, advertisement and use of any controlled product or any class of controlled product, for controlling the use of pesticides generally in agriculture, and for controlling the use of toxic chemicals in agriculture, the arts, commerce and for any domestic or other purpose. Four classes of toxic chemicals are to be regulated namely: highly toxic chemicals, toxic industrial chemicals, controlled chemicals and toxic chemicals and precursors used in the manufacture of chemical weapons.

Clause 6 will amend section 4A of the Act to prohibit the export of a controlled product without an export licence.

Clause 7 will amend section 5 of the Act to give the Registrar of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board the responsibility to supervise inspectors and give such inspectors instructions and directions in respect of their duties.

Mr. Speaker, clause 8 will amend section 6 of the Act to allow persons who are registered with the Veterinary Registration Board to be designated “medical examiners” as, currently, only medical practitioners can function as medical examiners.

Clause 9 will amend section 12 of the Act to enable the Minister to make regulations in respect of the export of controlled products and will increase the fines for contravention of the regulations.

Clause 10 will amend section 13 of the Act to increase the fines for various offences created by the Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill is amended by including under Part II of the Third Schedule a number of precursors. It is an offence to sell a Third Schedule drug without a prescription. As such, we are proposing that these drugs be sold only to a patient where his medical practitioner determines that it is necessary for the treatment of the patient. This measure will afford a greater level of control.

5.45 p.m.

However it is important to note that where any such drug is contained in a cough or decongestion preparation, no prescription is required. Exactly as the Member for Princes Town has indicated, that we listen to the contributions of the other Members when this Bill was presented the last time, and this was pointed out to us, we welcome that. So today we are making the necessary amendments so that these drugs that contain any cough or decongestion preparation, no prescription is required as this amendment specifically exempts such preparations. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (*Caroni Central*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make a brief intervention in this debate, because as the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West said we had debated both of these Bills a few months ago.

Before I get into my brief contribution, I want to utilize this opportunity, since I did not have the opportunity on the day of the funeral; we had a meeting of the Joint Select Committee here. I want to utilize this opportunity to extend our sympathy and condolences to the family of the late Chief Medical Officer Dr. Rawle Edwards. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Edwards died while undergoing surgery in Pakistan. He was the Chief Medical Officer for quite a number of years, and as the Chief Technical Officer at the Ministry of Health he wielded a lot of power, had a lot of influence and of course his responsibility was very onerous.

During his tenure as Chief Medical Officer he developed chronic renal failure and he was being dialyzed on a regular basis and then as a medical practitioner, as a consultant, as a specialist, he weighed his chances, he weighed his options and he went to Pakistan and he had his surgery done, and as I said he succumbed to the surgery. Since then and before that, the Minister of Health has made statements on two occasions to the effect—and I am only referring to what has been reported in the newspapers—that people should not go to Pakistan for renal transplant.

Chronic renal failure is a progressive, and you can consider it as a terminal disease as well, but when people have no alternative, when there is that little hope, when there is that little chance that they might be able to live longer with a transplant, people who can afford it take that chance. Many people have gone to

Pakistan, some have succumbed and quite a lot of people have actually got better because the operations have gone well. In fact, there is someone from my own village who was bed ridden, he was almost blind; he went across to Pakistan, he had his surgery, he has come back, and he is doing very well and in a very short time he will be able to resume his employment and so on.

I am saying this because Dr. Edwards at the Ministry of Health as the Chief Medical Officer, was one of the officers who was responsible for working on the Human Tissue Transplant Act and he was desperate to see that Act being implemented in Trinidad and Tobago and in fact, he was hoping that when the Act was implemented that he would be able to have his surgery done right here in Trinidad and Tobago. None of us would ever know what would have been the outcome of the operation had he had it in Trinidad, but perhaps, just perhaps, if he had the operation in Trinidad the outcome may have been different.

We have heard from the Minister that there have been several start-up dates that he has given for the Human Tissue Transplant programme, the last one that he gave was August and we are hoping that this time he is serious and the programme would really start in August, because a lot of people have died because of renal failure. Some have died because of the transplant that has been done elsewhere and we are hoping that this programme comes to fruition and the citizens of this country will be able to benefit. Mr. Speaker, we want on behalf of this side to extend our condolences to the members of Dr. Rawle Edwards' family.

As I said this is the second time we are debating these Bills here within the last few months, the last time was in June 2004. Then when we dealt with the Bill, we pointed out—as the Minister mentioned—that there were certain concerns that we had in particular, certain cough syrups and cold medications would have been available to the population only on prescription. We had said, at the time, that would put undue hardships and expenses on the members of the public, not only those who are poor, but even those who could afford to go to private doctors, because then they would have had to go to private doctors to get a prescription, to get their Comtrex, Tylenol Cold and Panadol and so on, and of course the poor people who would have to go and wait in the usual long lines at the health centres for their cold medications. I am happy that the Government and the Minister have listened to our concerns because that is not what he said when he brought the Bill here the last time.

I want to tell you why we are supporting the Bill today. Because at that time he said that we misunderstood the Bill; he said that the Bill's passage on Friday

would not affect the purchase of all over-the-counter drugs and the population had nothing to fear. This was what the Minister said to the public at that time. He said that the Ministry of Health, Food and Drugs Division monitored all pharmaceutical drugs coming into the country and would determine which drugs would need prescriptions or not. I told him that the Food and Drugs Department could not advise him outside of the law, they could only advise him within the parameters of the law and two days later the *Newsday* wrote an editorial and the caption of the editorial was: "Look again Mr. Rahael" and again they advised the Minister that he should look closely at the reservations that were expressed on behalf of the Members on this side, on behalf of the entire population.

I am happy that the Minister has acceded to our request because, we in the Opposition, as you know, have been labelled as obstructionists, we have been labelled as non cooperative, we have been labelled as opposing for opposing sake. But, Mr. Speaker, we are here to seek the interest of the members of the public and if it were not for our intervention today, the members of the public would have been in serious difficulty just to obtain very, very simple medications. As I said we are happy that the amendments have come.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. H. Rafeeq: I have a lot to say, Mr. Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Minister as well, we are amending the Food and Drugs Act here today, in which he is bringing under the Third Schedule about five or six substances. I just want to put to him that there are two other substances which I would like him to consider, maybe it would not be today, but at some future point, we should consider two substances. One to add to the Third Schedule and one to remove from the Third Schedule, and I want you to have these for your consideration.

The first one is a drug by the name of Misoprostol and the trade name of that drug is Cytotec. That drug is used by a lot of women to induce abortion. Mr. Speaker, at this point in time that drug is for free sale. That drug can be obtained over the counter. Women buy this drug, and they use it themselves without the advice or supervision of a medical practitioner. I am not, and I want to make it very clear, I want it to go on the record, I am not taking any sides in the abortion debate at this point in time, that is not what I am saying, I am talking about the medical aspects of the use of this drug. I am saying women use this to induce abortion and they use it without a doctor's supervision and I am saying that this drug, while it is available for free sale it should be put under the Third Schedule so that it would only be used under the supervision of a medical practitioner. I just want to ask if you could look at that.

The second group of drugs I would like you to look at, and maybe you can take those out of the schedule, is topical antibiotics. We know there is a very good reason why antibiotics are placed under prescription and that is that overuse can cause problems, can cause resistance, bacteria and things like that, that is why they are placed under prescription; but topical antibiotics do not carry the same risk, at the same level. It is my view that there are certain topical antibiotics that if removed and they are available for free sale, members of the public, when they get a little cut, scratch, or bruise they can go to the pharmacy and purchase one of these and use it. I do not think that would create the kind of problems as the oral antibiotics normally will, but you can discuss it with your technical officers. So that is another group of drugs I would like you to look at.

In other countries that has been done, that is, there are a lot of these topical antibiotics that are available for free sale, so when patients do have a little cut, a little bruise, they do not have to go to the doctor if it is not all that serious, they can go and purchase one of these and use it. So that is another area I would like you to look at.

What we are attempting to do here today in this piece of legislation is to control or eradicate the manufacture of illicit drugs. I thought it would have been useful—since the Minister had some time to reflect on it, from the last time the Bill was presented—if the Minister would have given us an appreciation of the magnitude of the problem that exists, as far as the manufacture of illicit drugs in this country is concerned. Do we have information as to how much illicit drugs are actually manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago? Do we have the capability and the capacity to track these drugs and laboratories where they are manufactured and do we have the wherewithal to have the surveillance so that we can bring the people who are manufacturing these illicit drugs to book? Do we have a record of how successful our operations have been in that regard? So I thought that it would have been useful if the Minister could have given us that kind of information or in fact whether, in this Bill, we are shooting in the dark and hoping that it hit somewhere.

All of us are aware that we have a serious drug problem in Trinidad and Tobago; lives are being destroyed, homes are being destroyed, families are being destroyed and criminal activities are on the rise and we know that a lot of them are related to drugs. If this measure here today is intended to plug one of those loopholes, we fully support that and I want to give the commitment on this side that we fully support that. I am saying this is only—in the fight against drugs and the fight against crime—a drop in the bucket.

Mr. Speaker, we are plugging, as I said, one small hole here today, but the crime situation continues unabated. We have had 55 or 56 murders and so on, and we have had kidnappings. We have had several kidnappings within the last few days and normally when there is a kidnapping—I know that one of the responses of the Government is that the kidnappings might be bogus and all of that. I do not know all the victims who have been kidnapped and which kidnapping is bogus, I think the law has to take its course and the perpetrators of those kidnappings should be punished. I am also saying that most of the kidnappings that have taken place in this country are genuine and over the last few days, as I said, there have been three kidnappings to my knowledge and one of these is the vet who was spoken of earlier in the other debate, the gentleman from Maraval, Dr. Azizul Rahaman. He is a personal friend and colleague of mine, so I know him very well. A better human being is difficult to find; he is a hard working, humble, very generous person. I can personally vouch for his character and I know that there was nothing untoward in that kidnapping, it had to be kidnapping for ransom. We are hoping, on behalf of his family and the families of all those who have been kidnapped, that something would be done very soon, that he would be released unharmed and we would not have to deal with that kind of problem here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, you know what is the most frightening thing about the criminal activities taking place—and I want to close this point here. The society is now becoming numb as far as these criminal activities are concerned. When you listen to the news and you hear that someone has been murdered it is not news anymore. The general reaction is, “okay, so what, one other person has been murdered”. When somebody has been kidnapped, the general reaction is, “so what, one other person has been kidnapped, who will be next?” Even robberies and break-ins and so on are no longer reported in the newspapers because these are not newsworthy anymore, but these are taking place in every community on a daily basis and it is only the victims of these crimes who pay any heed to them.

Mr. Speaker, coming back to the Food and Drugs Bill, there are quite a few agencies which will have to implement and monitor the operations of this particular piece of legislation and I just want to mention three of them. One is the Food and Drugs Department which monitors the quality and the entry of food and drugs into this country; the doctors who will have to prescribe this medication for people after they have examined them and so on, and, of course, the pharmacists who will store, dispense, and keep records of these prescriptions. Right now, these three agencies are in trouble; the Food and Drugs Department, the doctors and the pharmacists.

The pharmacists, as you know—I know for the San Fernando Hospital, I do not know about the other areas—have said it is difficult for them to look after in-patients and out-patients and at this point in time, they are only looking after the in-patients, so that out-patients are having very great difficulty in getting pharmaceuticals at the San Fernando General Hospital. The advice from the South West Regional Health Authority has been that these out-patients who come to the San Fernando General Hospital should seek to have these prescriptions filled at the health centres. That is extremely difficult, if not impossible, because most of these medications that are usually prescribed by the hospital clinics are not available in the pharmacies at the health centres. So it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for these prescriptions from the hospital to be filled at the health centres. What it will mean is that the patients who have come to the clinic, they have probably spent an entire day, be seen by the doctor, been given a prescription and if they cannot afford to buy these medications, that visit would be really worth nothing, because they would not have their medication to control whatever their ailments might be.

We have heard the Minister say they have been in contact with pharmacists from the Philippines and that they would be bringing them here in short order and he mentioned that they would have to write examinations and so on. I just want to warn the Minister, the pharmacists from the Philippines have been rejected by the Canadian Government because they are substandard. They have been told their qualifications are not good enough to practise in Canada.

Mr. Manning: The same thing they said about the Cubans.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, if the Government does not want to take the advice, that is okay, but I am just telling you what the Canadian Government has done. I am just reporting the facts. The Canadian Government has rejected the pharmacists from the Philippines, because they have said that their training is not good enough. The Minister said that there are about 51 vacancies in the public sector and I do not know how many he will bring down to write the examinations. Maybe the Minister could tell us when he is winding up, at whose cost would the pharmacists be coming here to write the examinations and what would their remuneration package be in relation to the pharmacists who are here. If the Pharmacy Board of Trinidad and Tobago has difficulty in registering these pharmacists as the medical board has in registering doctors from abroad, what are you going to do? Are you going to come here and change the legislation, amend the legislation to give you the power to register these pharmacists? Is that the way

you will go? I am just wondering, because that is what you did when the doctors could not be registered by the medical board and I want to know if that is the trend that you will continue.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, and again I want to advise the Minister, because I know that was in train. When we were there we were in the process of establishing a category of staff called pharmacy assistants and that piece of legislation was brought by this Government and we supported it and it was passed. I do not know what is the status of that right now, because I think it is more than a year now that that Bill has been passed and I am hoping that it would have been implemented fairly quickly, so that the pharmacy assistants would have taken a lot of the workload off the pharmacists, so the pharmacists can be released to do professional work. So even though you have a shortfall of pharmacists, where the pharmacy assistants would not have been assisting, that shortfall would not have had so much of a devastating effect on the public sector at this point in time. So I just hope that the Minister would give a little idea as to where we are with that.

As I said we have difficulties with these three agencies. The Food and Drugs Division is a watchdog institution and, as I said, it is responsible for registering and monitoring the sale of food and drugs in this country. That department also has a lot of difficulties. It is short-staffed and does not have the necessary equipment to do its work properly. To get a drug registered in this country, it takes a very long time. The monitoring functions of that agency, which is what it would have to do as far as the present Bill that we are passing today is concerned, is almost non-existent. While it is involved in the registering of drugs and so on, because of the shortage of staff, the limited amount of human resource capability, it hardly does any monitoring on the outside pharmacies, groceries, and so on. So that is another area that needs to be looked at.

Another area I wanted to mention to the Minister is the area of herbal medications and all those preparations that are coming into the country. There is a proliferation of herbal products in this country. Again, I am not taking sides as to whether they are good or not good. All I am saying is with the proliferation of these products, there needs to be proper monitoring. There needs to be proper control of these products entering and being sold, because there are lots of advertisements.

There are many advertisements making all kinds of claims as far as these products are concerned, and if patients or unsuspecting members of the public read these advertisements and are convinced that these things really work, they can find themselves in serious difficulty. I have just pulled one here from a weekly newspaper

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which says: "Start taking care of yourself and feel the explosion of health inside. Lose 10 inches to 25 inches in one hour". Obviously, there has to be something wrong with that. I am saying that some kind of control is absolutely necessary if we have to battle this kind of thing, because people are using them, people are believing these kinds of advertisements. There is another one here that I wanted to read for the Member for Diego Martin East, but I will skip this one. The point I am making is, there needs to be proper control of these herbal preparations which are not in place at this point in time, and I know that a lot of unsuspecting members of the public are conned by the advertisements that take place in these newspapers.

The third area is the group that will need to implement and monitor the provisions of this Act that we are debating today, the doctors. Even as we speak here this evening I know that there have been threats by the doctors to curtail their overtime and weekend activities at the nation's public health institutions, and that is supposed to start from this weekend. We know the kinds of difficulties the population will have if this does happen. I think this is because of the protracted and prolonged negotiations for their contracts of employment.

Do you know what is happening in the Regional Health Authorities as far as these doctors are concerned? It was a revelation a few days ago when the Regional Health Authorities told us that they are only giving contracts to doctors for one year. That is totally unacceptable. Some of the doctors who are fortunate are getting three-year contracts, but the rest are getting one-year contracts. What can a professional do with a one-year contract? You cannot go to the bank with a one-year contract for a loan to buy a car. You cannot go to the bank with a one-year contract to get a loan to build a house. A one-year contract is of really no value. You work for one year, the end of which you get a gratuity and that is the end of your employment. Mr. Speaker, when we asked the board specifically, whether there was a policy by the board to give permanent employment to any doctors, they said there was no such policy as far as permanent employment is concerned.

These are the concerns of the doctors and this is why the doctors do not want to go across from the public service to the Regional Health Authorities. They have security of tenure within the public service and now you are asking them to go across to an institution where there is no track record, where there are no permanent employees. When we were in office we established a pension fund for the Regional Health Authorities and my understanding is that that pension fund has in it, at this point in time, close to a \$100 million or thereabout. That pension fund was established to take care of the permanent employees in the Regional Health

Authority. What has happened to that pension fund and why is it that the Regional Health Authorities are not offering permanent employment to the doctors? As I said, this is why the doctors are having great difficulty in going across from the public service to the Regional Health Authorities. There is total chaos and confusion in the Regional Health Authorities and I just want to give you two small examples in the next two or three minutes.

In the Northwest Regional Health Authorities there was a vacancy for a particular position and I will tell you what the position is in a minute. I think it was Vice President, Human Resource,

Mr. Speaker: You are not speaking to the question. You will be passing over this quickly, right?

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I just want to draw two references as to what is happening in the Regional Health Authorities and then relate it back to the doctors. There was this vacancy and they advertised and they received the applications and so on, and one of the applications was from Eastman and Associates. That is a company in which the chairman of the board of the Northwest Regional Health Authority has an interest; he admitted that. When this issue came to the board he declared his interest and said he would take no further part in the discussions as far as that issue was concerned. Then it went to the Human Resource committee and that committee shortlisted the applicants and then they invited the chairman to sit as a member of the interviewing committee. He sat as a member of the interviewing committee and there were three persons on that committee. They interviewed the applicants, one of whom was from Eastman and Associates and that recommendee was placed first. Then he went and sat as chairman of the board again and ratified that decision to put that gentleman first.

As I said, I just wanted to mention two I would mention the other one very briefly in passing. Eastman and Associates also submitted recommendations for a position which was not even advertised, and at the end of their letter they said: "Thank you for your continued business". Clearly, there is conflict of interest in this situation, and we are saying that this cannot continue. You have the chairman of a board sitting there; you have a company in which he has an interest recommending persons. He sits in the interview and ranks the person first, and then sits as chairman of the board and employs the person. Obviously, there has to be something wrong with this.

Mr. Speaker, that is what is happening at that level and at the level of doctors you are giving them a one-year contract. Some of them, as we have been told by

some doctors, do not even have a contract. What they are working with is a letter of appointment. That certainly cannot be right.

6.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention two points on the Pesticides Bill before I take my seat. First of all, I think the use and handling of pesticides is not properly controlled in Trinidad and Tobago. In these shops that sell pesticides, there are people with no qualifications who are recommending and selling these pesticides. They may be recommending the wrong thing or the wrong amount and causing undue harm to members of the public. Secondly, there are people who are handling these pesticides and are not given the necessary protection by these agricultural shops. Some of them do not have masks, they do not have gloves and the proper protective gear. They should have masks, gloves and the proper protective gear. Not only that, they should be submitted to some kind of medical examination, if not every six months, at least once every year to see what kind of effect these drugs have on them, if they have any at all.

The disposal of the containers, cans and bottles that store these chemicals, also needs to be addressed. When the toxic chemicals and drug inspectors go to these shops and there are problems they seize the drugs; there is no proper storage for these drugs. So, these are some issues that need to be addressed.

I mentioned the last time and I want to mention again that a serious control needs to be exercised as far as the sale of grammosone is concerned. Grammosone is one of the deadliest substances that we have in Trinidad and Tobago. There are countries that have banned this substance and if we do not want to ban it as a first step, the least we can do is to have it sold under conditions, that is, sold to farmers who are able to produce a farmer's identification badge,. At least, we can start there with a view to having it removed altogether, because now there are other chemicals you can use for the same purpose.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I have a little difficulty with clause 7 of this Bill. I asked the Minister the last time whether the Registrar of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Board was a public officer. He said from his information that the registrar was in fact a public officer, because the post of Registrar of Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals is a public service post.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, the parent legislation says: "the Minister shall designate an officer from the Food and Drugs Division to be registrar of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Board". So the Minister is recommending, the Minister is almost appointing that person to be the registrar. So the Minister is

now appointing someone to a public service post, if, in fact, it is a public service post, as he was saying. But, the parent Act limited the functions of that registrar. It said the registrar shall keep and maintain a register of licenses and so on, enter in the register certain information and so on, give the inspector such information as may be necessary and perform such other duties as may be imposed upon him as far as subsection (2) of the Act is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, what this amendment is doing is giving the registrar far more powers and far more responsibilities than it had in the parent Act. What it says here is—

Mr. Valley: I thought you said you would be brief.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: We have four other speakers and if I am brief, they will not be.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment is saying;

“The Registrar shall be responsible for the general supervision of the inspectors.

That is an additional responsibility and, secondly, in addition to the word “information” he would now be giving “instructions and directions”. So, here you have the Registrar of the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Board, being appointed by the Minister. The Minister will take someone from the Food and Drugs Division and appoint him to that position and that position is a public service position. He will now be in charge of all the officers under him. Something has got to be fundamentally wrong with that, where the Minister is appointing a person to a senior position.

In the past, the practice has been that those who have served as registrars of that board have then gone on to become the Director of the Food and Drugs Division. That can be classified as a political appointee. I think the Minister should not have that responsibility. If that person is going to be given that amount of responsibility and that amount of power the Public Service Commission, which normally does the appointments and interviews should do that. The Minister should not have that responsibility. That is my reservation as far as this clause is concerned.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, when the Minister was speaking—and I know it must have been an error on his part, when he was talking about clause 4—he said “the Bill seeks to define toxic chemical as any chemical other than a pesticide which through its chemical action on life”, process and so on, can cause death. But, that was his old speech, because that has been amended in the new Act. It was

amended in the new Act to reads: “toxic chemicals means any chemical other than a pesticide, antiseptic, disinfectant, drug or preservative”; these have been added. So, the Minister read his old speech there. Whoever gave him that speech to read gave him his old speech and they did not include the amendments. It is in the Act and we accept this.

Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Adesh Nanan: (*Tabaquite*): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, you listened to the Minister of Health the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West. I listened to his presentation, as well I read most of it from the *Hansard*. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, what we saw this evening from the Minister of Health is really a copy and paste approach to his presentation.

The amendment before the House makes reference to precursor drugs. Once again, I thought the Minister would have enlightened the House with respect to precursor drugs and the final product that is considered an illicit drug.

We are told about a new introduction, nail polish, in the Minister’s presentation. I do not know if the Minister is aware of why they put nail polish into his speech, but I will try to give the House this evening an idea of what is really taking place with this amendment and the drug trade in respect to methamphetamine. The Minister spoke about heroin and cocaine, but he made no mention of methamphetamine.

Mr. Speaker, these precursor drugs are the substrate for the illicit drug methamphetamine, I will show the House this evening the importance of these precursor drugs within the confines of the operation and the function of the body, without causing harm as well as what happens when they are misused.

A major part of the amendment before the House speaks to optical isomers and, these drugs exhibit that phenomenon optical isomerism. Optical isomerism is a specific situation of these chemical compounds. The optical isomers, when a plane of polarized light is passed through a solution of these particular drugs, you have the rotation of light, either to the right or to the left and this is what makes these precursor drugs very important for the use of the formation of the illicit drug methamphetamine. If you look at these drugs, you would see the similarity within the chemical structure, and that is why any person with a chemistry background can make an illicit drug.

Mr. Speaker, this particular amendment being introduced into the legislation Trinidad and Tobago has already been introduced in other jurisdictions. It is for the same reason with respect to the optical isomerism and the chemical structure,

these optical isomers, whether they rotate the plane or polarized light to the right or the left, it is the dextrorotatory form that we are concerned with. If you develop the illicit drug amphetamine, and you come up with the laevo-form, which is rotating the light to the left, it is not as damaging as if you come up with the dextrorotatory form, the methamphetamine.

Mr. Speaker, it is this particular rotation of light that is making this particular series of precursor drugs, important in moving to the illicit drug methamphetamine. It is the structure of the compound, the precursor drugs. In my contribution I will show the importance of the precursor drugs and how they normally operate within the framework and the confines of the human body.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health made reference to heroin and cocaine and introduced nail polish into the debate. These precursor drugs—there are a lot of reagents that can be obtained without any particular licence. These reagents can be used to extract the amphetamine and covert it into the illicit drug. In the last debate I spoke about using Vicks inhalers—I am hearing some grumbling from the Member for Arouca North, but, I will show him that unlike the Minister of Health who came and read his contribution almost word for word from the last debate, this will be totally different with respect to the references.

Mr. Speaker, in that debate I spoke about the use of Vicks inhalers and the extraction of L-methamphetamine. From 2001, the Vicks company has removed that drug from Vicks inhalers. So prior to 2001, L-methamphetamine was a compound in Vicks inhalers—as a mild decongestant, but it has been removed from the Vicks inhalers that are on the shelves today. I will use another example to show how you can make the methamphetamine from the compounds, the precursor drugs that this amendment is referring to.

Because of the chemical structure of the precursor drugs, you have a very simple chemical reaction that can take place. You have to introduce in this particular compound a methyl group, and you also have to remove a hydroxyl group, and introduce a hydrogen group instead and the reagents vary. Now, you can take an ordinary box of matches or matchbooks—I am sure you will recall—I do not want to bring you into the debate—that if you are in a bar sometimes you get on your table a matchbook with some matches. You can scrape off the striking aspect from that matchbook. There is red phosphorous in that particular matchbook, 40 per cent of that particular material has red phosphorous in it. If you can collect enough of that, that is one part of the ingredient you can use to make an illicit drug. You can combine that particular red phosphorous with ordinary iodine and, that particular combination with any of these precursor drugs

will take you through a series of chemical reactions which will enable you to produce methamphetamine. It is very simple.

However, with red phosphorous, this particular approach or chemical reaction is how you synthesize methamphetamine from ephedrine. This takes me back to a historical perspective of the drug ephedrine. The amendment talks about ephedrine and its salts and optical isomers, but let us do some analysis of ephedrine. This particular use of ephedrine dates back to 1926 or even before that. Thousands of years ago, in the Far East in China, the leaf of the plant *ephedra sinica* was found to have medicinal purposes. Between 1926 and 1928, *ephedra* was introduced to Western civilization. The alkaloid content was about 1 to 3 per cent of the drug and in that percentage which is the medicinal aspect of the leaf, you had 40 to 90 per cent of that particular extract being ephedrine. There were also small traces of pseudoephedrine, which is mentioned here in the amendment, and also norpseudoephedrine. All these are extracts from the leaf of the plant *ephedra sinica*. These particular drugs occur naturally.

When ephedrine came into the medicinal environment, it was the first oral bronco dilator. It was very safe and convenient for a very long time, because it had a long duration of action. It was first introduced into Western civilization as a bronco dilator, but, as the years passed by it became caught up in the illicit drug trade. I want to trace the history because it is important with respect to this amendment. I will be brief.

Hon. Members: No, take your time. You have all the time.

Dr. A. Nanan: I want to go to a particular place in Denmark, because it is important for the House to know a bit about the history of *ephedra* and ephedrine. In 1972, in a town called—Elsinor in Denmark, Dr. Erickson who was treating asthmatic patients—you would recall I said ephedrine was being used as a bronco dilator. He mixed ephedrine with caffeine and found that his patients lost weight. He was treating for asthma but he introduced caffeine, because the caffeine combination increases the intensity of ephedrine and that was the birth of the anti-obesity pill—the Elsinor pill. There were over 250,000 prescriptions written in the United Kingdom for the combination of ephedrine and caffeine. Not large doses, 25 mg of ephedrine and 50 mg of caffeine. In the 1990s there was a marketing campaign for ephedrine and caffeine and the combination now was being marketed to the youth as an energy booster.

So, Mr. Speaker, you see how this particular drug has originated in the Far East and has been transformed into Western civilization. The discovery in Denmark has been used widely as a dietary supplement. Since it became an

energy booster—and it was being marketed as an energy booster—ephedrine and caffeine were used for recreational purposes and you had a lot of over-dosage. Then it became mixed up with the illicit drug trade and became a substrate in the methamphetamine manufacture. It is being used widespread for weight management. This brings me to the point—

Mr. Valley: If the member would give way. What is it that is good for weight management? [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: We will speak about that in a while.

Hon. Member: Wait.

Dr. A. Nanan: Is that a distraction or a question?

Mr. Speaker: I think it is a genuine question. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will just repeat for the Member's elucidation. It came about from Dr. Erickson in Denmark

Dr. Rowley: “He starting over, Ken he starting over”. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: In 1972, what had happened, ephedrine was being marketed as a bronco dilator, so it was being used by doctors for treating asthma. Remember in my last debate, I will get into it, I said that this particular drug mimics the sympathetic system.

Mr. Manning: Mimics the what?

Dr. A. Nanan: The sympathetic system and what it does it causes to be released ephedrine, norephedrine and dopamine. Remember the flight and fight mechanism?

Hon. Member: Flight or fight?

Dr. A. Nanan: Oh yes, sexual potency is also enhanced. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the Member for Tabaquite that he ought to proceed very slowly, because I notice the special interest of the Member for St. Joseph. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will get into that with respect to how it functions in the body under normal conditions, but, to answer the Member for San Fernando East.

In 1972, Dr. Erickson was treating his patients for asthma and giving them ephedrine in the dosage of 25 mg, but, he did mix it with caffeine for some reason and found that his asthmatic patients lost weight. Because of that, Elsinor in

Denmark, that town became famous for something called “the Elsinor pill” a combination of 25mg of ephedrine and 50 mg of caffeine. Dexatrim and all those other combinations of dietary supplements are mixtures of ephedrine and caffeine.

Now, what is happening is, that particular drug crosses the blood brain barrier, it is lipid soluble. The structure of ephedrine is very similar to the structure of methamphetamine, the only difference between the two substances is a methyl group. Because of the similarity in the compounds both of them act on the central nervous system, although, the L-isomer is not as active as the dextra isomer of methamphetamine that is why I said that the—*[Interruption]* Dextro methamphetamine, if the Member would recall, causes shadows and hallucination and paranoia and euphoria.

Dr. Moonilal: Like Members from the other side.

Dr. A. Nanan: And that is why it was removed from Vicks inhalers. In my last contribution I spoke about Vicks inhalers, but after 2001 it was removed from the Vicks inhalers because it can be abused. You could take 20 vicks inhalers and extract this methamphetamine from it and then modify it to get the active form which is dextro methamphetamine.

Going back to the Elsinor pill, there were 250,000 prescriptions written in the UK for this particular combination. The methamphetamine causes in the first two hours very good, clear thinking possibilities. History also tells us that this illicit drug was used in Germany and also in the world wars. It stated there they were giving methamphetamine to the pilots because they had to keep them awake and alert. Now it is being used as an illicit drug.

Unfortunately, with respect to the Elsinor pill—I thought the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West would have made the point with respect to the herbal products that the Member for Caroni Central spoke about. It is important to know that a lot of amino acids that are being sold on the shelf can be converted to methamphetamine. So, while you are trying to control on one side, that particular product may not be going into the dispensary, it might be sold in large quantities. You could pay \$41 for 100 tablets and you could have that opportunity just waiting for anybody with a little chemistry background—as I said before all you need is a box of matches, Member for Diego Martin Central and some iodine crystals and you could get methamphetamine—*[Interruption]*

It is important because, our match factory and our fireworks industry have a lot of red phosphorous—that is how it was before. In California they were using red phosphorous and iodine to take the precursor drugs straight up to methamphetamine.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the situation with respect to the blood brain barrier. Methamphetamine, the dextro form, crosses the blood brain barrier—it is lipid soluble and that is why you get the euphoric effects. With respect to L-methamphetamine, it does not cross the blood brain barrier; it acts basically, peripherally on the receptors—if you will recall in my last contribution, you have the beta receptors in the bronchioles and the alpha receptors in the nostrils. That is why a lot of these drugs the pseudoephedrine are being used as decongestant, they constrict, they act directly on the alpha receptors in the nostrils and they constrict those blood vessels and you have a less runny nose. You can reduce the amount of secretion coming from the nostrils.

6.45 p.m.

What is also important, Mr. Speaker, with these particular drugs, is how they act on the body. They release those endogenous hormones; those things are active in our system, epinephrine, norepinephrine and dopamine. They operate by mimicking our naturally acting hormones; sympathomimetic; they mimic the operations of the sympathetic system.

In my research—because I wanted to show the House—[*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: You are no quack. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Valley: He might be a mad scientist. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: I will also deal with the pharmacist perspective just now, Member, because I also have some pharmacology background.

Hon. Member: Pulling teeth? [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I want to define the compounds in that particular match book that I made reference to; 40 per cent is red phosphorous, 30 per cent is antimony sulfide, glue, iron oxide. What is important is the manganese dioxide; that is the oxidizing agent. I am sure the Member for San Fernando East is aware of that. I spoke about red phosphorous and glass powder. I spoke about red phosphorous and iodine, but I did not tell the House what happens there. I would not go into the detailed chemical reaction.

I spoke about oxidation and reduction, but you have the formation of hydroiodic acid, which is supposed to be controlled by the Toxic Pesticides and Chemicals Control Act. That is why I found this to be a little lacuna in this particular piece of legislation. In the Member's presentation he said that there were several pieces of legislation dealing with these particular precursor drugs. In my research, when I looked at Missouri and various other pieces of legislation throughout the world,

what showed up was that all the substances used in the reagent aspect of the transition from precursors to illicit drugs, were controlled by the Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important for the person who wants to make methamphetamine, to be very aware that while everything is on the Internet about how to make it from these precursor drugs, he has to know that a lot of heat is generated in these reactions; so you can have explosive situations developing. Not only are you going to have the situation where someone is trying to produce an illicit drug, but you can also have a major fire in the particular area, because of the amount of heat generated in these particular reactions. That is why all these reactions must be in a chilled container; they must be cooled down, because of the exothermic potential of the particular reaction. What is also important here is the extracts from the leaf of the ephedra sinica plant; those are naturally occurring compounds, but methamphetamine is a synthetic stimulant drug. It has to be synthesized, because it is not naturally occurring. I know that many people will try to make methamphetamine, but they will end up with the optical isomer that is not what they need.

When the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West placed these particular precursor drugs within the dispensary, he said that you must have a prescription and they must be under the control of a medical practitioner. If I am wrong, he will correct me, I am sure. That is what gives the opening of this particular debate into the pharmacist arena, because once you are putting these drugs within the confines of this schedule, they are going to be dispensed by a pharmacist on the prescription of a medical practitioner. While there is no problem with foreign pharmacists coming into the country, we have to ask the question: Are they qualified? It is my understanding that a number of these Filipino pharmacists have applied in Canada and have been rejected, because their equivalent qualification is a high school diploma.

When I did pharmacology, the course was for three years, but it was intensive training during that three-year period. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Manning: You did a degree in pharmacology?

Dr. A. Nanan: No, there was no degree programme at that time; there was a pharmacy diploma, but once you did it you were a licensed pharmacist after one year.

With pharmacology on the whole, the whole aspect of it is that the pharmacist is supposed to advise the physician. The pharmacist is the last check. When I was a pharmacist—*[Crosstalk]*

Hon. Member: You were a pharmacist?

Dr. A. Nanan:—there were a number of prescriptions coming into the pharmacy and if you were not aware of the dosage, the actions and interactions of the drug—like the combination of caffeine and ephedrine—you could have had serious side effects with a number of drugs. This example is relevant because it is part of the pharmacist's dispensing. If you take a tetracycline and before you take it, or even during the actual oral ingestion, you take a glass of milk, there is an interaction. It is not deadly, but there is a chelating action of the calcium with the tetracycline compound that neutralizes it to some extent, so you do not get the full effect of the tetracycline. Antibiotics are of such that you must have a certain threshold value in the bloodstream for them to act. That is why you have antibiotic resistance, because a number of patients would come, you prescribe a certain regime for five to seven days, one three times a day, but they could only afford a few capsules, so they take three or four capsules and the infection goes away, but the level of drug that is supposed to be in the bloodstream is not there; that is how resistance to antibiotics develops.

Going back to the dispensary with respect to this particular amendment, there must be that check and balance. If a Filipino pharmacist is operating within a dispensary and does not have that knowledge, is not competent, you have the potential for a deadly situation, because of the example I gave with the interaction and the drug would not have the full effect. If you give metronidazole and the person is not advised not to use alcohol, that could have an eventual lethal effect. [Interruption]

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for Tabaquite for giving way. On the basis of your argument, then we should have a proliferation of these problems in the Philippines; is that the case?

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer that question with respect to whether there is a proliferation of that in the Philippines. [Laughter] I am giving an idea of the importance of a pharmacist. [Crosstalk] I am not telling the Government not to bring the pharmacists, but I am showing them why there is need for a competent pharmacist. I have never been in the Philippines, I do not know how they operate, but if you have a student pharmacist, there is always a senior pharmacist supervising; so you must have that check and balance. [Crosstalk] If you want to go to Vision 2020, then have 2020 pharmacists.

The Minister of Health talked about a health sector that is going to be fully operational, in no time at all, offering all these services, but how can you have a

situation where you want to bring in pharmacists. [*Crosstalk*] You want to bring in pharmacists and you have your pharmacists that are of a certain standard, because the Member for Diego Martin East will be maintaining the standard of the pharmacology degree; it has to be internationally recognized. The qualification that is given at the University of the West Indies, the same pharmacy diploma, you can work with that in the United States, and the pharmacology degree can also be used to work elsewhere. It is of an international standard. [*Crosstalk*] That is why I am introducing this particular aspect, that we should not lower the standard to meet the need, because you can have a deadly combination.

Mr. Rahael: Where would you suggest that we get pharmacists?

Dr. A. Nanan: I will do some research on the Internet and find some competent, qualified pharmacists for you.

Let us just say, for argument sake, that X pharmacists—whether Filipino, Malaysian or whatever—are within the operation of a dispensary; the major aspect of prescription writing is Latin. Latin is the language in which doctors write prescriptions. [*Crosstalk*] It is universal with respect to the medical profession. I am not sure if Filipinos can interpret Latin.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: But you just said that it is universal.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am saying that they have a high school diploma, whether Latin is universal or not. [*Crosstalk*] I am just drawing a reference with respect to the interpretation of what exists in this environment and how our pharmacists are supposed to operate. I am not filibustering, because I have a lot more information to give the House.

Hon. Member: But the Philippines is part of the universe.

Dr. A. Nanan: I just wanted to get that point out of the way, before I move on with my contribution and the standard of pharmacists.

Hon. Member: Oh, God! [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. A. Nanan: I will leave that to the Government.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain drugs that can have serious complications developing, whether deadly or non-functional, with respect to what is being used; a typical example is the drug to treat migraine headaches. Concerning migraines, there is a situation with respect to cheese. [*Crosstalk*] It is free medical advice. I should not give it? Okay, I will move on.

Mr. Manning: No, give it.

Dr. A. Nanan: Wine and cheese tend to increase the possibility of migraine headaches.

Mr. Manning: Wine and cheese?

Dr. A. Nanan: There is a certain reaction; with red meat too; that is the whole combination which affects the person who gets migraines. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Red meat?

Dr. A. Nanan: You have to be aware of those things, because if somebody is prescribing a particular drug, for a person who gets migraine headaches, for example, Tonopan, to deal with migraines, and the person takes cheese and wine and eats red meat, he will end up undermining the effect of the drug. That is why when you did pharmacology, you did a lot of the interactions possible to maximize the efficacy of the drug.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: The Member for St. Joseph looks like he is getting a migraine. Do you need Tonopan? [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. A. Nanan: I tutored a lot of students when I was at Howard University; that is an aside. [*Laughter*] There are other specific interactions that need to be followed carefully. If you take antibiotics you should not drink alcohol. A lot of patients are informed that if they use antibiotics and drink alcohol, they will die, but that is not the point. [*Crosstalk*] When you drink alcohol and take antibiotics, you have more urine flow, so the drug is excreted in the urine much faster; it does not remain in the system. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] That is why you should not drink alcohol and take antibiotics, because of the excretion time; you will not get the full effects.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to methamphetamine and the amendment discussion before the House. Again, the Minister of Health is tardy; I have to point that out. This is not about knocking the Minister. [*Crosstalk*] The amendment speaks to phenylpropanolamine, which is another name for norephedrine. I do not know if Members are aware of that.

Mr. Narine: What if you mix brandy and milk? [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Phenylpropanolamine, because of its similarity with ephedrine, releases norephedrine, the same hormone that causes the fight or flight mechanism to occur. Dating back to 2000/2001, phenylpropanolamine was pulled off the shelf, so if you are now going to put it under a Third Schedule, you are late. Phenylpropanolamine was pulled off the shelf because—as I said in my last

contribution—it caused hemorrhage in the brain. It caused strokes in teenaged women. If you look at the preparations now, you would see that phenylpropanolamine has been removed and pseudoephedrine has been introduced. In the particular amendment, where you have the cold preparations and decongestants, pseudoephedrine is now replacing phenylpropanolamine. They have the same effects, with respect to the alpha receptors, but research has shown that phenylpropanolamine causes strokes in teenaged women and it is now in the dispensary. In some places, it is completely off the market.

Mr. Manning: Teenaged what?

Dr. A. Nanan: Teenaged women.

Hon. Member: Teenaged girls.

Dr. A. Nanan: I will not argue semantics this evening. [*Crosstalk*]

If you look at the structure of phenylpropanolamine, you will see that it can be converted to methamphetamine very easily. [*Crosstalk*] If you, really, want me to go back to the tardiness of the Minister of Health, I will. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] I will go back to 1928.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Do not go back; I know it by heart.

Dr. A. Nanan: A lot of the compounds have a hydroxyl group, the OH group. I am sure the *Hansard* could record that.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: All she has to do is copy what you said the last time. I do not want you to go back.

Dr. A. Nanan: This OH group, that is close to a benzene ring, shows acidic properties. That OH group, although basic attached to an acidic ring, it is very difficult to remove.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Like this amendment.

Dr. A. Nanan: For this particular situation, you have to use strong reagents; that is why when I made my initial contribution, I spoke about the importance of the reagents being controlled, because to remove that particular hydroxyl group, you have to first convert it into the chloride. I am sure the Member for San Fernando East is aware of that; that is basic aromatic chemistry. You use the thionyl chloride compound and you convert that OH group to a chloride and then you reduce that with lithium aluminum hydride or sodium borohydride and you end up with the amphetamine. From that

amphetamine you move to methamphetamine by methylating that compound with chloromethane. So with this particular phenylpropanolamine, you have the very peculiar situation where you cannot remove that OH group; you must have that knowledge of chemistry to move that and replace it with hydrogen to become methamphetamine. I was tempted to ask, "Any questions?" but I will go on. [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker, Parkinson's disease—the disease that Pope John Paul is suffering from—is because of a lack of the neurotransmitter dopamine in the brain; this particular compound, methamphetamine, utilizes dopamine as a transmitter. [Crosstalk] In the treatment of Parkinson's, the patient is given El Dopa, which is converted to dopamine. [Interruption]

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

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

Mr. Speaker: Thirteen or 30? [Laughter]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I thank you and hon. Members for extending my time. I give you the assurance that I will not be too long again.

Mr. S. Panday: It is a good contribution. [Interruption]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Would the Member give way? Just in keeping with the scientific lesson that we are getting in pharmacology, I want to know if you mix Kola Accuminata with Rupala Montana, what would that combination result in?

Mr. S. Panday: An aphrodisiac. [Laughter]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: I do not know if the Member would be able to say.

Dr. A. Nanan: That is some particular African herb that I am not aware of. [Laughter] In other words, I do not know.

Mr. Narine: But those are Latin names. [Laughter]

Dr. A. Nanan: Do you have any idea of the expanse of the vocabulary of the pharmacist?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: But you said Latin was universal. I thought you would have known; I am sorry.

Dr. A. Nanan: I thought you asked me to give way for an important piece of advice. *[Laughter]* I would have to get injury time for that, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: It was important to me. *[Laughter]* *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Narine: He does not know what it is.

Dr. A. Nanan: I also want to point out from the dental perspective, which is important—*[Interruption]*

Mr. S. Panday: Hear the dentist speak now.

Dr. A. Nanan: A dental practitioner can, upon a clinical examination, recognize a methamphetamine addict. *[Crosstalk]* A lot of diseases manifest themselves in the mouth. For a lot of initial chronic diseases, you have possible exposure in the mouth. *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. Member: Some people better take note. *[Laughter]*

Dr. A. Nanan: You can pick up the first signs of a disease by a proper examination of the mouth. A lot of cancers are picked up, initially, in the mouth. Squamous Cell Carcinoma can be picked up in the mouth, initially, but once you pick it up early, it can be treated. With AIDS you also have a manifestation in the mouth: purple lesions. With Leukemia you can see early the entire gingival bleeding. Because of methamphetamine crossing the blood way barrier, you have clenching of the jaw and a lot of muscle twitching, in methamphetamine addicts, because of the neurotransmitter being released. *[Crosstalk]* This muscle twitching causes the clenching of the jaw, which causes the teeth to be under tremendous pressure, so you have compression of the teeth. A lot of people who use methamphetamine smoke it and the crystals go onto the tooth surface and erode the enamel; so you can see from the mouth if a person is a methamphetamine addict. You can also tell by the actual musculature of the jaw what is happening with that particular person. *[Crosstalk]* *[Laughter]*

We have to recognize that there are good uses for amphetamines. They are used as appetite suppressants in obese patients in controlled doses. *[Crosstalk]* They can also be used to treat a condition called “narcolepsy”, because they keep you awake. So if a person is sleepwalking or sleeping away all the time—I do not make any reference to your Members. *[Laughter]* *[Crosstalk]* Narcoleptics can be treated with the use of methamphetamines. It is the abuse of amphetamine that

makes it an illicit drug. When you take amphetamine and you add the chloromethane and you go to methamphetamine in the dextro form, then you have abuse taking place. You have amphetamines that are appetite suppressants and because of that potential, you have abuse by athletes.

This might be comical, but it is factual. A lot of athletes use Actifed and Sudafed for simple coughs and colds, but when they are tested, those particular compounds are now banned. They are stimulants, because of the central nervous system effect. Athletes, probably knowingly or unknowingly, use these compounds for enhancement. If you look at the list of drugs that are banned by the Olympic committee, you would see pseudoephedrine and all these compounds, because they have the potential to go towards the central nervous system and give you that stimulant effect. You will also be very awake, so you have an advantage and that is all because of the chemical structure of the compounds. The amendment before the House may look simple, but it has far-reaching consequences; the ramifications are diverse.

Mr. Speaker, the Members may be happy that I am coming to the end of my contribution. I have about five more pages left.

Mr. Manning: Five more pages? Not at all.

Mr. Valley: I am.

Mr. Rahael: Do you want a further extension? [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, you must recall that epinephrine is a naturally occurring hormone in the body, so if you give it orally, it will be totally of no use, because it is digested; so it is given intramuscularly or intravenously. It has medicinal purposes. Epinephrine, even in small quantities, will cause vasoconstriction of the blood vessels, so if you are administering an anesthetic in the mouth, the combination of the anesthetic with epinephrine will cause the blood vessels in the mouth to constrict. If you are injecting in a particular area, you will have more of the anesthetic remaining. If you are injecting in a highly vascular area in the mouth, the anesthetic will be picked up very quickly by the blood if you do not have this constrictor there; that is what prolongs the action of the anesthetic.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask, "What is the importance of that to this debate?" With respect to the medicinal purposes, this particular drug is used to stimulate heartbeat. If a patient goes into syncope or faints, a person may have a tremendous allergic response and just collapse and the whole system shuts down. You could give epinephrine directly into the heart muscle and try to revive him; so it has its uses. For that same fight or flight mechanism, it causes the heart, or any particular muscle grouping to

contract. It is also used to treat emphysema, again, because of its vasoconstrictor properties. Epinephrine is also used in bronchitis and bronchial asthma.

I do not know if Members are also aware that another use of epinephrine is to treat glaucoma. Glaucoma occurs when a person who suffers with high blood pressure has bleeding of the peripheral blood vessels in the back of the eyes and there is blurred vision. You would give epinephrine eye drops to constrict the blood vessels. Glaucoma is brought about by different situations. Diabetics are prone to it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a little about shadows, because it is important for the House to be aware that the symptoms of an addict include insomnia, which I mentioned before; high body temperature, because of the high metabolic rate; elevated blood pressure, that is why he could get a stroke. There is a condition called orthostatic hypertension; a big word. This occurs if you are sleeping and you suddenly get up off the bed, you tend to feel dizzy; that is because your system has not responded to the different change in posture. A lot of people suffer with this condition, where even if they get up from the bed slowly, they still feel dizzy. You can use epinephrine to treat orthostatic hypertension, because it can constrict the blood vessels and you will get elevated blood pressure.

Diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting are common side effects of most drugs, also skin rashes, euphoria, restlessness and dilated pupils. Of course, dilated pupils is a sympathomimetic situation. If you are in a fight or flight situation, your pupils will become dilated. Long-term, the addict would have liver and kidney damage, depression, altered brain chemistry and he could lose weight. Eventually, he would go into a condition called paranoid schizophrenia. If you just trace the addict from when he uses methamphetamine, which can be used by smoking or inhalation, after five days use he then tends to see what is called "shadow people". He has not had sleep for five days; he is in a daze where he sees shadows coming alive.

Just a little history, Mr. Speaker. In Germany, it is said that Hitler used methamphetamine; it is a possibility. [*Crosstalk*] You have the clear thinking possibility, but, eventually, you go into irrational thinking and paranoia. I do not know if you want to give the Prime Minister this. Users often experience feelings of extreme power in their minds [*Laughter*] and this power is usually not paused when the user starts off the day with a good night's sleep. That will be very dangerous for the Prime Minister, who thinks that he has all that power already. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Manning: Ask Jerry who using that.

Dr. Rafeeq: For different reasons.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, before I wind up, I just have a few points I want to touch on. [*Interruption*]

Mr. S. Panday: You chased the Speaker out. The Speaker himself had to run.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much more time do I have, Sir?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have a little more than 10 minutes.

Dr. A. Nanan: I now go to the other Bill before the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill, and the importance of the Environmental Management Act (EMA) to it.

There is a link between illicit drugs and toxic chemicals, because hydroiodic acid and potassium permanganate are not things that we would consume. These are toxic chemicals, but you have to control them, at some point in time. Thionyl chloride, lithium aluminum hydride, all those toxic chemicals, must be controlled. The Minister said that regulations are coming with respect to this particular Bill. I hope that when the regulations are made that they will be all-encompassing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, toxic chemicals include the stores of DDT. There is something that is important to understand. This is a slight digression, because I have gone back into the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) Bill. Thalidomide was given to pregnant mothers for motion sickness. Again, unknowingly, thalidomide was an optical isomer, so the other isomer caused birth defects. I am sure the Prime Minister is aware of the racemic mixture; it has both of the isomers, whether it is dextrorotatory or laevorotatory; you have equal amounts of both of them. When you were using thalidomide in the past, you were treating with one particular isomer for the motion sickness, but you got birth defects from the other isomer. That is the situation with these optical isomers, one can be useful and the other totally destructive.

This takes me now to the storage of DDT and other toxic chemicals. The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) is supposed to be looking after the environment. I want the Prime Minister to be aware that the Water Pollution Rules that are not coming before the House—whenever I pass on the bus route near Beetham Gardens, I see what is being poured into that particular river there, every Friday, as a rule. We have to move to the polluter-pay-principle; whether we are stepping on people's toes, we must put country first. The Water Pollution Rules must come before the House, because the country needs to have some kind of legislative framework in which to operate. There is an Environmental Management Act, there is an Environmental Commission and there is an Environmental

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Management Authority, but part of the legislative framework is missing for the action of the EMA, especially in the area of water pollution. [*Crosstalk*]

That is not a problem. I was dealing with the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act. [*Crosstalk*] That is not irrelevant with respect to what is happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When you have major flooding taking place, as we did recently, all the pesticides as fertilizers in our soil are distributed all over the country and they end up in our seas and rivers and you can have a fish kill. Mr. Speaker, you cannot charge anybody for fish kill. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources should be aware of that. Unless you see somebody putting something in the water, then it is an offence, but if there is a fish kill nobody is responsible. That is the situation right now; that is a loophole that needs to be addressed. You may find out what is the chemical used or what has happened, but nobody is really culpable with respect to that particular pollutant.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West spoke about the Vienna Convention and the convention dealing with dangerous drugs, but there is another convention dealing with persistent organic pollutants (POPs). Trinidad and Tobago has signed on to this Convention, but we have not taken the steps to ratify it. With respect to the persistent organic pollutants, there are certain chemicals that can have harmful effects within the environment. While we are signing on to a convention, we need to go further with respect to ratification of the legislative framework.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is important with these two particular pieces of legislation is the half-life situation, which does not only apply to radioactivity, it also applies to the chemical and the time that it would lose its destructive ability, use or potency, as my hon. colleague has reminded me. With radioactivity, it is when half of the particular compound has deteriorated. If a compound has a long half-life, it means that it remains in the environment over a longer period of time. As I go back and forth between the two amendments, you will see that ephedrine has a long half-life; it remains longer in the system and has a greater effect.

The Oily and Hazardous Waste Rules is another part of the legislative framework that is missing. You have a lot of hazardous oily waste going straight from the service stations, in many cases, into our rivers and all these things are toxic chemicals in different classifications, but they are all detrimental to mankind. When we deal with these amendments before us, this has to be considered. The Minister of Health needs to meet with the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, under whose portfolio the EMA reports, to ensure that there is some linkage with respect to toxic

chemicals and pesticides. The EMA representative is now on this particular board; that is a linkage that is necessary. It needs to go further than that, because the EMA representative might sit on that board and just be a representative going back and forth. We need to have more cooperation between the agencies. Oily and hazardous waste rules must be produced and brought to the Parliament; so, too, the Water Pollution Rules.

Of course, we have that situation at Forres Park with respect to toxic chemicals emanating from the landfills, which is a whole new debate, but it is important, because toxic chemicals in the atmosphere have serious debilitating effects on the society. *[Interruption]*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the toxic chemical situation, not only in the landfills, but the misuse of chemicals can also be a major problem in the country. As the Member for Caroni Central pointed out, there is also the situation with chemicals not being handled properly. A number of chemicals, once they are released into the soil, do not last long there. *[Crosstalk]* If handled properly, they are not detrimental, but there are people who are not aware of this. In fact, in my constituency, somebody sprayed a vegetable garden with a weed killer and there was a sudden draft of wind and the chemical blew across into a neighbour's yard and affected the children of that particular household.

Mr. Narine: They sprayed a vegetable garden with a weed killer? *[Crosstalk]*

Dr. A. Nanan: There was also that particular spraying that caused all the children in Barrackpore to be hospitalized. There was also the aluminium disaster in Bhopal, India. I wanted to draw the reference to that particular situation where there was a major disaster and people are still suffering from the effects in Bhopal. Before we have an environmental disaster—I am not hoping that we do—but we need to take stock of our legislative framework with these toxic chemicals. Thank you.

Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town*): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Tabaquite has done a good job. *[Interruption]* I would like you to stay, because there is a very important point I want to make. *[Crosstalk]* As a matter of fact, the Member for Tabaquite scared the life out of me, in that, I suffer with some of the symptoms he mentioned.

Mr. Manning: “Doh” say which one. *[Laughter]* *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. S. Panday: Before I go into the main aspect of my contribution, my colleagues have dealt with issues of the Food and Drugs (Amdt.) Bill, so I will concentrate on the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals (Amdt.) Bill.

Mr. Speaker, in section 6, which has been amended, there seems to be a mistake. It says:

“The Minister may designate public officers to be analysts and inspectors according to their qualifications...The Minister may designate Public Officers to be Medical Examiners who shall be members of the Medical Board.”

In this amendment, the hon. Minister speaks about putting veterinary surgeons after the words “Medical Board”. This cannot be the intention of the Bill. It should have said:

“Medical practitioners who are registered with the Medical Board”

If the Minister may designate public officers to be analysts and inspectors, according to their qualifications, and those people are to be medical examiners who shall be members of the Medical Board, that group is so small that you may not be able to get the kind of expertise needed. I humbly submit that we need to look at that aspect.

Mr. Narine: That rules out Jennifer.

Mr. S. Panday: Before we go any further, we are merely putting a framework in place, what about its implementation? One would have been happy to hear the Minister indicate how well this Act has been performing. Do we have the number of inspectors in place or will it be like Occupational Health and Safety Act, where you pass laws and adorn your law books with these pieces of legislation and, at the end of the day, you are not implementing them? Is there a sufficient number of inspectors? How many people have been prosecuted under this Act? Is the Act working or are we just passing legislation for legislation sake?

Another point which gives the impression that we are merely passing legislation for the sake of passing legislation and putting an amendment, as they say, to probably expand the definition of toxic chemical. When one looks at the long title of the Bill it is, really, to deal with importation and now exportation and it is the same Act really being flipped across. We would like to know. When one looks at the various amendments, having heard the Member for Tabaquite, one would see that this is a very serious piece of legislation. When one looks at the penalties which are imposed for the breach of such serious offences, one would see

under section 13 of the parent Act, where it says that if anyone breaches the regulations and the Act—one expects a greater penalty. Under the Dangerous Drugs Act, the penalties for breaches have gone from \$10,000 to \$25,000 to \$50,000 to \$100,000 to \$200,000.

Mr. Speaker, the penalties under the old Act state:

“Except as provided in section 13, a person who contravenes the provisions of the regulations is liable for an offence and to a fine of two hundred and fifty dollars and twenty dollars for each day.”

That was in 1979; taking devaluation of the dollar into consideration, look where we have gone:

“deleting the words ‘five hundred’ and ‘one thousand’ and substituting the words ‘two thousand’ to ‘four thousand’...”

When one looks at the Bill, it really applies to large conglomerates and big businesses. One could get the impression that they would breach this Bill with impunity because of the small fines which are imposed. They, probably, just would not care. I humbly submit that what is necessary for such legislation is that the fines be increased, so that they will act as a deterrent to people breaching the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot go as highly academic, as my friend, the Member for Tabaquite. I promise that I will not carry the House to the extent that we have to order dinner. [*Laughter*]

The hon. Minister said that the legislative framework regarding chemical control, as currently exists, could be described as varied and scattered. Provisions for control and monitoring of such chemicals are found in three pieces of legislation, namely: the Food and Drugs Act, the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act and the Dangerous Drugs Act. When my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, went through the chemicals, one could see that a greater strain would now be placed on the Forensic Science Centre.

I do not want to open my debate very wide just to focus on that, Mr. Speaker, but the situation at the Forensic Science Centre is in a bad way. There is one handwriting expert and very few analysts. When a person is charged with a simple narcotic matter—one joint—and he comes before the court and pleads not guilty, the prosecution then has to prove that that exhibit, which was found in his possession is, indeed, a prohibited drug. It has to go to the Forensic Science Centre to be tested. When it goes there, it takes sometimes up to two years before it comes back.

We speak about race and so on, but hon. Member for San Fernando East, that Member for Laventille East/Morvant is doing a great injustice. Go to the jail and you

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will feel to cry. Go to the courts and you will feel to cry. Ninety-five per cent of the persons in jail are the landless. I do not want to talk race. Young boys, 18 years, 19 years, for one stick, they go to jail and have to remain in custody for two years, because they are either living in a National Housing Authority (NHA) house or squatting on the line; they do not have any realty and, as such, they cannot obtain bail. Our little children are suffering in the jail.

7.45 p.m.

We want to solve crime. All of us are against crime, but at the same time we must look at the situation as it stands. We must have social conscience. They suffer for almost two years. When a young man loses two years of his life at that early stage and he wins the case, Mr. Speaker—

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the completion of the matters before the House.

Question put and agreed to.

**PESTICIDES AND TOXIC CHEMICALS
(AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL**

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, after two years waiting to have this case heard, he comes out a frustrated man.

One, he has been put with hardened criminals and has been humiliated in jail. Jail is a place that humiliates you, 90 per cent of the young boys are buggered in jail and when they are released they hate society and they going back into the same system.

Mr. Speaker, we had found that as we pass these Bills, there is a greater burden on the Forensic Science Centre and when that is done, we are going to extend that problem that we have in the judicial system.

When one looks at it from another point, not only do we have all these people coming back—when you are in custody they cannot remand you for more than seven or nine days. So they are coming in that Black Maria every nine days, and if there are 90 cases with inmates from the prison, 90 policemen have to come to court or 100 because you have witnesses. So you have the police in the courts and the time the court takes to go through the list, it is almost 1 o'clock in the afternoon. So when these 90 policemen could have been outside dealing with crime, they have to be tied up in the courts. We look at it from one angle where people are suffering because

they do not have land, they are not wealthy, because when the wealthy and the middle class are charged they come out the next day, but the kind of people who are in custody are those from the lower strata in society. So we are trying to fight crime but most of the policemen are tied up in the courts for most of the day, and when they are in the courts all day, and they are told they have to work in the night, at nights they cannot perform.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to deal with crime we need to look at the situation and deal with it. The facts are that most of the members of the Judiciary whether they originally come from the lower class, very shortly after appointment, they acquire a middle class attitude and if you go to the courts and hear the pleadings of these people, they say—that is the law and they send you up—you see men in San Fernando kicking up the wire, it is like they want to burst through because they are so frustrated that they cannot have their cases heard.

We are denying those persons their constitutional rights. In Jamaica, it is said that you have a constitutional right to a speedy trial, and our Constitution says you must have a right to a fair trial, but I humbly submit that in fairness, the speed at which a trial takes place is also important.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, what you are saying is very interesting, but can you establish the link for me please? You spoke about the Forensic Science Centre, return to that please?

Mr. S. Panday: Yes. I am saying that all this legislation would be putting an extra burden on the Forensic Science Centre and I am making the point that the situation would be exacerbated. That is the link. So we need to look at that whole issue.

This point has been noted by the present Minister of National Security, and I quote from the *Daily Express* of March 02, 2005:

“National Security Minister, Martin Joseph said yesterday that one of the problems at the Forensic Science Centre is the shortage of personnel.”

And this Bill will impact upon that.

“In response to a question from Mr. Robin Montano at yesterday’s sitting of the Senate...Joseph said the problems the Forensic Science Centre face did not happen overnight, adding that steps are being taken to remedy the situation.”

Mr. Speaker, if we go through the normal steps to remedy that situation, by the time that happens, we would be in total chaos because to train persons in forensic science takes probably about five years.

“Joseph said there is a problem with respect to recruitment as specialist type personnel are required. ‘We can’t just pull people off the street and put them in the Forensic Science Centre,’ he said.”

What he is saying is that this will take a long time to deal with. I am saying that we are creating criminals during that time; we are creating criminals in the jail by not giving them an early trial.

“He said four scholarships have been approved and are offered and there had been discussions with the British Government to deal with the backlog at the Centre.”

I humbly submit, Mr. Speaker, that four scholarships will not make a dent in the deplorable situation at the Forensic Science Centre.

“He said the ministry is doing a comprehensive report on the needs of the Centre and both long-term and short-term measures are being adopted.”

I would have been happy if he had indicated what those long-term and short-term measures were.

“Joseph said that there are 232 matters before the courts where the accused had been granted bail but the matters were postponed because of delayed reports from the Forensic Science Complex.

He also said that according to the Commissioner of Police, 111 matters have been postponed where the accused persons have been remanded in custody but are unable to get bail.”

Mr. Speaker, I doubt the integrity of those figures. I am not blaming the Minister, but I am saying whosoever gave him those figures misled him, because in one court in San Fernando, I know personally that there are about 200 or 300 matters. He dealt with the latter in the following way:

“He said of this 111, a total of 33 persons have been remanded in custody without bail...”

And at the end it is quoted:

“Joseph responded immediately that he has to double check the figures.”

Mr. Speaker, this is the problem. We are passing laws, we are putting framework—as my hon. friend, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West says—we are putting that legislative framework in place, but unless we put infrastructure for the implementation of the legislative framework we are going nowhere. We are just passing laws for the sake of passing them.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said in many quarters that the Opposition does not make any contributions as to solutions, or put forward solutions. I think that the situation of crime is so important and this situation at the Forensic Science Centre is so grave that we need to look at this issue from a nonpartisan point of view, and I humbly suggest, hon. Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East, that if we really want to make a dent in crime, we must ensure these pieces of legislation are implemented.

Having regard to what the Minister has said, it would appear to me that the situation would not be solved in this manner and we should take immediate steps to privatize the Forensic Science Centre. If we do that, and the Government now becomes a client of the centre, I am certain that the private enterprise or a joint enterprise between the Government and the private sector will bring that new management structure that will be able to bring that kind of expertise that would deal with the matter expeditiously and to prevent the hon. Minister from sounding so frustrated.

When one reads between the lines, one would see that the hon. Minister—and I do not blame him, I cast no blame on anyone at this stage—one senses the frustration and hopelessness in the tone and the voice of the hon. Minister.

Assuming that the Forensic Science Centre is a part of the Ministry of National Security, and for national security purposes we want to have our fingers on it, I would not even say we want to control, or we want power. Like we have done at Mount Hope where the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has leased some suites to the cardiac people and you have a hold on them and they do their heart surgery, but the place belongs to you. In your lease agreement as a conveyancer, you can put whatever terms you want to ensure that the integrity of the Ministry of National Security is maintained.

So we are passing laws here as you say to deal with precursor drugs and I am certain that precursor is with crime and what not, and I make this one point and say that we try as legislators to look at that problem and see if we can go in that direction to deal with the matter immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to 8.00 p.m. for them to get extra food.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Speaker, I thank all the Members on the other side for their contributions. I thank the Member for Tabaquite for his university lecture this evening and his very informative discourse.

I have heard the Member for Princes Town loud and clear with respect to the Forensic Science Centre and we are certainly going to address it as you have rightly said. The Minister of National Security is already looking at it to ensure that the personnel who are required both for short and long term are being pursued and we are going to do whatever is necessary to upgrade the Forensic Science Centre.

The Member for Caroni Central raised certain points; one of them relates to the Pharmacy Assistants Programme that he referred to. I am very pleased and happy to let him know that Cabinet has approved the programme and it is to start on April 01. We are going to be training 200 pharmacy assistants, but it would be in batches of 50 and there are going to be persons from the public and private sectors. *[Interruption]* Yes. Well, those from the public sector would be internal and the private sector would be through the Pharmacy Board, so it is not going to be advertised in the newspapers.

As I said, we will be training 25 persons initially from the public sector because there are persons who are classified as clerks right now working in the pharmacy and assisting to some extent and from the private sector—they will pay their own way. Those from the private sector will pay. Of course, those in the public sector will be paid by the Government and there will be a scholarship for that. Those from the private sector, I think will be contacted through the Pharmacy Board, and 25 persons identified. I suspect that is how they will do it.

Dr. Rafeeq: I thank the hon. Member for giving way, but I do not think—maybe you can have the Pharmacy Board assist in the selection process eventually, but there should be some means of advertisement so that all pharmacies will have the opportunity to have their clerks—

Hon. J. Rahael: We certainly will discuss that with the Pharmacy Board. The concern is that initially it is going to be in batches of 50 as I indicated, so there will be just 25 from the private sector. So yes, the Pharmacy Assistants Programme is to begin on April 01 and we will be training 200 persons for two years.

The point about the herbal products is also being addressed. The Herbal Products Regulation is expected to be approved by the end of March and, of course, it will go to the Food and Drugs Department for final approval. So progress has been made and work has been done in those areas.

You raised the question of the doctors' contracts. As you are aware, attempts have been made now to get the medical professionals who are public servants over to the Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and I am confident that the RHA will now offer them permanent jobs. The doctors have always been on contracts through the RHAs Some in

fact, requested a one-year contract, some will request a three-year contract and that is being addressed by the Regional Health Authorities.

You raised the point about the Registrars, the last time you also raised that point and the attorneys looked at it and the advice is, notwithstanding that the post—in fact the Act created a post of Registrar under the establishment of the public service and the Public Service Commission appoints the individual. Again, I know because it advises that the Minister does not appoint this individual and no Minister has ever invoked this clause of section 5.

Dr. Rafeeq: Again I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. Mr. Speaker, the Minister is saying there is a public service post of Registrar, and if I get what he is saying accurately, the Public Service Commission appoints that person to the post? Then we have two Registrars because the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals parent Act says:

“The Minister shall designate an officer from the Food and Drugs Division to be Registrar.”

So this is clear that the Minister appoints the Registrar, which is what the Act says. So how can you have this in the Act and then you have a position of Registrar that the Public Service Commission is appointing. One has to go; either you suppress that post, or you take this off.

Hon. J. Rahael: I think we can look at it in the committee stage again, but this has always been in the Act. So it is not a new amendment that is now being brought forward. It has always been in the Act.

Mr. Speaker, that is what is happening with respect to that situation. Mr. Speaker, the hour is late and, therefore, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 7 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 8.

Question proposed, That clause 8 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Rahael: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 8 be amended as circulated.

Insert after the word “Veterinary” the word “Surgeons”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 8, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 9 and 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

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

FOOD AND DRUGS (AMDT.) (No. 2) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, That a Bill to amend the Food and Drugs Act, Chap. 30:01, be now read a second time.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House be adjourned to Friday, March 11, at 1.30 p.m.

I wish to inform my colleagues that on that day the Government plans to complete the debate on Item No. 5 on today's Order Paper, the Home Mortgage Bank (Amdt.) Bill, and also Items 3 and 4 on the Order Paper.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.12 p.m.