

*Leave of Absence**Friday, May 27, 2005***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, May 27, 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 following Members seeking leave of absence from today's sitting of the House: the hon. Member for Arima (Hon. Pernelle Beckles); the hon. Member for Diego Martin East (Hon. Colm Imbert); the hon. Member for Caroni East (Mr. Ganga Singh); the hon. Member for Couva South (Mr. Kelvin Ramnath) and the hon. Member for Laventille West (Hon. Eulalie James). The leave which the Members seek is granted.

EDUCATION (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Education Act, Chap. 39:01; brought from the Senate. [*The Minister of Education*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex Authority for the year ended December 31, 1994. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Venture Capital Incentive Programme for the year ended September 30, 2000. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Venture Capital Incentive Programme for the year ended September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Environmental Trust Fund for the year ended September 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the abridged financial statements of the Deposit Insurance Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Papers Laid

Friday, May 27, 2005

6. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Police Complaints Authority for the year ended September 30, 2002. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
7. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Police Complaints Authority for the year ended September 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
8. Annual report and annual audited statements of accounts of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
9. Third Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Regional Health Authorities Pension Fund Plan for the period September 22, 1999 to December 31, 2000. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
10. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Tobago House of Assembly for the year ended September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Papers 1 to 10 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

11. Report of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation for the period October 1999 to September 2000. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
12. Report of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation for the period October 2000 to September 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
13. Report of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation for the period October 2001 to September 2002. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
14. Report of the Princes Town Regional Corporation for the period October 2003 to September 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
15. The Immigration (Exemption from Work Permit Requirements) Order, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

COPYRIGHT (AMDT.) BILL
Special Select Committee Report
(Presentation)

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Roger Boynes): Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the table the Fourth Interim Report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Copyright (Amdt.) Bill, 2004.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform hon. Members that the Government is able to answer all the questions on the Order Paper, except one.

We are asking for a deferral of question No. 17 for a period of two weeks. The Government will answer questions Nos. 14, 16, 27, 30 and 31.

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

**List of Projects and Programmes
(Details of)**

- 17.** Could the Hon. Attorney General provide this House with a list of all projects and programmes involving state enterprises, statutory authorities and other state institutions in which parliamentarians have been engaged by the State, as well as the amount of moneys paid for their services since January 2002 to the present time?

Question, by leave, deferred.

**United Nations Observance Days
(Steps for Implementation and Support of)**

- 14. Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche)** asked the Hon. Prime Minister:

Would the Prime Minister state what steps are being undertaken and programmes implemented or supported by his administration to observe and highlight:

- (i) The United Nations Observance of International Women's Day March 08, 2005; and
- (ii) The United Nations Observance of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination March 21, 2005?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Hon. Edward Hart): Mr. Speaker, on March 08, 2005, the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams, officially launched International Women's Day celebrations on the Brian Lara Promenade, where 84 organizations including 17 government ministries, statutory bodies and quasi governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other interest groups provided information and

Oral Answers To Questions
[HON. E. HART]

Friday, May 27, 2005

displays on the promenade, as well as participated in a street parade and a cultural rally.

The Ministry collaborated with key stakeholders in the planning and execution of the observance of International Women's Day. Advertisements were also placed in all media promoting the significance of the day and encouraging public participation.

The Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women of Trinidad and Tobago hosted a workshop at the Ministry of Works and Transport on March 10, 2005. The workshop focused on saving mechanisms for the economic empowerment of women. Other workshops on different aspects of empowering women were hosted by various government ministries during the week of March 07—11, 2005.

The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs hosted a three-part lecture series which was aired on television on March 01, 03 and 07, 2005, in recognition of the contribution of women's international development. These lectures focused on women in calypso; the media and non traditional occupations and sought to identify challenges and successes as well as to inspire new entrants. The general public was able to ask questions and give their comments. These programmes serve to inspire and educate the national public.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago also provided financial and technical support to the following NGOs that requested assistance to commemorate International Women's Day celebrations: the Network of Non-Governmental Organizations for the Advancement of Women in Trinidad and Tobago which represents over 100 women organizations; the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies; Men Against Violence Against Women (MAVAW) and the Hope for the Elderly.

No formal programmes were put in place to highlight the United Nations Observance of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21, 2005. However, in July 2003, this administration convened a round table to hold discussions on race relations with a view to fostering racial harmony between the two major ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago. This committee which was appointed by Cabinet currently comprises a moderator and one representative from each of the following organizations: the Emancipation Support Committee; the National Association for the Empowerment of African People; the Muslim Coordinating Council; the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha; the National Council of Indian Culture and Club L'Ouverture.

At its inaugural meeting in July 2003, the hon. Prime Minister asked members to formally begin the work of exchanging ideas and the perspectives on racial harmony

and ultimately, national unity. The committee's terms of reference include dialogue among the members with representatives keeping their respective organizations appropriately informed. The discussions must also take place in a manner that does not create discord but facilitates understanding of different perspectives on matters related to race. The committee has been meeting regularly.

Thank you.

**List of Criminal and Civil Cases
(Details of)**

16. Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Attorney General:

Could the Attorney General provide this House with a list of all the cases both criminal and civil, in which parliamentarians have been retained as counsel, as well as the amount of moneys paid for their services since January 2002 to the present time?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie): Mr. Speaker, the information which is sought by the hon. Member is available in the latest report of the Auditor General on the public accounts of Trinidad and Tobago which is dated April 25, 2005, and was laid recently in this House, together with the previous annual reports.

**Procurement of Goods and Services
(Government's Intention)**

27. Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Could the Minister indicate whether the Government intends to create new state agencies for the procurement of goods and services in Trinidad and Tobago?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, the overall objective of Government policy is to create an environment where citizens can enjoy an enhanced quality of life particularly in the areas of education, health, housing and personal security. Implicit in this objective is the aim for the country to achieve standards of performance in all dimensions, the economic, social, environmental, technological and institutional, similar to those of developed countries.

In this regard, the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) is a comprehensive instrument of Government's policy representing the public investment thrust across

sectors. The PSIP 2005 consists of high priority investment projects which are being pursued as another step in moving towards developed nation status. The PSIP 2005 advances the Government's commitment to the long-term goal for Trinidad and Tobago and is carried out by government ministries and departments and the Tobago House of Assembly.

To this end, Government has agreed to the establishment of five wholly owned state enterprises under the Companies Act, Chapter 81:01, to carry out the functions as follows:

- (i) As Government has embarked on a course to diversify the economy and develop capacity in the non-energy sectors, a new institutional framework has been developed for tourism marketing and development in Trinidad and Tobago. In September 2004, the Tourism Development Company Limited was established and charged with the responsibility for developing all aspects of the tourism sector, including the establishment of standards to be maintained at all identified national sites and attractions and the implementation of those standards.
- (ii) The Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited was established on September 27, 2004, to facilitate the implementation of the National Sport Policy pending the establishment of the Sports Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. This limited liability company is charged with the responsibility for providing advice and making recommendations to the ministry responsible for sports on matters relating to sports and physical recreation; implementing suitable programmes for total participation in sport and high performance sport management and maintenance of sport facilities and designing and setting standards for National Coaching Programmes for coaching certification.
- (iii) The National Infrastructure Development Company Limited was established on January 11, 2005, to assist those ministries that do not possess the institutional capacity to manage projects. The company was therefore established with the responsibility for the procurement of designs, construction, management and financing of priority projects. The financing and implementation of these projects could be outsourced to the private sector under a variety of arrangements to be determined on a case by case basis under an approved policy.
- (iv) The Education Facilities Company Limited was established on March 11, 2005, with the responsibility for the procurement of designs, construction

and management of projects under the Ministry of Education. It is envisaged that the human resources, financial and other expertise will be outsourced to deliver projects in a cost effective and timely manner. The establishment of the Education Facilities Company Limited is therefore a mechanism for implementing the required infrastructure to advance the country's social and economic development.

- (v) There are a number of significant large-scale projects under several ministries which impact on rural development. The Rural Development Company Limited was established on May 02, 2005, to undertake the management and implementation of projects related to rural development. Implementation in this context would include a variety of functions required to organize, manage and fund the process of rural development through all its stages as appropriate.

Dr. Khan: Can I then infer that the formation of these companies in tourism, sports, works, transport, education and several other ministries was done as a result of lack of implementation in these ministries?

Hon. K. Valley: I think that could be an incorrect inference. For example, the Tourism Development Company was hived off Tidco. About 10 or 11 years ago, we attempted to bring together the Export Development Company, the Industrial Development Corporation at that time as well as the tourism company, I cannot remember what it was called then, to form Tidco with the concept that this one organization would promote Trinidad and Tobago as both a location for investment as well as a destination for tourists. At that time there was one minister heading both areas, trade and industry as well as tourism.

However, over time with portfolio changes it was felt that tourism development ought to be separate and apart from the trade and investment aspect. That is the reason for the formation of the Tourism Development Company to give that type of focus.

With respect to the sports company as stated in the answer, the long-term concept is to have a sports commission. In the meantime, the sports company will implement the policy of the ministry. The ministries are supposed to be policy-making bodies with the implementation outsourced via the sports company in this instance.

The same applies for the infrastructure company. Policy-making would remain that of the ministries, but the implementation would be outsourced by these companies.

Dr. Khan: Is the Member for Diego Martin Central saying that in the ministries that have been mentioned, there is no implementation arm? It is only policy-making with no implementation? Is that how it was done before?

Hon. K. Valley: This Government has found it more efficient to have the implementation outside of the ministry and leave the ministry to concentrate on policy design.

Dr. Khan: Can I then infer that the Government found that the implementation arms of the so called ministries were incompetent that you have to form these new companies for implementation?

Hon. K. Valley: It begs the question, that he is assuming that there was an implementation arm in the ministries beforehand.

Dr. Khan: Is this not the same method of approach that was condemned by the PNM when they were in Opposition and the United National Congress was doing the same thing?

Hon. K. Valley: I think that he has to provide some examples.

Munroe Road Hindu School (Status of)

30. Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Would the Minister state when will commencement of the construction of the Munroe Road Hindu School begin, and what is the expected completion date?

The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Manning): Mr. Speaker, the reconstruction of Munroe Road Hindu School requires the completion of the acquisition of an additional parcel of three acres of land to relocate the school as the current site is inadequate. Upon completion of the identification and acquisition of a suitable parcel of land, architects and users-briefs will be prepared to reflect recent developments in the provision of physical facilities to enable more efficient and effective delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum. The construction of a primary school usually takes one year.

Mr. Ramsaran: I would like the Minister to tell us what has happened since the school was supposed to be built in 2000 to now.

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: We are in the process of acquiring land. The school is on a very small parcel of land. That school cannot be built on that small parcel of land because the curriculum is different. When the land is acquired then we will be able to start the process.

**Industrial Court
(Irving Street, San Fernando)**

31. Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): asked the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Information:

- (a) Could the Minister of Public Administration and Information inform this House whether the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is renting premises located at Irving Street, San Fernando to house a branch of the Industrial Court?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state:-
 - (i) who is the owner of the property being rented;
 - (ii) the date of the commencement of negotiations for the rental of the property; and
 - (iii) what is the monthly rental inclusive of the service charges, the terms of the lease and whether there is an option to renew and if so, at what rent?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, the Government is renting premises at Irving Street, San Fernando to house a branch of the Industrial Court. The origin was the decision of the Cabinet in September 2001, that the Property and Real Estate Services Division of the then Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Local Government, in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs identify suitable temporary accommodation in San Fernando and Scarborough to house the proposed south and Tobago offices of the Industrial Court.

The owner of the property is Perseverance Holdings Limited.

In accordance with Cabinet's decision in September 2001, interest in leasing/renting the building was communicated to Perseverance Holdings Limited on April 23, 2002. Negotiations for the rental of the property commenced on August 22, 2002 and were completed on April 16, 2003.

The monthly rental inclusive of service charges is \$98,871.23 (\$6.75 per sq. ft) plus \$14,830.68, value added tax for approximately 14,747 sq. ft of air-conditioned office space, together with all on-site car parking spaces. The lease is for three years starting from April 16, 2003 and does not contain an option to renew.

Dr. Nanan: Can the Minister name the directors of the company, Perseverance Holdings Limited?

Hon. K. Valley: No. I cannot.

SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Supreme Court of Judicature Act, Chap. 4:01, [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION BILL**

A Bill to establish the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation and for related matters, [*The Minister of Housing*]; read the first time.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
(APPOINTMENT TO)**

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion:

Be it resolved that the Hon. Eulalie James, Member of Parliament be discharged from the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to enquire and report on government ministries with responsibility for areas listed in Part I and on the statutory and state enterprises falling under those ministries and that the hon. Edward Hart, Member of Parliament be appointed a Member of the said committee.

Question put and agreed to.

**OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT
(PROCLAMATION AND IMPLEMENTATION)**

Mr. Harry Partap (Nariva): Mr. Speaker, I wish to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas the Occupational Safety and Health Act, No. 1 of 2004, was passed in the House of Representatives on December 05, 2003 and in the Senate on January 13, 2004; and

Whereas the Occupational Safety and Health Act, No. 1 of 2004, was passed in the House of Representatives on December 05, 2003 and in the Senate on January 13, 2004; and

Whereas the said Act was assented to by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on January 30, 2004; and

Whereas the said Act has not been proclaimed and therefore cannot be implemented; and

Whereas there has been a high incidence of industrial accidents resulting in the death of several workers in the workplace;

Be it resolved that the Government take all necessary steps to have the Occupational Safety and Health Act proclaimed and implemented without further delay.

Before I start my contribution on this Motion, let me on behalf of my colleagues remember those who died in their workplaces, being victims of PNM's negligence and inactions. We sympathize with the bereaved families. Indeed, it is with deep distress and pain that I list those who died in their workplaces, victims as well of lapses in safety and health condoned by an anti-worker, anti-labour PNM Government.

Between January last year and the present time, the dead are: Kenneth Merrick who died in a gas explosion at Petrotrin—his blood is on the hands of the PNM; Selwyn Heeradan who also died in an explosion at Ramco—his blood is on the PNM's hands; Sanjeev Rampersad who died after being crushed at the port—his blood is on the PNM's hands; Marcus Arthur who died after falling from a roof at the port—his blood in on the PNM's hands.

Dale Paul died in an explosion—his blood is on the PNM's hand. Shivam Harrilal died in an explosion—his blood is on the PNM's hand. Kelvin Callendar died in an explosion at TCL—his blood is also on the PNM's hand.

2.00 p.m.

It is now 18 months since the Occupational and Safety and Health Bill was passed in this House, and 16 months since it was assented to by the President and became law, but OSHA cannot be implemented until proclaimed.

Mr. Speaker, when we on this side gave our unanimous support for the passage of OSHA on December 03, 2003, the then Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development announced that it was an early Christmas gift to the workers of the country.

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. PARTAP]

Friday, May 27, 2005

I want the Member for Point Fortin to know that his gift has not been delivered to the workers of this country, and two Christmases have elapsed. What this incompetent PNM Government has delivered instead to the workers of this country since Christmas 2003, was the grim reality of seven coffins bearing the bodies of those who perished through falls from great heights or explosions or being roasted by intense heat. All this has happened because the law was not in place to protect the lives on the factory floor. Seven families lost their loved ones; seven families lost their breadwinners; seven citizens could have been alive today if the OSHA legislation was operational.

Only on Monday, 23 May 2005, Dale Paul was buried in Claxton Bay, the victim of severe burns about the body when a fire broke out on a 90-foot platform at the International Steel Group at Point Lisas. His three colleagues: Zynool Hosein, Gregory Philip, and Morris Grant suffered first degree burns. They are still at hospital. On May 14, 2005, this month, Sylvester McMillan was burnt in a fire in the gantry tank farm at National Petroleum, Sea Lots. He suffered burns to the face, chest, stomach and hands.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from a story in the *Guardian* of Monday, 23 May, 2005 written by Radhica Sookraj. She wrote about the death of Dale Paul. I quote:

“Meanwhile, some of his colleagues said they were afraid to go back to work. Sources said recently another Wellfab employee suffered injuries to his eyes after another mishap at the workplace.

‘We so scared to work there. We want to work but this is a hazardous job. ‘We don’t know what will happen’, one worker said.”

Mr. Speaker, I will read another extract from the *Guardian* of Tuesday, May 24, 2005 at page 25 written by Leah Mathura-Dookhoo, again, on the death of Dale Paul.

“Paul’s mother, Carol, said the family had not recovered from the death of her husband, Victor, a retired police officer, a year ago, far less to deal with the death of her son.”

A distraught mother in distress, because of the negligence of the PNM. Do they really care? Would they lose sleep over this or any other fatal mishap in the workplace? The National Trade Union Centre (NATUC), its General Secretary, Vincent Cabrera, described the ISG plant at Point Lisas as “an occupational cemetery for steel workers”. Adding that because of the absence of the OSHA laws that company was getting off with minimum payments in compensation for family loss.

What a travesty of justice under the PNM! Cry shame on the PNM!

We not only sympathize with the families at this time but we apologize to them on behalf of this incompetent, heartless, ruthless PNM Government which has been sitting on its haunches, twiddling its thumbs while our workers are under a sentence of death because of bad safety and health practices on the factory floor. The lives of four workers were snuffed out so far this year because their Government refused to take the steps to protect them in the workplace and yet, as if living in a world removed from us, the former Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development the Member for St. Ann's East, placed an advertisement in the *Newsday* of April 28, 2005, complete with a colour picture of himself giving a message to mark World Day For Safety and Health at Work. What hypocrisy! This is what the Member for St. Ann's East said, and I quote:

“Annually over a million people die from work related accidents or illness. The economic costs are very great, the human cost of such suffering in incalculable.”

Coming from the former Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development!

The Minister gave what I will describe as a public relations message to mark World Day For Safety and Health at Work. Very safe in his office he gives a public relations message, as the PNM has been doing.

I now see that the Member for San Fernando West is getting a little brave and she is speaking the truth, but she would not have long. They would not tolerate that for long. The then Minister gave world figures for industrial accidents omitting to state what the statistics were locally. There were—and I understand that there were over 600 industrial accidents in 2004; the official figure is 234—that is the figure that the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development will give but the real figure is over 600.

It is estimated that the National Insurance Board pays out industrial injury and work-related diseases compensation to some 3,000 workers at an annual cost of roughly \$10 million. Minister, you know all that and yet you have not proclaimed the Act so that it can be implemented! Why have you not apologized to the workers and their families for this travesty of justice? Why did you not use that space in the *Newsday* to apologize to the workers of this country? And then they have the boldface to demand that my colleague, the Member for Fyzabad, apologize for being slapped by the Member for Diego Martin West! They want an apology. They should have used their majority in Parliament to demand an apology to the workers of this country for PNM's negligence and inaction in

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. PARTAP]

Friday, May 27, 2005

providing safety and health protection for the workers of the nation. The PNM must apologize to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their incompetence. They must do that.

The Member for Point Fortin was right when he accused the PNM of being anti-worker, anti-trade union. [*Crosstalk*] You did! Do not sit there and deny it. I know you are looking for a little 'wuk' but you must stand up to what you said. You described the PNM as anti-worker, anti-trade union. You accused the PNM of brutalizing the workers and you are right. I am not chastising you for that. I am complimenting you, and you must know when you are getting a compliment because you do not often get it from the PNM. You know that my friend.

Mr. Speaker, now this incompetent and impotent Prime Minister is prepared to rub the nose of the workers into the ground and insult them by putting an arrogant, pompous, aristocratic snob as the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

Mr. Speaker: You are commenting on a Member in the other place.

Mr. H. Partap: I apologize. I will withdraw it. I was going to say a little more but I will have an opportunity at some time to say it. That is the disrespect and the contempt that the Prime Minister has for the workers of this country. It is not that that incompetent bunch of jokers across there are not aware of the danger being faced by workers. They are fully aware! They are aware.

My friend, the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, knows the danger. If I am to believe the PNM councillor, Dhansook, when the hon. Minister drove down to the car park of Smokey and Bunty—and remember that car park workers are covered under the OSHA law—and he rolled down the window of his BMW and he stretched out his hand and collected the sweetbread—[*Crosstalk*] I am talking about sweetbread brothers. You are talking about something else. Not even to say thanks and then he makes his way out—he drives out into the night. Car park workers are covered under OSHA. We put it there. We covered all the workers of this country, even the car park attendants.

Mr. Speaker, they know. What are they doing about it. They do not care about the safety of the workers. They care about themselves. Sweetbread is now very expensive. I understand now it is about \$10,000 a slice. So that they know! I guess the Prime Minister might suggest that fatal accidents on the factory floor are temporary. It may be collateral damage and the very junior Minister in the Ministry of National Security, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, might say

it is all in the line of duty. That is PNM for you: calculated, callous, half-hearted, lack of compassion, purveyors of death and destruction, a virtual blight.

The Government has been making excuse after excuse to prevent the proclamation of this Act. [*Crosstalk*] Do not worry about Sumairsingh, worry about the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro.

Mr. Speaker: Let the Member make his contribution. Do not engage him in any crosstalk. I want to hear him.

Mr. H. Partap: I have been saying that the Government has been making excuse after excuse to prevent the proclamation of the Act. Since 1975 they have been drafting and redrafting OSHA legislation. When the UNC came to office the then Prime Minister, the Member for Couva North, Mr. Basdeo Panday instructed that the legislation be put on the front burner with a deadline for passage. That was in 1995. The UNC placed the revised complementary OSHA Bill before the Parliament three times between 1995 and 2001, and on the three occasions, and even after the scrutiny of Joint Select Committees, the PNM refused to support the legislation to protect workers at the workplace.

We knew that the PNM was disappointed when the Opposition supported the OSHA Bill in December 2003. We caught them by surprise, both here and in the other place. We forced them to pass the legislation but we could not have anticipated that this corrupt, wicked and vindictive PNM would want to stall the proclamation of the Act in order to satisfy their friends and supporters in the business sector. We did not cater for that. And that is what it is all about stalling the proclamation to benefit their business partners and their friends and so they had the former Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, the Member for St. Ann's East, making himself—giving lame excuses for the delay in having the Bill proclaimed.

Hear what this jokey former Minister of Labour Small and Micro Enterprise Development said; no wonder the Prime Minister had to replace him. I am quoting a story by Denise Renee published in the *Guardian* of March 04, 2005. I quote:

“In the aftermath of these deaths, Labour Minister Anthony Roberts assured that Government was ‘doing all we can and as quickly as we can, to give life and teeth to the (Occupational Safety and Health Act)’”.

If you want to give teeth, talk to the Member for Tabaquite. He will be able to put some teeth in the OSHA.

“However, several things had to be done before the Act could be proclaimed and made law, Robert said during the post-Cabinet news conference at Whitehall yesterday.

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. PARTAP]

Friday, May 27, 2005

Roberts explained yesterday what had to be done before the Act can become law.

He said since the Act alluded to the appointment of an authority to administer the law, Cabinet had appointed a team to examine developing structures for the authority and guidelines for its operation.”

Mr. Speaker, appointing a team to examine developing structures for the OSHA authority is just another way of saying they want to kill the Bill. In Government the surest way to kill a piece of legislation is to put it before a Cabinet-appointed Committee.

There is absolutely no reason for the Government to establish a team to develop the structure of the OSHA authority. A structure was developed when I was Minister of Labour on instruction from Cabinet contained in Cabinet Note LC 96/42, dated October 10, 1996 entitled “Institutional Arrangements to give effect to the proposed Occupational Safety and Health Act 1996 and Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996”. Since then we had completed the work and this is what the Cabinet Note had said. I will read:

“Cabinet Minute 2632

In view of the expanded scope of the Safety and Health requirements to be monitored, consequent on the enactment of the above legislation...”

And this was proactive because the law was not passed yet. The UNC was proactive;

“...agreed that:

- (a) the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives institute appropriate mechanisms for the establishment of an Occupational Safety and Health Agency to be responsible for monitoring health and safety standards in industrial establishments in Trinidad and Tobago, the Agency to be responsible to the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives.
- (b) the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives submit for the consideration of Cabinet, comprehensive staffing and budgetary proposals for the operations of the Agency referred to at (a) above.”

And this is from the Cabinet Note.

Mr. Speaker, all that is here. They do not have to reinvent the wheel. They do not have to put it before any sub-committee of Cabinet. It is here already. They must go ahead and proclaim the Bill. Put the thing in place. Fourteen months have elapsed and they are just pussyfooting with an important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, you will note that the regulations governing the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the mechanism for the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health agency, staffing, budgetary allocations and an organizational chart were already developed by the Ministry since 1996 in anticipation of the passage of this Bill, but they stalled it. It is there! They must go back and look at it. It is now 14 months since the President assented to the Bill. Implement it! Why is it taking this Cabinet-appointed committee 14 months to develop a structure to operationalise the Act when that was already done? The PNM is simply stalling.

I intend to just run through the Act and to demonstrate that you do not have to wait 14 months to proclaim it because most of the facilities that some of the companies may have, they may just have to strengthen them, and here I am just going to go through it. For example, in Part I of the Act, sections 1 to 5 deal with matters relating to definitions. You do not have to wait 14 months to understand the definitions. Read them through, they are all there, sections 1 to 5 and you would understand the definitions so you can put the Act to work.

Part II gives general duties—sections 6 to 13, and I just want to look at 6(2) (c).

“The provision of adequate and suitable protective clothing or devices of an approved standard to employees who in the course of employment are likely to be exposed to the risk of head, eye, ear, hand or foot injury...”

Providing adequate clothing or devices, should that take 14 months to do?

“The provision of such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure—”

that the employees know about what is required of them.

You take 14 months to provide this information to the workers, to provide training and to provide the supervision. Fourteen months you will take?

“(3) An employee shall—

- (a) ensure that all hazardous chemicals present in the industrial establishment are labelled in a way easily understandable...”

You are waiting 14 months to label chemicals? And you cannot implement the Act because you are waiting on that?

- “(b) Obtain or prepare, as may be prescribed, an unexpired, chemical safety data sheet...”

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. PARTAP]

Friday, May 27, 2005

Fourteen months you are waiting to do that?

- “(7) An employer of an industrial establishment of twenty-five or more employees, shall prepare or revise, in consultation with the representatives of his employees, a written statement of his general policy with respect to the safety and health of persons employed in the industrial establishment...”

You are taking 14 months to prepare that? Unbelievable!

- “(12) Notwithstanding any other law, during an employee’s pregnancy, and for a period of six months after birth of her child, her employer shall offer her suitable, alternative employment on terms and conditions that are no less favourable than her ordinary terms and conditions of work, where the employee is required to perform work that poses a danger to her health or safety or that of her child...”

You want to wait 14 months to put this into operation? Just to find alternative work in the factory for this pregnant woman? Unbelievable!

Mr. Speaker, let me take section 2: Emergency Plan and Risk Assessment.

- “(i) suitable and rapid means of obtaining first aid help and transportation from the industrial establishment to a hospital for injured workers.”

You are taking 15 months to make arrangements for that? You do not have to buy a whole hospital. All you have to do is to make the arrangement so that an ambulance can get there speedily. This Act is not asking you to buy a whole hospital or to put down a whole hospital.

2.30 p.m.

It continues:

- “b (ii) measures and procedures to be used to control a major fire, to react to serious damage to the industrial establishment, to evacuate the industrial establishment and to notify rescue personnel,”

Is the Government waiting 14 months to put this into operation?

I am now going to Part III. I am not going to deal with that part. It is what already exists. In fact it already exists in the Industrial Relations Act: rights of employees to refuse work where safety or health in danger. That is already in the Industrial Relations Act. The Government is holding back this Act because it is

waiting 14 months. They are waiting 14 months to repeal the Industrial Relations Act so that this could get in place? The Government is really making joke.

Hear what happens in Part IV, Safety. I quote:

“24(1) Where, in connection with carrying on of a process, there is given off dust or fumes or other impurity of such a character and to such an extent as to be likely to be injurious or offensive to employees in an industrial establishment, all practicable measures shall be taken by the occupier to protect the employees against inhalation of the dust or fumes or other impurity...”

The Government is telling me that it is taking 14 months to provide workers with dust inhalers. That is the thing you use to cover your face when you are working in dust. They are taking 14 months to get that? What is that at all? Are they serious?

Section 25B(3) states:

“Every part of the electric generators, motors and rotary converters, and every flywheel directly connected thereto, shall be securely fenced unless it is in such a position or of such construction as to be safe to every person...”

This part is asking that the machinery must be securely fenced. It is taking 14 months to put a security fence around the machinery. There are workers facing that kind of danger. The Government is waiting on that to proclaim this Act.

Section 25E states:

“Every employer in consultation with the representatives of his employees shall establish a safety and health committee at an industrial committees establishment in accordance with this section where—

- (a) there are twenty-five or more persons employed at that establishment; or...”

Basically, what it is asking for is that the companies put in place a safety and health committee. That is a requirement of the International Labour Organization; not only us. Is it that the Government is waiting 14 months to get the companies to appoint these health and safety committees? They should have been there already. What is the Government waiting on to proclaim this Act?

Part V deals with fire. Section 27(1) states:

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. PARTAP]

Friday, May 27, 2005

“In every establishment, the doors that are provided for use as fire exits shall, while work is in progress at that industrial establishment, be either left unlocked, or secured in such a way as to be capable of being readily and quickly opened from the inside.”

The Government would wait 14 months to get the companies to get this into operation, just to leave a door open when you are working inside? That is ridiculous! I wonder if the Government really studied this Bill! I wonder if the former, present and past Ministers of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development of the PNM Government ever studied this Bill. These are simple things. In 1995, we went to the Ministry of Labour, in Riverside Plaza and had to use all kinds of things to get the hinges operational again because they were rusted since they were never opened. When we went there in 1995 we opened it. The Minister should check to see whether they are still in operation because those workers will be at risk. The Government is waiting 14 months just to leave a door open when they are working inside.

“Every room in which employees work shall be so arranged that there is for all employees in the room a free passage way leading to a means of escape in case of a fire.”

Is the Government waiting 14 months to put that into operation, just to clear the passage way so that workers could run out in case of a fire?

Section 29 states:

“In every industrial establishment there shall be provided maintained and kept readily available for use appropriate fire equipment approved by the fire authority for fighting fire...”

Is it that we have to wait 14 months to get a company to put a fire extinguisher in the workplace?

Part VI speaks about health. This is one little a jokey: Every industrial establishment shall be kept clean and free from dirt and all kinds of refuse.

“(a) accumulations of dirt and refuse shall be removed daily, where practicable, by suitable methods from the floors, benches, furniture, furnishings and fittings of workrooms, and from the staircases and passages:

Is the Government waiting 14 months for the companies to clean the place? This is getting more and more ridiculous.

“(c) effective means shall be provided, maintained and used to prevent the breeding of insects, rats, mice or other vermin;”

It would take 14 months to put that into operation?

“(d) effective means shall be provided and maintained for the draining of wet floors and yards....”

It goes on in the case of workers who may need respirators. The Government has waited 14 months and it is not passing the law because it cannot get these into the workplace. What a thing!

Part VII deals with the welfare of workers.

“39.(1) In every factory, effective arrangement shall be made to provide and maintain at suitable points conveniently situated for all persons employed therein, a sufficient supply of cool, wholesome, drinking water,...”

All that means is a water cooler! You cannot get a water cooler in an industrial establishment? No, no, no “all yuh” really want help. It goes on to say that you must have a separate toilet for men and women workers. What is the cost of a toilet bowl? I think it cost approximately \$700—\$900. It depends on the quality. The provision of a lunch room and a first-aid kit is essential in every industrial establishment. The Government wants 14 months for companies to put a first-aid room or first-aid kit? Section 44 says that if there are more than 250 employees provision must be made for a canteen. The Government is waiting 14 months to put that into operation, that is why it is holding back this Act. All the others we have here are only procedural. They are things that could be done at the Ministries of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General. They are repealing certain sections. That is the sum total of this Act. The Government is holding back this Act, it is not proclaiming it because it is said that there are things that must be put in place. There are many more things with a few details. These are the basic ones. This Government is holding this back and they are putting the lives of workers under serious jeopardy. There is nothing in this Act, absolutely nothing, that should hold back its proclamation. It is just that the Government is stalling. It does not want to protect workers in the workplace. That is a sad commentary on the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, I have gone through this Act and I want to tell the PNM that they should not delay further in proclaiming the Act because it could be done. The idea of referring this Act to a committee is really wasting time. The Government knows

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. PARTAP]

Friday, May 27, 2005

very well why it wants to waste time. We should not be getting this excuse from the PNM time and time again. I have demonstrated that the UNC government, under the distinguished leadership of the Member for Couva North, had already developed the structure to operationalize OSHA laws. Lest we forget, let me just itemize them again. We developed a comprehensive revised OSHA legislation which, thank God, you have passed. The regulations for operationalizing the law are already there. You can take a look at it and revise it if you want, but bring it out quickly. The planned structure for the OSHA authority is there. I have them here with me in this file. The Minister has it in the Ministry. There was a comprehensive plan for staffing the agency and a proposed budgetary allocation. The figures need revising now. We initiated discussions with the various ministries and agencies that would impact upon the new legislation. We initiated it and continued it. Bring the Ministries of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and Health into the loop, you will need them. We started that. If the Minister wants, I can send him copies of the letters.

We initiated consultation with the social partners on what we called the Industrial Injury and Disability Compensation Bill, 1997. This Bill was proposed to replace the archaic Workmen's Compensation Act to bring compensation and liabilities in line with the decent work environment promoted by the International Labour Organization. In fact, we believe that you cannot have a comprehensive OSHA law and not revise the Workmen's Compensation Act. Both must run hand in hand. The Industrial Injury and Disability Compensation Bill, 1997 was placed before what we called the Standing Tripartite Committee on Labour Matters, established by the distinguished Member for Couva North when he was Prime Minister. I do not know if that is still in operation, but every matter we took before this committee, they looked at it dispassionately and did all the required consultation and submitted a report on April 30, 1999. As you know, we did not have time to bring it forward. [*Interruption*] You really want to know why? It was because of done deal.

Mr. Speaker, what more do they want in order to proclaim the Act? The glaring truth is that the PNM administration seems, to me, to be a puppet with the strings being pulled by vested interest, so they cannot act in defence of the workers of this country. They can say what they want, it is clear to all and sundry that the PNM never wanted the Occupational Safety and Health Act. They were contented with the 1948 Factory Ordinance, which placed the minimum legal obligations on their friends in business to protect the safety and health of their employees. Mr. Speaker, let me support what I just said by referring to some comments made by Members on that side, in relation to this Bill. I am quoting at

this time from the *Hansard* of November 18, 1999. Hear what the Member for Diego Martin East said:

“This whole question of impracticability and unworkability of clause 15...”

That is the same clause where you give workers the right to walk out in the event that the conditions are not good for their health and safety.

“if it is enacted in the form proposed in 1987 and in the form proposed in this Bill, will allow tremendous potential for abuse and disruption of the entire economic system in Trinidad and Tobago. The whole fabric of the society could be disrupted in a situation of abuse.”

When he said that, the former Member for Oropouche said: “Not at all. Hysteria. Alarmist!” The Member for Diego Martin East was being an alarmist because clause 15 of the OSHA legislation is really the same clause that is already in the IRA that is being operated now. So he was being an alarmist.

Hear what he says again on November 18, 1999:

“The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives, however, introduces a Bill which, if it is passed in its present state, would cause every single school in Trinidad and Tobago to be abandoned tomorrow because this introduces the concept of suspicion.”

Do you think they are serious about occupational health and safety? It continues:

“So all the teachers in all the schools in Trinidad and Tobago can say, ‘I believe that this roof is made of asbestos, and I am going home, now.’”

Clearly, he did not read the Act at all.

“I suspect that the cesspit is overflowing and I am going home now. I suspect that the electrical wiring in this school is defective and it will burn down and I going home now.”

He did not cater for school children burning down schools under the Minister of Education now. [*Interruption*] There is nothing nice about that, it is just your incompetence. That is what it is about; an incompetent Minister of Education. I know the Member will not feel nice because he has to go home for tea this evening. She is incompetent and you should remove her and leave her home to make tea. It goes on:

“I suspect that the drinking water in the tank at the back of the school is contaminated and I am going home now.”

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. PARTAP]

Friday, May 27, 2005

He puts it in the most ridiculous way. Why? Because he wants to say that OSHA should not be put on the statute books. There are more ridiculous statements by him. In the same *Hansard* of November 18, 1999 the Member for Diego Martin East said:

"Really, what we on this side are saying is that there is absolutely no need in Trinidad and Tobago, as the structure today in our society, at our stage of evolution, to have a Bill that is so far-reaching and we believe that what should be done instead, is to restrict the provisions to certain categories of industry for the time being, or to bring other legislation that is more suited to small business..."

He is crying about small business

"and to non-manufacturing situations;"

He said that we should not bring the Bill, we should change a few words in the Factories Ordinance and that we should not put anything substantial. Do you know why? He built a wall that capsized and could have killed someone. It continues:

"Why try to bring umbrella legislation that has provisions in it that clearly are not suited to our society, not suited to our country, not suited at all to the culture, traditions, norms and practices in Trinidad and Tobago? Why?"

Why not upgrade the Factories Ordinance to deal with factories? Why not bring another Bill to deal with specific high risk areas and look at other legislation to deal with other areas such as the Parliament and so forth? Why must we have legislation which is clearly designed to deal with industrial, heavy manufacturing and so forth? They had no intention of passing this legislation. There is more again.

I want to skip those and tell you what the Minister of National Security, in his incarnation at that time—I do not remember if he was. He was in the House and this is what he said on November 18, 1999. Mr. Martin Joseph; every time I hear that name I laugh. Even Minister Hinds is laughing also. This is what he said:

"Mr. Speaker, I felt the need as member of that joint select committee, to get up and make these few remarks. Yes, we participated, we had extensive meetings. We met approximately nine times. Yes, we raised many of those concerns. Some of these concerns were not addressed. I do not believe they could be addressed in a committee stage, I believe the Government

needs to go back to a committee so that we can bring laws that can satisfy what we want to accomplish.”

In other words, he is saying: “Do not bring OSHA. We do not want to pass it. We want to put it before a committee.” They intend to put that before a committee and it has gone back to a committee again, even though the Act was passed. What a shame!

This is the *Hansard* of May 14, 2001. Hear what the Member for Diego Martin East said. He was the spokesman for those opposite. He said:

“...we are going to have dialogue with the OWTU; we are going to talk to the PSA;”

They have been drafting and redrafting this Bill since 1975. In 2001, he said we were going to have dialogue with the OWTU and the PSA. It continues:

“...we are going to talk to NUGFW; we are going to talk to the Bank and General Workers Trade Union; then we would come up with amendments which we would send to them and then we would arrive at consensus.”

That was 30 years after they started that process. They still want to hold back the Bill? He has been repeating that same speech.

“I am, therefore, not going to be very long. I have essentially said what I have to say. We are going to submit detailed written memoranda to the trade union movement; we are going to have a discussion with the Safety Council; we are going to talk with the Employers’ Consultative Association; we are going to talk to everybody,”

This is what they should have done. He called me lazy, but I am not going to read that part.

“And when we are finished with our dialogue, we will come back to this Parliament; submit amendments which would have been the results of proper communication with the social partners...”

That was since 1975.

I now refer to May 18, 2001 because this is interesting. The Member for Couva North, when he spoke as Prime Minister, hit the nail on the head. Hear what the Member for Couva North, then Prime Minister, said:

“Since 1997, they are now going to consult. Mr. Speaker, it is clear beyond a shadow of a doubt, the Member for Diego Martin East does not want this Bill to be passed. It affects the personal interests of people on the other side.”

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. PARTAP]

Friday, May 27, 2005

That is their side.

"They do not care what happens to workers. Workers are dying; workers are being injured from day to day in this country, and a Bill is being presented to this Parliament in order to safeguard the welfare of the workers, and what happens? Because of the personal interests of Members on the other side,..."

That is their side;

"they go against it—hundreds of thousands of workers in this country!

“They ridicule...”

Meaning the PNM;

"the Bill, but they intend to go and have consultation. I do not know what they were doing since 1997. I do not know what happened when we had a joint select committee of Parliament. They are now going to consult! This is a ruse. What they want is, they want to scuttle this Bill again; they want to deny the workers their right to protection under the law, protection of their health and safety, and they want to find spurious excuses to justify their irrational action inspired by self-interest."

The Member for Couva North hit the nail on the head. That was a very great speech. Mr. Speaker, they feel they could hide. They cannot. They could run, but they cannot hide. That has been the history of the PNM with regard to legislation aimed at protecting the health and safety of workers and aimed at labour, particularly. The Government cannot protect the workers or citizens of this country from the violence and kidnapping because it is arm in arm with the criminals, as we discovered in the recently concluded Lance Small case in Miami. They are running with the criminals. How could they protect the people of this country? Can they protect the workers of this country? No, they cannot.

This Motion calls on the Government to stop the excuses and move urgently to have the Occupational Safety and Health Act proclaimed. The Government is already 30 years late in putting legislation in place to protect the health and safety of workers. In all humility, workers of this country would have to thank Opposition Leader and Member for Couva North and the UNC for legislation to protect their safety and health in the workplace. It is because of the persistence of the UNC both, in and out of government, there is an advancement in the Occupational Safety and Health Act to the present position where we are only awaiting its proclamation. We are going to insist that the PNM Government

complete the process by proclaiming the Act and monitoring its implementation. We will not give up until all workers feel safe in the workplace and they feel confident that at the end of a work day they can be safely reunited with their families.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. Thank you.

Dr. A. Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion and I reserve the right to speak at a later stage.

Question proposed.

The Minister of Social Development and Minister in the Ministry of Housing (Hon. Anthony Roberts): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My friend from Nariva, having concluded his presentation, I would suggest to him that he request a copy of that presentation from *Hansard*, so that he can read the comical and nonsensical presentation that he has taken so much time to make in this honourable House this afternoon. [*Desk thumping*] I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to respond, so as to set the record straight and to respond to the Member who has missed his mark. He is woefully short of a length, in every respect.

The Member, in making his contribution, mentioned that the persons, who unfortunately lost their lives as a result of problems in their workplace, blood is on the hands of the PNM. I want the Member to relate that statement to what they have done to the people of Laventille. The blood of the people of Laventille is on the hands and bodies, or has covered the UNC. I would use every opportunity that is available to me to remind them of their wicked deeds and the dreadful act perpetrated on the people of Laventille and the country as a whole. It was their Member, a former Member of the San Fernando West constituency and former Minister of Works and Transport who went to the people, especially the young people of Laventille, and sowed the seeds of destruction, misguided the young people of Laventille and used government funding to create the kind of mayhem that now exists in Laventille; setting them on a path of destruction and developing that concept, as they called it, of community leaders. There were no community leaders before. When they talk about blood on the hands of the PNM, the UNC is drenched in blood.

I recall my friend, the Member for Couva North, telling this country that he is prepared to sleep with the devil. There is a price to be paid for sleeping with the devil.

Mr. B. Panday: Me “eh” sleeping with you. I could tell you that. Not you. I prefer the devil.

Hon. A. Roberts: He is proud about it, but the country has to suffer for it. In his heydays, I recall him telling the country: “If you see me and a lion fighting, feel sorry for the lion.” Today it is different. I could hear him in a quieter tone now saying: “If you see me and a kitten fighting, feel sorry for me.” [*Desk thumping*].

Hon. Member: Waving gallery. Departure lounge.

Hon. A. Roberts: What they have done today with this Motion is that they have tried to get some kind of political mileage. They know very well that proclamation, in respect of this Act, is not something that is immediate. When they talk about proclamation, I can refer them to their time when a number of Bills were passed under them and up to today the Acts have never been proclaimed. They knew very well that it would take some time before the Act is proclaimed. It is dishonest of them to come to this House and play to the gallery and pretend they do not know. They will not learn. It is because of the same dishonesty that their already dead party is having the kind of difficulty it is now having with two of their Members defecting and another being suspended. It is because of dishonesty. They are here today to perpetuate that dishonesty. They cannot help it.

I indicated to you that they are aware that the proclamation will take some time. I want to quote from the *Hansard* of January 13, 2004 in another place where in one of the debates one of their Members indicated that:

“Trinidad and Tobago should seek, as we are seeking to do, to promote a positive culture of safety and health at the workplace, and we should encourage all the stakeholders, all the social partners, as the Minister alluded to in his presentation, the Government, the labour movement, the employers/managers or management, the non-governmental organizations, should all be involved in seeking to promote a culture of safety in the workplace...but I think as we continue to educate and build awareness and sensitivity, as we seek to establish a legal framework...”

Thus, alluding that the proclamation would take some time.

It was the same Member, in his contribution, who enquired from the former Minister of Labour, my colleague, the Member for Point Fortin, about the time frame for implementation. The Minister advised that it would take approximately

one year. He could not give a definite time, but what he was saying to the honourable House was that it would take some time to put the necessary institutional and administrative framework in place before the proclamation. Today I am pleased to use this opportunity, having listened to my friend from Nariva rant and rave, and he appeared to be enjoying himself. Now that he is through, he would look at his contribution and be saddened and ashamed of himself, based on the contribution that he has made and what he has placed on the record in this Parliament. I welcome this opportunity to clarify the record and to remind this House of what has been done over the period. The Member read and read—I am not about that—possibly to make up time in his presentation.

Section 64(1) of the Act stipulates the establishment of an Occupational Safety and Health Authority, which my colleague mentioned, with responsibility for the implementation of the provisions of the Act. Section 69(1) establishes the Occupational Safety and Health Agency. In pursuance of the establishment of these two bodies—I am going to repeat it because he must understand—the Cabinet, a PNM Cabinet of a responsible government, appointed the Occupational Safety and Health Council with the following terms of reference: to draft the Occupational Safety and Health Policy; to develop codes of practice that could provide the framework for the Occupational Safety and Health Authority; to carry out its function; and to submit recommendations for the organizational structure and authority. The Member read something from a Cabinet Minute; but he did not say that the work was actually done. They went to Cabinet and got approval. Going to Cabinet and getting approval is not actually doing the work. Under the PNM Government we did the work. The committee was appointed and the committee did its work. In its anxiety to complete the work, we omitted to hold discussions with the Tobago House of Assembly. You would agree that Tobago is an integral part of the unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk Thumping*]. It is important that we hold discussions with Tobago. We have two Tobago representatives in this House.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: On “yuh” back Bench, not in the Cabinet.

Hon. A. Roberts: The UNC would know that; it was because of the two Tobago representatives they were able to come into government on one occasion.

Mr. Hart: Oh yes!

Hon. A. Roberts: How did they treat them? How did they treat Tobago? The PNM is different. We recognize how important Tobago is to the unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago and so they must be consulted on important pieces of

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Friday, May 27, 2005

legislation. That is why we referred the matter to the Tobago House of Assembly for them to make their input. I have been to Tobago when I had the opportunity to be the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development and I held discussions with the Chief Secretary and other Members of the Tobago House of Assembly with respect to this piece of legislation, so as to ensure that we have their input and that it is done as quickly as possible. As soon as we receive that information from the Tobago House of Assembly and we are able to get their response to the report, that document would be submitted to the Cabinet of the PNM Government.

While all this is happening; while Tobago is doing its work, I want to assure this honourable House that the Ministry I had the opportunity to lead was not sitting back idly. The Ministry was doing all that it was supposed to do, in terms of the preparation and training of the staff, so that they would be in a position to discharge their responsibility under the Act. The authority is considered to be the heartbeat or the engine for the implementation and/or administration of the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. We embarked, as a Ministry, on the training of personnel to prepare them. I would give you an idea of some of the training that we embarked on. The senior officer of the Safety Division of the Ministry, Mr. Devnath Roopnarine has, pursued and completed studies which led him to attaining an MSc post graduate Diploma in Occupational Safety and Health at the University of Salford, Manchester, London. Presently, five Safety Officers I are pursuing training facilitated by the Caribbean Health and Environment and Safety Service towards obtaining the National General Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health. Only last month, one officer was sent to China in an effort to pursue studies along the line of occupational safety and health.

As a government, we considered the Occupational Safety and Health Act to be very important to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. As a responsible government we believe—the Member has said it and I will repeat it—that you must take the necessary steps to put everything in place so that the people will be able to benefit from the Act. It is indeed very unfortunate that a couple of persons lost their lives and we extend our sincere sympathies to the families. I had done so as Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. We believe that Trinidad and Tobago must put itself in a position. Prior to the proclamation of the Act, their colleague in another place spoke about educating and building an awareness and sensitivity. That is what we are doing here today. We are doing everything that is possible.

The Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies has increased its programmes with respect to health and safety, so as to build that awareness, creativity,

sensitivity and education for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to prepare themselves for the proclamation of the Act. The country must be OSHA-ready. I understand what he is saying. Because of their recklessness, when they were in government, they would have operated that way. Without any kind of preparation they would have gone and proclaimed the Act and then put the country in peril. That is how they would have operated.

The Member spoke about the workers. They have ridden the backs of the workers of this country into government and they treated them like nothing. I have had discussions with the workers' representatives concerning the OSHA legislation. I have indicated to them what the Government is doing and the approach that we are taking with respect to the Occupational Safety and Health Act. When they talk about the workers, they do not have the interest of workers of the country at heart. The Government is doing, at this time, what it can to ensure that there is sufficient preparation before the proclamation of the Act. I give the country the assurance that in due course, this Government will pursue the proclamation of the Occupational Safety and Health Act in Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you.

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Having listened to the Member for St. Ann's East, I am convinced in my mind and I am sure the country would understand the plight that this country is in with respect to the non-caring of this Government, as far as the people of this country are concerned, especially the poorer people. Today Trinidad and Tobago could still be described as a working class country with a large percentage of the people being workers, us included. We have a Government that will come to this House in response to a brilliant presentation from my colleague from Nariva who indicated why this piece of legislation should be proclaimed. We got the excuse that we have waited long. I was waiting for the reasons for the delay; something that is substantial. What the Member said, in his rambling, is that he went to Tobago. He said if it was a government of this side we would go headlong and proclaim the Bill and create problems for, I do not know who. In my mind, when you come to Parliament and you debate a Bill and it is passed and becomes an Act, I thought whilst that is being done we would also be preparing to proclaim that particular piece of legislation. I am now convinced that they had no intention of passing the Occupational Safety and Health Bill.

Mr. B. Panday: The Tobago Members were here.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Everybody was here when this Bill was passed. It shocked the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and Minister in the Ministry of Housing so they now have to perform some delaying tactics. I want to place on record that the businessmen in the country are asking the 36 Members of Parliament, of course these are Government's Police Reform Bills, to support that. This is, in my mind, the problem that faces the country and the PNM. It is payback time for the businessmen. I have spoken to businessmen about the OSHA legislation. They believe and they have said it publicly that it is draconian. Do you know why? There are certain clauses in this Act that would affect them negatively and they do not want to suffer, so they are putting pressure on the Government that they should not proclaim the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Crime is rampant. There are record murders and kidnappings in Trinidad and Tobago. There is crime all across the country. We are not safe anymore. Recently, I spent a couple of days in Jamaica. What I have witnessed there will happen to Trinidad and Tobago very quickly, if the PNM is not removed from office today. The Dons are ruling Jamaica. Politicians, police and the civil society have no say in what takes place in that country. These people trade in drugs and crime and are ruling the country. We have seen the birth of that in Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister alluded to it. He acknowledged that there are gang leaders and gangs across Trinidad and Tobago. The acknowledgement is good, but what are you doing about it—giving them more guns and more power so that they can roam the country and rule Trinidad and Tobago? The time will come when the Members on that side will have no authority when it comes to dealing with crime in this country because these people are becoming stronger and stronger everyday.

We have evidence from the Miami Court, where the Prime Minister was named as having used the Muslimeen to gain power in Trinidad and Tobago. We did not hear the Prime Minister or any Member of the Government denounce that. There is violence in Trinidad and Tobago, which is being perpetuated by the PNM. We have to talk about it. The Minister brought this into the debate. He said that people on this side created gangs. Do you have any evidence of that? You are in government now, go to the police. If the Member has evidence and he feels so strong about the UNC starting gangs, he should go to the police; he is in office. Do not bring police to the Parliament.

Incidentally, this is our workplace and we are not free. The Member for Fyzabad—policemen around today. The Assistant Commissioner of Police is here

dressed in khaki. He has come to deal with Mr. Chandresh Sharma. The Member has evidence of gang formation and he cannot talk to the police? Are they trying to intimidate us on this side? We will not be intimidated. We will come here and talk and let the country know what is taking place. If there are gang leaders and the Member knows who they are, he should let Mr. Allard know.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Chaguanas, I think you are misinterpreting the reference made by the Member for St. Ann's East, about gangs in Laventille. Come back to the Motion before us, please.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the workplace, which is Parliament. I feel intimidated today. I am not safe in my workplace. Here we are representing our people and there are police officers all over because one Member of Parliament was suspended. I was making the point that the Member has evidence of gang leaders. Had I been the Minister of National Security, I would have asked him to give me the address because he is the Member of Parliament for St. Ann's East, which is also part of the crime hotspots in the country.

When he spoke about workers, I made the point that Trinidad and Tobago has a working-class population and the working class is being destroyed. Their safety is not ensured. I want to say why the UNC supported this Act and I want to know why they are not proclaiming it.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know why they are not proclaiming the Act. I would just read a few clauses. Section 6(2)(c) states:

“the provision of adequate and suitable protective clothing or devices of an approved standard to employees who in the course of employment are likely to be exposed to the risk of head, eye, ear, hand or foot injury, injury from air contaminant or any other bodily injury and the provision of adequate instructions in the use and...protective clothing or devices;”

That is one of the reasons we supported the Bill. We wanted to improve the quality of protection for workers in the workplace. Why is the PNM against this?

I want to put this on record, and I fear no one when I say that this Government is in the hands of the big business in this country. We see it and I am fearful of it. When I went to Jamaica, it was as if I was seeing myself in Trinidad and Tobago, over the next three or four years, where the country would be in control by persons other than the Government. They are playing games with dangerous people in this country, for example, the drug lords in this country. Who are they?

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Friday, May 27, 2005

Are they the big businessmen in this country?

Mr. Partap: Ask Rahael.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Who are they? Tell us! We had a drug report which pointed toward a senior Syrian businessman in this country. Who is that person? Has that person become bigger? Is he now in the corridors of power? We do not know. We have to ask these questions. I am fearful for the day that Trinidad and Tobago will fall deeper into the abyss of crime in the society. I am extremely worried about that. When we come here to talk about OSHA, this is about all the people of Trinidad and Tobago finding some safety wherever they work.

We supported this Bill. Section 6(2)(d) states:

“the provision of such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety and health at work of his employees;”

Mr. Speaker, we supported this Bill. Section 6(3)(a) and (b) states:

“(a) ensure that all hazardous chemicals present in the industrial establishment are labelled in a way easily understandable to the employees, or are identified in the prescribed manner;

(b) obtain or prepare, as may be prescribed, an unexpired chemical safety data sheet for all hazardous chemicals present in the workplace.”

Mr. Speaker, that is why we supported this Bill. When this debate was coming to a close, the hon. Leader of the Opposition—this was on December 05, 2003—when he was closing the debate said:

“I want to go further. I ask that this Bill be passed today; that it goes to the Senate next Tuesday and that by Friday it be assented to by the President and proclaimed on the same day. We hope that there will not be an attempt in the Senate to send the Bill to committee. We shall wait and see.”

Mr. Speaker, the then hon. Minister—their erstwhile friend from Point Fortin—said in closing:

“Mr. Speaker, I give the assurance that this Bill will go to the Senate on Tuesday. We had the opportunity of going down memory lane with the Member for Couva North when he dealt with matters that were here before some of us were born.”

Mr. Speaker, he said that he was going to assure this honourable House that no changes would be made and this Bill would not be sent to any select committee, but it would be proclaimed without any delay.

Mr. Speaker, we are waiting. I want to point this out to the hon. Member that this is another disrespect for this Parliament. You sit and preside over this Parliament, but I have a problem because we consider the OSHA Act to be a serious piece of legislation. We come here with a Motion to debate why this Act was not proclaimed, and the Minister did not see it right to be here to respond, but we have the then Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprises responding. I see this as a gross disrespect. This again shows, and I always believe, that they do not care about the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have the former Minister, the Member for St. Ann's East—I do not know what is his portfolio at this moment—who talked about things which do not give us a sense that he cares or represents the Government in any way, and to tell us that they really care about the workers.

Mr. Speaker, if you go back to the history of the Occupational Safety and Health Bill, you would see the number of times that this Bill was introduced in this country; and the PNM blocked it. Mr. Speaker, as I said before, when this Bill was passed in this country, it was as if they expected the UNC not to support it. That is why today I am firm in the belief that they are not ready to proclaim this Act.

Mr. Speaker, a very serious issue was raised by the Member for St. Anns East, when he talked about the blood of those in Laventille must be on the hands of the UNC. You know, I must put on record that these poor people have voted for the PNM all their lives. Since 1956 they have been voting for the PNM and they have never changed. Even when there was a 33/3 sweep in 1986, Laventille voted for the PNM. What do they have to show for it?

In every poverty report that comes out of Trinidad and Tobago, Laventille would top the poverty percentage—whether it is 50 or 60 per cent—and these people have voted faithfully for the PNM, and today for their representative to come to this Parliament and blame the UNC for their demise is unfortunate. These people should tell their MP that he is a dishonest person, and they would not support him in the next election. You have been there in office and we could go down history and talk about the positive things that were done in that Laventille area when the UNC was in government.

When I was the Minister of Social Development, I remember going into those areas and setting up with NAADAP several anti-drug initiatives. We had people

coming to us and telling us that we were doing a good job, but it is our culture to vote for the PNM. Mr. Speaker, they are paying for that, and for this Member to come here and say that the blood of the people who were murdered in Laventille is on the hands of the UNC; I do not want to hear about that.

Mr. B. Panday: He means we embraced them in sympathy.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Exactly. We embraced them. We could go through the records. Under the UNC, every Minister went into Laventille. We never neglected Laventille. As a matter of fact, to be quite honest with you, we were accused by our own supporters of going to Laventille too often; unlike you who believe that Caroni does not exist; and who believe that Caroni should be destroyed by a big flood so that you would remain in office. We were not like that. We went into Laventille. You could go to the Ministry of Social Development and you would see the records there. The Ministry of Sport built indoor facilities across that area, so for you to come today and try to blame us—as dishonest as you could get—for the crime that is taking place in Laventille, we would not allow that.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what is amazing too? There is another reason. The first reason for the PNM not supporting the Occupational Safety and Health Bill is that they are in the hands of the big business. They could say what they want. They are in the hands of the big business. It is no surprise to me that the big business is asking the UNC to support the Police Reform Bills. We explained to them that we cannot put the police service into the hands of that Prime Minister, or any one person, because of the way politics is. Maybe Abu Bakr may be the next Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the way they are moving. Could we give him the police service? We cannot! We told them that and we would tell them that again. We have the big business—and I am sure that they were assured that you are not going to introduce OSHA so that they could do what they want; they could “advantage” the people.

Mr. Speaker, the second point is that this Government treats its workers worse than anybody else. They are the culprits as far as managing and dealing with workers. A case in point is the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) workers. They visited me and told me that they were contracted to some contractors, who really reap the benefits, and who receive millions of dollars. These poor workers are back to the days of bonded slave labour. They work for the minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, you could go and calculate it, and you would see what I am talking about. They work long, hard

hours. I pay tribute to them. Their take-home salary is about \$700 maximum, per fortnight. Can anyone of us here go to a grocery with \$700 much less pay T&TEC, WASA and other utility bills? But what is worse than that, they have no sick leave.

Two ladies came to my office and they were in tears, because they stayed home the day before—if you look at the places where they work—they work along the highway—because the drain was dirty and they got ill. They left at 10 o'clock and they were paid up to 10 o'clock. There was no excuse. They have no sick leave, not even for an hour, and this is Trinidad and Tobago in the 21st Century. If they are having their monthly period and they get ill; then “crapaud smoke their pipe”; not a cent for them.

Mr. Speaker, they have no national insurance. There is no protection for these workers, and this is why they are the culprits. I know they would never—the last time I bet, but I would not bet this time—I want to challenge them to proclaim the Occupational Safety and Health Act, because they are the biggest perpetrators of injustice against workers in this country.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), there are persons out there who would get a 10 days—and, of course, we talked about the ghost gangs and so forth, but I would put them aside for this moment—and the few persons who work with the URP—the percentage that actually work is less than 40 per cent, because 60 per cent, as admitted by the Minister of Local Government himself, said that it is rotten—you know, the million dollar bag person. Mr. Speaker, again, we have people working there and they are working for minimum wage, so you cannot blame them for whatever they do, because of the way that they are being treated. They have no sick leave; no national insurance. Some have been shot at recently in the workplace. I read where four men have been murdered and so forth, and when they die their families have nothing to get. There are no death benefits or anything. We thought that by supporting the Occupational Safety and Health Bill, we would improve the quality of life of workers in Trinidad and Tobago, but this is not happening. Then, am I surprised to hear that poverty is 50 per cent? I am not!

Mr. Speaker, if you take the food basket and calculate the cost of living—we hear this rubbish about a 25 per cent increase, but they compete with themselves—over the last period; if you go back to 1995, and you calculate the cost of living then, to the cost of living now, you would see the disparity; you would see the difference. I dare say that the cost of living has been increased since then by more than 150 or 200 per cent, in different areas. They cannot deny that.

Occuapational Safety and Health Act
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Friday, May 27, 2005

They are presiding over pauperizing Trinidad and Tobago. When we supported this Bill, it was to improve the quality of life of our citizens, and this is not happening.

Again, I want to come back to Parliament, the seat of law making in this country, where today would go down in my mind—I was not here for the last few sittings. When I came to this Parliament today and I saw the hype about one Member being suspended, and the effort being made by those on that side to deal with the particular Member of Parliament, I became very scared. If they could spend so much energy; so much resources—you have the Assistant Commissioner of Police—they said it was Mr. Allard who talked to the Prime Minister on October 06, 2002, the day that my colleague, Dr. Rafeeq, and myself were arrested in Chaguanas, together with Kirk Meighoo and others. When I went home to look at the news on television, I saw his face in the Parliament talking with the Prime Minister. That is the same Mr. Allard who is today parading around this Parliament with his official uniform. I dare say: What is his responsibility here?

I believe, in my little experience in this Parliament here, that the Speaker is in charge of this Parliament and he has a sergeant-at-arms to deal with certain things.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You know that now.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Why are you using this excessive force? Why do you want to scare the people? I want to tell you that we are not scared. I want to put it on record in this Parliament that the party has advised Mr. Sharma to withdraw. Mr. Sharma wanted to be here, but we thought that it was in the interest of this country, not to show people all over the world that we have a situation where all the evidence is against the PNM.

The report of the special committee to deal with the matter said that there was no reason to ask either Member to do anything, but we have the Government using its might by asking one of the two Members to apologize, and failing to apologize, they would ask that he be suspended. Mr. Speaker, this is something that we have to be very careful about.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: The Member disrespected the Parliament.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: You are talking about disrespect and I am on my legs. That is being disrespectful. You would have your turn to talk. I do not know why you do not ask for permission to talk on the Motion. This is what we are talking about, disrespect. Is either you yap, yap, yap and that is disrespectful, or you sleep like the Prime Minister. That, too, is disrespectful.

I want to put on record that Mr. Chandresh Sharma has accepted the advice of the party, and he has stayed away because people believe, and I believe, that the red herring of the teacup affair must not put us away from the main issues of the day, because in this job there are hazards. When I looked across and saw the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro on the No. 2 seat, it shows that we are living in hazardous times in this Parliament. We have one law for one and one law for the other. The Member for Port of Spain South says that he is not moving, and he did not move. My hon. friend from Ortoire/Mayaro said, Okay, I was accused of something—

Mr. Partap: I take sweetbread—

Mr. M. Ramsaran: —and I would step down but, yet, the Member for Port of Spain South would come and sit here as if nothing has happened.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I do not know what that has to do with the Motion presented by the hon. Member for Nariva. Please, get back to the Motion.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the hazards of being a Member of Parliament and being a Government Minister. This is our workplace and we must be allowed—maybe in a few years from now, you would understand what I was talking about. This place has been a hazard for those in 1990. The evidence is still there. If we cannot talk about it in the Parliament then we should not be in Parliament. We must talk about it; we must not be fearful of coming here to do our duty, because we have big bad policemen around Parliament looking for Chandresh Sharma. They could be looking for criminals; they could be looking for the drug pushers; and they could be looking for all the persons who are creating havoc in Trinidad and Tobago. We do not feel safe. I do not feel safe but, yet, they come here to harass the Member of Parliament. I want the Prime Minister to understand that he has made a fool of himself with this whole teacup affair, and he has created mischief and the buck must stop somewhere.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He lied to the Parliament.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the hazards that face Members of Parliament. Mr. Speaker, we are living in a country today where people would say to us from time to time that this kidnapping would stop when they kidnap a Government Minister. So, I would try to disabuse their minds, and I do think about it. You know, if they kidnap an Opposition person, which they have already done—they kidnapped and murdered one of our colleagues' sons, as you all know, but nothing has stopped them. I am seriously thinking about the Ministers on that side, who are not being given the flashing lights and so forth.

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Friday, May 27, 2005

Are our lives at risk? I am asking this question very seriously, because I heard some fright in the Member for St. Anns East voice or some emotions that there are now gang leaders all over his constituency, and what is taking place there.

Mr. Speaker, what is happening is that we, too, are working under severe conditions. I want to make a plea for myself, but I also believe that Members of Parliament in this country, both Houses, should be given some sort of protection, and not only when we do something wrong there should be police all over the place.

Mr. Speaker, just to remind you, since ACP Allard is common in today's incident—he was also the person who headed the police service when Dr. Rafeeq and I were arrested—I am asking that the same energy that he did that with, why not provide protection for us? If we call a police station now we would get no response. That is why I believe that we are living like criminals behind bars. If you call a police station now and say that there is somebody lurking in the vicinity, the police would not be there for the next two or three hours.

I want to ask the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, who is now on the Back Bench, and who is the Chairman of the PNM—he has been ejected from his Ministry, or he ejected himself from the Ministry—is he being given any protection? Is he being given any sort of feeling of safety? I am sure he is not. I already talked to the Member for Point Fortin and he is outside there in the cold.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about OSHA, as I said, I could read all the clauses and the reasons why we supported this Bill, but what makes it worse is that I thought that today, the former Minister would have come and given us something that we could hold on to but, of course, it was not there.

Mr. Speaker, June 19, 2005 is Labour Day in Trinidad and Tobago, and that has now become a farce. Mr. Speaker, it is Labour Day for whom?

Hon. Member: When is Labour Day?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: On June 19, 2005 is Labour Day. I have to tell him because he does not know anything about labour. As a matter of fact, I have received a report but I would not go there this afternoon, at least, not yet. That has become a farce in Trinidad and Tobago. Who would be out there doing what?

Mr. Speaker, the trade unions in this country have been crying, asking and begging for OSHA to be proclaimed, and nobody is listening. If you mention the name Cabrera, they would say he is a UNC.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: But he is.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: If you mention the name, Indarsingh, he is a UNC, so because these two major players are deemed to be UNC, OSHA would not be proclaimed. We have to be careful about this. So June 19, 2005 would be a sad day for labour in this country. Who is the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: I do not know.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: What would he tell the people? What address is he going to make to the people? Is he going to say that they are not introducing the Occupational Safety and Health Bill? You have been in this House and you have heard questions being asked here—good intentions by the UNC. We have put certain things in place and there have been two questions in a row. We came here on behalf of the workers and poor people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the teachers at the Munroe Government Primary School are working in a shack. The school is as big as here, and it is covered with leaking galvanize, and the rainy season is upon us. They have asked for some help and protection from their MP, and the Minister comes to this House today and says that it will be built in one year, whenever it starts. How comforting those words are.

The last time I asked a question about the public library in Chaguanas, which was approved by the previous government and moneys were put in place—the Minister is now saying that they are assessing the library services in Trinidad and Tobago, and when that time comes, and a decision is made, he would then tell us when the library in Chaguanas is going to be built. That is discrimination, and that shows that the power that be—because Rudy Indarsingh is a UNC and Cabrera is a UNC, let us kill labour. I got this from a reliable source and that is the Government is destroying Caroni (1975) Limited as a means of putting an end to UNC supporters, but I want to tell them that they made a mistake. That was said and it was never denied.

Mr. Rahael: Who said that?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: It was said in this House and it was never denied. So, here we have a Government who made us believe that they care for the working class. I want to tell you that they do not care about the working class. I think I understood what the Prime Minister was trying to say when I got angry that day. He said glibly that 40 per cent of the country is living below the poverty line, and

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Friday, May 27, 2005

we know that a few days before it was 22 per cent, and that was the latest UNDP report. I wanted to know where the other 18 per cent was coming from. He wanted to say that if it is 40 per cent in the next five months, when he gets the report and it is 22 per cent, he would claim responsibility for reducing it but, in fact, the reverse has occurred where now it is 40 per cent and counting. I put the blood on their hands. They are the ones destroying Trinidad and Tobago. They are not indicating to us that they are going to take the people out of poverty and they are going to save us from crime.

Mr. Speaker, what is famous about this Government is that when they come here and talk to the population, you hear words like “crime is temporary”. I have never heard about temporary crime before. Corruption is temporary. They would have to tell us what period is temporary. Is it 50 years? Is it 10 years? Is it during the life of the hon. Prime Minister? We do not know.

Mr. Speaker, again, corruption affects every one of us in the workplace. For example, if the Government is a business organization we, the stakeholders, would aspire for good shares and so forth, because good shares would mean a lower cost of living; it would mean better protection by the national security agencies and so forth. So we pay our dues, and we collect taxes from the corporate sector and so forth, and the population would expect some good dividends but, what do we get? We cannot get the dividends because 50 per cent of the would-be dividends have been stolen by directors of the board. Is this, too, temporary? How long would this corruption continue? We, as stakeholders, are waiting to hear how much our shares would be. We are hearing that the money is being interfered with and, as the old word says: “looted” by the directors.

We are not happy at all about how our workers are being treated in this country. When I started my contribution—I do not plan to finish early, I am going to use my 75 minutes—I said that in this country we have a very—though the rich is getting richer every day—small and dwindling middle class, thanks to the PNM, and an ever increasing poorer class. You cannot deny that. You boasted about creating employment—URP, CEPEP and all these fancy acronyms that mean nothing; no development. So you are creating this massive lower class. I want to tell you that if we do not take care of our poorer people and the unemployed persons, we are sowing the seeds of a social revolution. The people now understand what is taking place.

Again, I heard the Member for St. Ann’s East crying out in desperation as to what is happening. Maybe he is sending a message to his Minister of National

Security about what is taking place in Laventille, but I fear for what is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago. We have this ever growing population—the working class in our country—and this is a recipe for a social revolution. If you go back to your history books, you would see that the Marx and Engles talked about the threat of the working class. We have to be very careful how we deal with them; how we deal with their representatives.

What was going to happen if my friend was coming to his workplace and he was debarred at the gate? Let us say, he was like the Member for La Brea, who believed that he was bad, and pulled up his sleeves and walked with 100 supporters. If there was a confrontation at the Parliament and some blood thirsty officer of the law—

Mr. Bereaux: Hon. Member, I think you are misleading this House. The Member for La Brea never walked in here with any supporters; he never walked in feeling that he was bad. Your government did not give La Brea water and the hon. Member protested, and he was put out by the then Speaker. He bowed and left with respect. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I am totally disappointed. I thought you looked real bad that day. Maybe that is my perception. Mr. Speaker, if that was not bad behaviour, then I do not know what is bad behaviour. Again, that is history and it is in the *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker, if there was a group of persons out there supporting the Member of Parliament for Fyzabad, who believed that he was going to his workplace; and who believed that he was being treated badly: what would have happened to our country?

Mr. Speaker, while I am talking about employment and the rights of workers and so forth; the Members of Parliament have offices and we serve our constituencies. Some Members would be there and some Members would not be there. We have MP Chandresh Sharma who is now without an office; without an office staff. Five persons or four persons would now be unemployed.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: That is the same thing you did to Dr. Rowley.

Mr. Partap: Dr. Rowley got paid.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He did not get pay.

Mr. Partap: His staff was paid.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: They did not get pay.

Occupational Safety and Health Act
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Friday, May 27, 2005

Mr. M. Ramsaran: How could a society move forward when something that happened 10 years ago could justify something that happens today? Listen to the Member for Arouca South!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He did not disrespect the Parliament.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Are we moving forward or are we remaining stagnant in our brain? Something that happened five years ago is being used as a yardstick in a negative way for something that happened today.

I am making a plea now. I am not begging. I am saying that these five persons are without jobs now. Is this the rights of workers when they are being treated like that? This must be seen as—what I have been trying to say—a spite and being vindictive against people who opposed you. If we do not try to stop this kind of thinking—I always try to make my point—we are going nowhere and we are going nowhere fast. Are you giving me a lecture when to stand up and when to sit?

Mr. Speaker, I have a couple points to make. Let me just check my notes to make sure that I am not leaving out anything. Mr. Speaker, let me come back to the Bill for a while. The history of this Bill, as I attempted to portray, is one that shows that at no time the Government was interested in introducing the Occupational Safety and Health Bill. I want somebody to be honest and tell me that; I want somebody to be honest and tell me that they are ready to improve the conditions of workers in this country by proclaiming this piece of legislation. Is there anybody honest enough to get up and say that they want to do it and that they are interested in the working class? Could anybody get up and tell me that the Government is interested in proclaiming this Act? Then I would sit and shut up. I know and I am convinced with the happenings in this country that they are not interested; it does not serve the Government's interest in supporting the Occupational Safety and Health Bill. You have shown it because you have discriminated against the working class for so long.

I hear a boast by the Member for Point Fortin that it was the PNM that introduced trade unions. Mr. Speaker, I believe they caused trade unions to come into this country, because of their history of dealing with workers in a negative way. They did not encourage trade unions.

Mr. Rahael: We entrenched them.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: You entrenched them because the need was there. You maltreated Caroni (1975) Limited workers. Do you remember Bloody Tuesday?

Do you remember how these trade unions were formed? Do you want me to give you a history of Krishna Deonarine (Cola Rienzi) and Butler? Do you remember those days? They came to plea the case of sugar workers. You did not encourage them, but you caused them to exist.

The PNM came here with the Industrial Relations Act to deal with the working class and to deal with trade unions. History would show where they have attempted to destroy the trade union movement. Today, I heard some of you mouthing that you are not interested in trade unions.

When the UNC was in Government, we encouraged trade union members to sit on state boards to bring the workers' view to the board. What has happened under your watch? You have fired all the trade union representatives and they are no longer on boards, so the workers' rights, on a particular board, are not being heard and cared for. You have one or two trade unionists on your side.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Raffique Shah was put on a board, but he was not put there to represent the workers. He was put there as a pay-back, and this has nothing to do with representing workers. When we talk about representation, we mean that in Petrotrin, we would put somebody from the OWTU. If something happens in Caroni (1975) Limited, we would put somebody from the sugar union to represent the persons who work in that company. So, for the Member to put on *Hansard* that they encouraged trade unions is misleading the nation.

If we have a state of emergency throughout the country, and policemen are confronting criminals, would you say that you have encouraged it or you caused it? Did you get the point?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: What is the point?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: The point is that you have maltreated workers over time. That is the history of the PNM. You have maltreated the sugar workers; you have treated the Port workers badly, so they had to form unions to fight for their rights, and today you continue to deal with trade union members in a particular manner as to make them go back into their shell. I promise you that once we are in the UNC and have blood in our veins and nothing to be ashamed of, we would be on the side of the workers, and the workers must rise again. We in the UNC promise you and the country that once we return to office, poverty would start going down again and unemployment would go down. We would return to office because of the non-performance of this Government. Every Minister has failed. You heard the Member for San Fernando West coming here today and saying—we must give her some credit—that the Government has failed.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Thank you Members for having my time extended. The point I was making before the end of my first 45 minutes, was about the role of the PNM in destroying the working class in this country. Do you know what amazes? This sometimes causes concern and that is how we manipulate our working class. For example, persons would be living in abject poverty; persons would be suffering during the five-year rule of the PNM—

Mr. Speaker, I did a survey on old age pension. Every time, prior to now, whenever there was an increase in old age pension it was during an election year. You could go and research that. Since 1956, whenever there was an increase in pension it was during an election year. So you have people suffering. Pension has raised to \$1,000. I had a case this morning where a poor person came to me. That person was paralyzed in an accident and that person was asking me, as a former Minister of Social Development, what I can do. When I found out what was happening, the person is paralyzed from his neck down, and with the \$800 disability allowance, the cheapest place to house that person is costing \$3,000 and the family is living in poverty, because of this accident which occurred about 13 years ago. To take care of such a person is really a heavy burden.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Did that person not come to you before?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Maybe the resources have been dwindled away. Mr. Speaker, again, you see, they are trying to justify nonsense. This is the style of this PNM Government. Once you try to make excuses—I want to tell you, as a former cricket coach, if you ask a team why did they fail you would get 100 excuses, and once you are making excuses, you cannot improve. How do you expect this Government to improve? I am talking here about a case of a poor person who cannot face the cost of living.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: What is the person's name?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: When my office called around, the cheapest place was \$3,000.

Adjournment

Friday, May 27, 2005

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, June 03, 2005 at 1.30 p.m. On that day, we would do Motion No. 2 under “Private Business”, which is a negative resolution and which must be done within 40 days from the 27th day of April; after which we would continue the debate on Motion No. 1 under “Government Business” which is the Election and Boundaries Commission Order, 2005.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the question, there is a matter to be debated on the Motion for the Adjournment. I now call on the Member for Siparia. [*Desk thumping*]

Dansam Dhansook Allegations (Government’s Failure to Report on)

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (Siparia): Mr. Speaker, it is now a matter of public record and record in this House that allegations have been made by councillor Dhansook with respect to bribe-giving by himself, and bribe-taking by the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South and the Member of Parliament for Ortoire/Mayaro. That is a matter of public record—the allegations made by councillor Dhansook.

Secondly, it is also a matter of public record that these allegations were sent to the hon. Member for San Fernando East in his capacity as Prime Minister.

Thirdly, it is a matter of public record that the Prime Minister referred those matters to the office of the hon. Attorney General.

Fourthly, it is a matter of public record that those allegations were forwarded by the Attorney General and/or by the Prime Minister to the Integrity Commission.

Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Attorney General is a constitutional office under our republican Constitution. It is the kind of office, in terms of its functions and its powers and so forth, that is slightly different from one that you would find in some other jurisdictions and, at the same time, it is similar to the powers, duties and functions, throughout the common-law world. The office of the Attorney General holds a very special position.

Under our Constitution that office must exist. There must be an office holder before a government can be constituted. It is the only other office, apart from that of the Prime Minister, which must be held for there to be a constituted

Dansam Dhansook Allegations
[MRS. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

Friday, May 27, 2005

government in this Republic. The other Ministers could wait. We have seen, in fact, when appointments are being made, that immediately upon the appointment of the Prime Minister, the first officer of the Cabinet who is named is the office of the Attorney General.

4.15 p.m.

Throughout the common-law world the Attorney General and the Office of the Attorney General hold the powers and must act always as the guardian of the public interest. It is said that the Office of the Attorney General is the guardian of the public interest. So, there are duties, responsibilities which enure in that office which belong specifically to the Office of the Attorney General.

If it is that the Prime Minister did not see it fit to refer these bribe-taking and bribe-giving allegations to the police; to the Director of Public Prosecutions and to the Fraud Squad; the person who is advisor to the Prime Minister and to the Government—the legal advisor to the Government is in fact, the hon. Attorney General, the Office of the Attorney General—and thereto, the Attorney General of his own volition has the powers as guardian of the public interest, but he also has a further duty, and that duty is as the legal advisor to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

Whilst I will not in any way excuse the fact that the Prime Minister did not see it fit to send these allegations to the police, and so on—that is another issue which we will deal with at another time. The issue that concerns me is the Attorney General with his special powers as guardian of the public interest; as advisor to the Prime Minister, legal advisor to the Cabinet, having received these allegations, did nothing more or nothing less than to send them to the Integrity Commission.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong with that; if he referred them to the Integrity Commission. If he advised the Prime Minister to refer it to the Integrity Commission, come and tell us. We do not know. What we do know is that the Prime Minister agreed and admitted that the allegations had been sent to the Integrity Commission. Did the Attorney General meet with the Ministers concerned? That is one of the allegations that is being made, that he met with the two Members of Parliament. After meeting with them and after reading these letters that were sent, he was of the view that there was a *prima facie* case made out and, therefore, it should be sent to the Integrity Commission. Why is it that these allegations were not referred to the DPP? Why were these allegations not

referred to the Commissioner of Police or to the Fraud Squad? The Attorney General has his own little unit inside there—someone said it is a whole political Fraud Squad by itself—the anti-corruption bureau, which sits within his office, which is under his jurisdiction and gazetted under the powers given by the Prime Minister: put that unit there. Why did the Attorney General not send it to the DPP; to the police; to the Fraud Squad, even if it is—I am very happy he did not send it to his internal police he has inside there—*[Interruption]* I have not ruled that out. I am not ruling it out; I am not ruling it out. That is why he did not send it.

How is it when other allegations are made, you bring all these foreign people from all over, travelling all over the world and taxpayers' dollars doing forensic audits, how come the Attorney General did not see it fit to have audits done; to have those kinds of investigations done? He sent it to the Integrity Commission. Let us talk about that for a minute. We set up in the law in this country an Integrity Commission. What is the role and function of the Integrity Commission? It is to monitor, to investigate of its own volition or upon the recommendation of anyone else. The Integrity Commission has the power then to look into and deal with issues relating to breaches of the Integrity in Public Life Act.

Therefore, having put that body into office; having given them those responsibilities, then you would say its main purpose is to bring about a reduction of the corruption in the country; a reduction into breaches of matters dealing with integrity in public life. The experience, the statistics and the tangible evidence in this country is that that corruption level has not been reduced in any way, because every year since the PNM has been in office the statistical evidence; the tangible evidence is the corruption index in the world has placed Trinidad and Tobago always, always—the corruption index is getting worse. There is the tangible evidence.

The Attorney General ought to have known that. Here is an Integrity Commission that is supposed to be functional, and it is not dealing with its responsibilities. He should have known that it could not handle these matters. If it is that the Integrity Commission does not have the resources, then the Integrity Commission has a duty to come out in public and say so, but they have sent in their reports. I do not recall any report coming from the Integrity Commission saying that they do not have enough resources; the Government is not giving us the resources; the Government is not giving us the personnel. We have nothing of that nature. So, is the Integrity Commission happy with what they have—two investigating officers? That is what they have. They have been unable to seriously investigate any matter for the last three years—nothing. So we have

Dansam Dhansook Allegations
[MRS. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

Friday, May 27, 2005

sitting in this Parliament: one, two, three Ministers of Government before the Integrity Commission and a fourth and fifth soon to come—four Ministers of Government—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And one Opposition Member.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:—Minister Rowley, former Ministers Khan and Williams and Minister Rahael, matters before the Integrity Commission.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And one Opposition leader.

Hon. Member: The Prime Minister [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Those matters are being dealt with and will be dealt with according to justice. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, when these Dhansook allegations came in a year ago, up to today, if that matter was not raised in the public domain in this Parliament, we would not have known. Nothing would have been done. The Integrity Commission has done nothing with the matter. Why was it sent only to that Integrity Commission and not to the proper authorities? I am saying that the corruption index shows us that they are not doing anything. They had the matter in their hands since last year and nothing has been done.

I come to the third point. My hon. colleague, the Attorney General, we had, I do not know if it is the opportunity, to actually be in the law school at the same time.

Mr. Jeremie: I am glad you remember. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: We were colleagues in law school. I am sure the Attorney General would have come across and read the Prevention of Corruption Act. I know he is a diligent student when he wants to be. He did not top the law school and I would not want to repeat that, okay.

Hon. Member: Depends on who did it.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Who “top”?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: He did not do it, okay.

Hon. Member: She.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Who “top”?

Hon. Member: She did.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Do not come with those low dodges and under the belt. The Attorney General would not do that himself. He did not come to say

who bright and who not. I am giving him due respect as a colleague. If you want to know who “top” the law school, check the records, you will see who “top” the law school.

Hon. Member: Who taught him?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, Act No. 11 of 1987, “An Act to provide for the Prevention of Corruption”. Under this Act, the crimes of bribe-giving and bribe-taking are clearly enunciated. They are crimes in the law of Trinidad and Tobago. These are not matters that are dealt with simply by the Integrity Commission, breaches under the Integrity in Public Life Act and so on, these are criminal offences. So, the allegations are being made with respect to criminal offences. They are very, very serious criminal offences. Section 6 of this Act reads:

“A person who commits an offence under sections 3, 4 or 5,...is liable, ...upon summary conviction or upon conviction on indictment, to a fine of five hundred thousand dollars...imprisonment for ten years and, in addition, shall be ordered to pay to such public body...as the court directs, the amount or value of any gift, loan, fee, or reward...”

In addition, because we are dealing with the Members of Parliament:

“Such person shall also be adjudged forever incapable of being elected or appointed as a member of a public body or of holding any other public office and shall forfeit any such office held by him at the time of his conviction.”

Exceedingly serious offences. Serious criminal offences. The Attorney General in response to these, and with respect to information when he read those allegations, was of the view that a *prima facie* had been made out—that is why “it should be referred to the Integrity Commission”—but failed, neglected, omitted to send it to the DPP, to the Commissioner of Police and to the Fraud Squad. In my respectful view, I am calling upon the Attorney General—the last time I asked him a question I got a writ, so, I hope this question would not bring another writ. I want to ask another question—[*Interruption*—I would ask it outside, I have plenty court clothes and Indian Arrival clothes, too, do not worry.

Mr. Speaker, the question I ask is: Why did you not send it to these other authorities, who would have the resources and the wherewithal in order to carry out proper investigations, with respect to exceedingly serious criminal offences? You know the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro honestly believed that they were very serious allegations. That is why today, he is sitting on the back bench here. The Member for Port of Spain South takes a totally different view. I will ask the Attorney General,

Dansam Dhansook Allegations
[MRS. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

Friday, May 27, 2005

when he is considering, if he has already sent it, well, tell us. If you have not sent it to the DPP, and so on, I want to know whether the report sent to the Member for San Fernando East with respect to over-laying; with respect to Lake Asphalt; with respect to the bribe-taking and bribe-giving, with respect to that matter—which I will deal with when we come on another occasion—whether that report that is in the Prime Minister's hands, if it is in the Minister's hands and whether that has also been sent to the Attorney General or to the Integrity Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 90, I beg to move that Standing Order No. 10(2) be suspended to allow for the reply of the Attorney General at this time.

Question put and agreed to.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to respond to the Motion which is raised on the Adjournment of the House. When I first saw this Motion, I had great difficulty understanding whether I should take it seriously, and I will tell you why. When I say that I had great difficulty understanding whether I should take the Motion seriously, what I mean is this; the Member for Siparia was for a very short time, an Attorney General of this country. She was also—as she quite rightly pointed out—a classmate of mine, and I operate on the presumption that she must understand some law, not only law, but also due process. Another reason for my having difficulty in taking this matter seriously is because I have a memory, which I want to share with this House this afternoon. In December, 1999, when the Member was on this side, a councillor in the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation wrote to the then Prime Minister accusing a then Member of Parliament and Government Minister of bribe-taking. The course of action taken by the Member for Siparia and her Prime Minister led to the assassination of Mr. Hansraj Sumairsingh. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: On a point of order. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please. I think you should—

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker. The course of action which was taken did not prevent the assassination of Mr. Hansraj Sumairsingh. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: You like it? You like it?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Speaker, that is the context in which I give an account of the Government's stewardship in this matter. The hon. Prime Minister received a letter from one, Mr. Dansam Dhansook in the middle of 2004. He delivered a bundle of documents to me in the middle of June 2004, with instructions to take such action as I might deem fit. The bundle included two undated letters from Mr. Dhansook, one which was expressed to be written to the Director of Public Prosecutions himself and the other which was expressed to be written to the Director of Public Prosecutions and to the Commissioner of Police. The Prime Minister handed me his bundle. Without showing the document to the Ministers involved, I discussed the broad nature of the allegations with them—that is due process. I came to three conclusions: one, that the Ministers knew Mr. Dhansook; two—as the Member for Siparia quite correctly pointed out—that there was an allegation which involved a possible commission of an offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Integrity in Public Life Act, 2000. The third conclusion I came to was an obvious one: that the three persons involved were persons in public life and it was in that context that on June 18, 2004—for the information of the Member for Siparia—I spoke with the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Chairman of the Integrity Commission.

I satisfied myself at that time, that the Integrity Commission, not only had the power under the Constitution by virtue of section 138(2)(d) and section 5 of the Integrity in Public Life Act to conduct these investigations, but they had meticulously conducted a similar investigation with great success in the past. I am sure that the Member for Couva North knows very well what I am speaking about.

Mr. B. Panday: I do, I do.

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Speaker, on June 24, 2004, I therefore referred the matter in writing to the Integrity Commission making certain observations generally. When I referred the matter to the Integrity Commission, I knew—I wondered if the Member for Siparia knows that these retired men and women in the Integrity Commission do not investigate anything themselves—that they rely on the police service, under section 5 of the Integrity in Public Life Act. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: That they rely on the police service, under section 5 of the Integrity in Public Life Act to conduct investigations on their behalf. These retired persons do not walk out of the Unit Trust building and go to Rio Claro and interview persons; there are police officers who do that. I have satisfied myself that

Dansam Dhansook Allegations
[SEN. THE HON. J. JEREMIE]

Friday, May 27, 2005

the investigator who would likely be assigned to this matter, was the then head of the Fraud Squad, Assistant Superintendent Wellington Virgil, now Assistant Commissioner of Police and Head of the Special Branch. So, Mr. Speaker, to say that the police were not involved in this matter, or to suggest that the police were not involved in this matter, and to suggest that the Director of Public Prosecutions was not involved in this matter, is really to stretch the truth. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: When the Integrity Commission met on this matter, it was important for me to ensure that the Anti-corruption Squad, of which the Member spoke, that there were lines of demarcation between the responsibility of the Integrity Commission and the Fraud Squad as represented by the head of the Fraud Squad and the Anti-corruption Squad. The Anti-corruption Squad is a unit which is set up primarily to investigate corruption, but corruption involving transnational crime, that is to say, crime in respect of which—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: How do you know these bribes have not gone transnational?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Crime in respect of which—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: How do you know?

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Crime in respect of which, Mr. Speaker, you need co-operation from foreign governments under the Mutual Legal Assistance arrangements which are now in place. That is why the Attorney General's office is involved, and that is why the Anti-corruption Squad, on the face of it, had no need to be involved in this particular matter.

Mr. Speaker, I say all this against the context that I set out at the beginning, which is that I took this Motion with a grain of salt and I had great difficulty in taking it seriously. We in this Chamber are responsible for issues of life; we are responsible for issues of death, and we are also responsible for maintaining the highest standards of conduct in public affairs. [*Desk thumping*]

That, obviously, did not motivate the actions of the Member for Couva North, when he received the correspondence in 1999. It did not motivate the actions of the Member for Siparia, when she was advisor—maybe for 10 days or however long—to the Prime Minister, but at the end of the day nothing happened and the blood of Mr. Sumairsingh is on their hands. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: Hansraj Sumairsingh.

Dansam Dhansook Allegations

Friday, May 27, 2005

Sen. The Hon. J. Jeremie: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Government that he leads are committed to the highest principles of integrity in public life. [*Desk thumping*] In this matter, the Government and the Attorney General have acted in accordance with due process and the law of the land.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.36 p.m.