

Withdrawal of Motion

Thursday, November 10, 2005

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 10, 2005

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

WITHDRAWAL OF MOTION

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have been advised by the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre that the Motion standing in her name listed for debate tomorrow has been withdrawn and she does not wish to burden this House with a debate which, substantially, mirrors the debate currently in progress.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual report of the Police Service Commission for the year 2003. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Eighth report of the Police Complaints Authority for the period October 01, 2003 to September 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Annual administrative report of the Siparia Regional Corporation for the period October 2003 to September 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Annual audited financial statements of Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

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

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER

(LEAVE)

Avian Influenza

(Government's Failure to Prepare National Plan for)

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I seek leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter of urgent public importance, namely, the failure of the Government to prepare a national plan to combat the avian influenza, the bird flu virus. The matter is definite because it relates to infection caused by this virus affecting both human beings and poultry.

The matter is urgent because the bird flu virus has reached neighbouring Suriname and there is need for us to be in a state of readiness and response.

Avian Influenza
[MR. SINGH]

Thursday, November 10, 2005

However, there is no articulated national plan; there is no official stock pile of the bird flu inhibiting drug, Tamiflu; there is no network of preparedness and there is no public health education programme.

The matter is of public importance, because avian flu is recognized as posing a serious global threat. One scientist has alarmingly announced that 1 billion people stand to die from the coming global flu pandemic. The bird flu poses a clear and imminent danger to the health and welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have considered the Motion as raised by the hon. Member for Caroni East and regret that I would be unable to accede to his request. May I suggest to the hon. Member that he use the provision of Standing Order 11. [*Crosstalk*]

GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO COMBAT CRIME

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [November 09, 2005]:

Be it Resolved that this House take note of the Government's efforts to combat crime. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I join this debate to take note of the Government's efforts to support the Minister of National Security and to support the Government of which I am a part, in its effort to combat crime.

In the first few contributions to this debate, we heard contributions from hon. Members opposite and from Members on this side. The distinguishing feature of the contributions from the other side was a confirmation on the part of the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre that she was prepared to sit with the Government to discuss a mechanism and an approach to passing the Police Reform Bills. That was the distinguishing feature, in my opinion, of the contributions from the other side. It was the first time that we have ever heard it articulated in that way; that a Member of the other side is now prepared to sit with the Government and work out a way to adapt, modify or amend, as that case may be and pass the Police Reform Bills.

The other contributions from the other side were puerile. In particular, the Member for St. Augustine was completely out of sync with reality; that was demonstrated, most succinctly, by the Member for Port of Spain North who

pointed out that the Member for St. Augustine practised avoidance for his entire 60 minutes, or however long he spoke. He avoided the issue; he pretended to be Pontius Pilate, he washed his hands of the whole thing. He said, "I am not involved; I am not responsible; it is not my business; it is the Government's business; keep me out of this; I want no part of this," and it took that very strong contribution from the Member for Port of Spain North to bring us all back to where we should be, that, in fact, it is the duty of all Members of Parliament to deal with this issue.

When I listened to the puerile contribution of the Member for Oropouche, trying to give the impression that all that is happening today is solely the responsibility of the Members on this side, that it was caused by us, I have to repeat some of the things said. I read the papers a few days ago that in my own constituency, in the Bournes Road area, some young men were engaged in a water fight; by that I assume they were throwing water on each other. Apparently that was something routine; from time to time the young men of that area would have a water fight, and somebody got wet. That is what I gleaned from the newspaper report, that somebody got wet and that person went home, got his gun, came back and shot and killed one of the other persons involved in the water fight.

I then saw another story where another young man put on a pair of sneakers belonging to his brother and his father told him, "Those are not your sneakers; take them off." He got his gun and killed his father. Now, no rational mind, no mature person would lay that kind of behaviour at the doorstep of a government; those are acts of insanity. It tells me something; you kill somebody because you were in a water fight and you got wet; you shoot him; you kill him. You put on somebody else's sneakers and because somebody told you to take them off, you pull out your gun and kill him. It does not matter whatever the issue is; you put on a sneakers and somebody tells you, "That is not your sneakers," bang; you take him out for daring to tell you that.

You may laugh or dismiss some of the points made by the Member for Diego Martin West, but he is right; that is the American culture; that is the whole concept of disrespect, of "dissing" someone. "So you wet me, you diss me and you will die for that; you tell me that I cannot wear those sneakers, well, you diss me and you will die for that." That is the American culture; that is what you see on movies, cable television and so on, in the worst ghettos of the developed countries; someone feels disrespected, and so he kills the person. While it may

have come from the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and you might feel naturally inclined to dismiss it, do not. This is reality we are dealing with.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: What are you suggesting?

Hon. C. Imbert: Hold on, I will come to that. These murders, apart from the fact that the law enforcement agencies have failed, and I think that no serious person would deny that we have a failure of law enforcement in this country, we have an importation of foreign culture and an importation of the concept that life is cheap and there is no longer any regard for life in Trinidad and Tobago. The consequence of all this is that you shoot someone, so what; you go to prison and you get three square meals or whatever it is or the witnesses are all intimidated or wiped out, as the case may be, and the case is thrown out and you get off. This is where Trinidad and Tobago has reached today. We have to take stock of that.

It has already hit home on both sides of this House. Members on both sides of this House have already come face to face with the reality of violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago. I think there is no such thing as a cheap political point. It is stupid to politicize this whole thing, because you do not know what is going to happen tomorrow. As you get in your car outside and drive down the road, you have no idea what is going to happen. That is the situation in this country today.

The other point that needs to be made is that the Minister of National Security has been criticized for drawing comparisons to other countries, but that was in order to find out what we must do. None of us is the oracle that has the only and perfect solution to this problem. This needs collective reasoning and thinking. We need to put all our brainpower together and come up with a solution to this problem. In order to find a solution we must look at the information, the situations, the experiences and the strategies used by people in other countries. What is happening in Trinidad and Tobago is not unique to Trinidad and Tobago.

I heard some commentator making the point that we were capable of solving our own problems and we should not look overseas and try to import solutions. That is a childish, trivial, oversimplification of a real life problem. We have to look at what is going on in other countries and adapt it to our problem to find a solution, because this problem is virtually out of control at this point in time. I reject the assertion that we in Trinidad and Tobago have all the answers to all our problems. I think we need to look at what has happened in other countries.

I did a bit of research and looked at what has happened in other countries and one of the things I found was an article on the Los Angeles Police Department giving a history from 1853 coming up through the years and looking at what various police chiefs had done over this period of 150 years and up to the present time. I looked at what the situation was in 1987 and the chief of police in Los Angeles at that time was Darryl Gates.

"In 1987, the two most disturbing problems facing the Department were narcotics trafficking and street gang violence."

Does that not sound familiar? What are the two biggest criminal problems facing Trinidad and Tobago? Let me repeat:

"...narcotics trafficking and street gang violence."

When I look at some of the proposals coming from the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, they are a bit simplistic. We need to get to the root of the issues facing us. Somehow, certain sections of this country are afraid to deal with issues. We have a drug problem in this country and people must admit that, recognize it and confront it. There are various organizations that like to talk all the time, always issuing bulletins and statements, but you never hear them talk about that. They practise avoidance, what the psychiatrists call avoidance; I am sure the Member for Caroni Central would bear me out; the proverbial ostrich syndrome; you put your head in the sand; by the time you take your head out, that will go ahead.

Mr. Singh: That kidnappings were bogus.

Hon. C. Imbert: Member for Caroni East, calm down. I am not casting any aspersions on anyone at this point in time, yet. Let us go on.

Mr. Speaker, the article goes on to say:

"While enormous confiscation of drugs, cash, and weapons were increasingly made..."

Again, you know that we had a drug bust the other day. How much hundred million was that?

Mr. Singh: \$700 million.

Hon. C. Imbert: Whatever it was, big, big, big bust.

"Chief Gates spoke...about the 'deadly plague invading our shores.' More than half of all murders and bank robberies were narcotics related;"

This was Los Angeles in 1987.

"200 street and 10 motor cycle gangs infested the City with members in the thousands, committing 205 homicides, 1,711 robberies...There were more than 5,000 victims of these and other gang-related crimes."

That was the situation then. Let me go to the solution now. The article continues:

"In the war against narcotics, Chief Gates contributed a concept and programme of historic significance to law enforcement through his creation of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) programme. DARE was based on his contention that the present generation had already surrendered to drug dependency..."

So his point of view was that in Los Angeles, at that time, the present generation gone; "dey" gone; they had already surrendered; they were all drug abusers.

"...the country's future lies with the readiness of our children to resist..."

As I read this I thought to myself, "This makes sense." While I do not agree that we should abandon the present generation, certainly one of the things we should do is have a very aggressive programme to prevent our children from getting involved in drug use, drug dependency, trafficking and so on. [*Desk thumping*] That is certainly something that I would recommend to the collective heads of this House.

We all have children, I assume, and we all care and worry about them. Certainly, I would be mortified if my son ever fell prey to this kind of thing. I am sure for people on the other side that would be a horrible thing to happen. So that is one thing they did in Los Angeles; they executed this drug abuse resistance education. Clearly it is something we need to look at and it is something we can do in Trinidad and Tobago, a very aggressive education and drug abuse reduction programme within our schools and in every place where there are young people.

The other thing that Gates did was to actually organize what is now the famous weapons and tactics Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams. He pioneered this in 1972 and SWAT has evolved from that. The other thing he did was to turn to the residents of Los Angeles and recruited volunteers to assist the department. This is something that could work in Trinidad and Tobago.

The article continues:

"The old and young responded by the thousands, permitting sworn personnel to meet more pressing duties. They ranged from uniformed line reservists to

youngsters enrolled in Deputy Auxiliary Police activities to clerical workers. They constituted 94 different groups with 55,305 members not including 3,000 Block Club captains attached to Neighbourhood Watch programmes. Volunteers contributed 172,210 hours of time in 1987..."

Again, I think this is something we should do in Trinidad and Tobago. We should enlist members of the public to assist law enforcement agencies in policing, in volunteer servicing.

The 250 policemen now doing desk duties, why are they doing that? The last time I was in government I heard about this. It was either in 1994 or 1995 that I heard about these 250 police officers doing desk duty; they are still doing desk duty 10 years later. That is something we should aggressively deal with and get them out of there and into detections, surveillance, enforcement, patrols or whatever. I assume by now that they are fairly senior persons, get them into some sort of enforcement aspect of policing. That is why I do not dismiss the Minister's effort to look at what is going on in other countries to borrow from them and to learn from their experiences. This is what we have to do; that is my view and I think it would be the view of any right thinking person.

Another thing that was done, and you may have heard the Minister talk about it is the whole question of this thing called CompStat. Let me explain what it is; in Los Angeles in 2002, the new police chief then coming in, William Bratton, decided very quickly that the community did not trust the police department; this was long after 1987. He said:

"This severe lack of community trust in the police department was created in part by a breakdown in communication and sharing of information between the community and the police department. To win back the city's trust, Chief Bratton...put systems into place to create an organization where information and changes occurring in the department would be freely shared with the community and media. Opening up the organization and communicating with the media and the community is now building the bridges of trust in Los Angeles."

This article was taken from *The Police Chief, The Professional Voice of Law Enforcement*. The article went on:

"Many of the internal problems were caused by the department's culture of risk aversion and resistance to change."

Does that sound familiar? Since I have been in this Parliament, I have been hearing about the resistance of the police system to change.

"The attitude of risk aversion was the major catalyst leading to highly restrictive policies and procedures, which in turn resulted in low organizational performance, poor morale, and a corresponding decrease in proactive enforcement tactics and arrests." *[Interruption]*

Mr. Ramsaran: We will do all that.

Hon. C. Imbert: We need to confront these things and deal with them. They came up with this system called CompStat:

"CompStat, short for 'computer statistics' or 'comparison statistics'...system for managing police operations with a proven track record in several major metropolitan police departments tracing its roots back to 1994..."

In the famous Giuliani New York City Police Department.

"In 1994 major changes were made in the management style of the NYPD. No longer was a centralized command-and-control the watchword and micromanagement from headquarters acceptable. Precinct commanders were granted latitude in managing their precincts, initiating their own crime control operations and making use of the resources available to them. Precinct commanders avoiding risk was no longer a formula for success. Instead, the department recognized and encouraged the positive efforts of the precinct commanders and their officers in reducing crime, disorder, and fear, and the department also measured their success."

This is what it is all about.

I remember an old gentleman telling me once that they published in the newspapers every week, or whatever it was, statistics on all the police departments within New York City; the number of arrests; the number of convictions and so on, and you began to have police precincts competing against each other; so that promotion, bonuses, rewards and so on were based on results. So you get the murders down, you get the solution to crimes down, you get rewarded. The policemen moved away from playing it safe. They were playing it safe: you stay, you tow the line; you "doh" upset nobody; "yuh" stay there, 10 years later they promote you to sergeant or whatever; "yuh" stay again, "yuh" just push some paper around your desk and you go up and go up and go up. That is what it used to be; they changed the whole culture from playing it safe or risk aversion to rewards based on performance and results. That is how Mr. Giuliani and his commissioner got crime down in New York.

I was in New York in August; I was in Manhattan. I walked all over Manhattan all hours of the day and night and I heard of no crime. I saw no crime; there was nothing there. I could safely walk up and down the streets of Manhattan at midnight; no problems; Greenwich Village, East Village, wherever. I thought to myself, what a thing; 20 years ago you could not do that; you could not go into Times Square, they would mug you; 42nd Street was a den of prostitutes and pickpockets. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Singh: How you know that?

Hon. C. Imbert: I heard so; I read it in a book. *[Laughter]* Someone told me the other day that you could just walk all about in Manhattan 12 o'clock in the night with no problem. You see police officers on the street, but they are essentially hanging out looking on. That is how I would like Trinidad and Tobago to become. There are some things the population needs to understand, because as my colleague from Diego Martin West said, people say, "Do something." When all the Members of the Government are confronted by our constituents, they say to us, "Do something now." This is the kind of thing they say when we go in meetings, "You have to clean it up; clean up the police force." People get offended when you tell them that they do not understand, and they do not.

In New York, the mayor is elected and he appoints the police chief. If tomorrow morning the police chief does not perform, "Aiyo Pancho; he gone"; he is fired.

Mr. Singh: You are making it so simple.

Mr. Ramnath: The Prime Minister is not elected.

Hon. C. Imbert: That is how it is. You could pour cold water on it if you want, but that is a fact. In all these systems, the elected politician, in this case the mayor of New York, can fire the chief of police.

Mr. Singh: Constitutional reform. *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. C. Imbert: Yes. He does not have to answer to any Police Service Commission; he does not have to answer to some insulated group of people. If crime is on the rise, if murders are going up, once you have established the performance parameters, that you do not want more than this number of serious crimes, if the police chief does not perform, they fire him. We cannot do that in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Ramnath: You can hire the commissioner.

Hon. C. Imbert: You cannot hire the Commissioner of Police; we cannot appoint him. The politicians cannot do that in Trinidad and Tobago. The police commissioner is appointed by the Police Service Commission. People have to understand this.

Mr. Ramnath: Your Prime Minister is not elected. He is chosen by you all.

Hon. C. Imbert: All these countries that have had this tremendous success have a different system to Trinidad and Tobago. I am glad to see the Member for Couva South is in agreement with me. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Singh: You are suggesting some widespread systemic change?

Hon. C. Imbert: I am coming to that; because the Member for Couva North did some very good work. I do not know why he wants to disown the work he did; so I am coming to that.

I want to repeat, where Mayor Giuliani was able to clean up New York, make Times Square a booming real estate area and convert it from a ghetto to some of the most prime real estate in Manhattan, if the police do not perform, he could fire them. He does not have to worry with any service commission. We do not have that privilege in Trinidad and Tobago; it does not matter which government is in place, which Prime Minister, which Leader of the Opposition. No Prime Minister in this country could get up in the morning and write a letter, "You are fired!" Like Donald Trump in *The Apprentice*. [*Crosstalk*] No Prime Minister could decide; no Minister of National Security or his counterpart in any one of these countries can decide to introduce the CompStat system.

You could imagine if promotion of police officers, rewards, salaries, bonuses and all these benefits in Trinidad and Tobago were based on performance. Do you know how many judicial review cases you would get? And I am coming to that in a little while. If we try to institute the system in Trinidad and Tobago, which now exists in New York, where the precincts are given control of their resources, where precincts are given the flexibility to take their own measures and do their own thing and they are rewarded based on performance and police officers are promoted based on the number of arrests and convictions and the reduction in the murder rate, "dey" running all "de" way, not even walking, to the courthouse.

Any of the persons who have gone through this route could let me know where I am going wrong. "I come in as a police constable with my three O'levels," or whatever, "After 17 years, dey make me a corporal; a couple years later, they make me a sergeant; then I become an inspector," and so it goes; "By the time I hit about 58, I next in line to be Commissioner of Police; if they do not make me Commissioner of Police, I going in de court and filing for judicial review." It

does not matter how I performed during the 30 or 40 years I was there. [Crosstalk] No, I am serious. As I said, the Member for Couva North did a lot of work; I do not know why, after having done all that work, he would want to disown his own child.

Let me come to an example; I need to put this in. What I am about to read, cannot happen in New York. This is the case of Constable X. "Dey tell me I cyar call de name." A matter came for the attention of the Executive, the Government, to pay a gentleman called Constable X for payment in lieu of unutilized vacation leave, prior to being retired from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. This came in 2003. The matter for consideration was the payment of salary to Constable X in lieu of accumulated vacation leave beyond the maximum eligibility of 662 consecutive and 172 working days earned prior to being retired from the police service with effect from February 08, 2001. On the face of it, this is very innocuous; no big thing.

Mr. Speaker, do you want to hear about Constable X. He enlisted in the police service in 1971. With effect from 1971 and continuing over the period 1974 to 1975, he was found guilty under delegated authority by the Commissioner of Police and fined on, at least, 10 occasions for a variety of allegations, including absence without leave, failing to comply with instructions, disobedience to orders, insubordinate conduct and falsehood. He was suspended from duty in 1990 and suspension was never formally lifted.

During the period November 1986 to 1997, Constable X had been on the job for approximately 17 months, having been on suspension interdiction for a variety of court charges. These charges were larceny, obscene language, disorderly behaviour, assault and battery, traffic offences, et cetera. Constable X failed to attend several appointments with the medical board between 1991 and 1994 to determine his suitability or otherwise for employment in the police service. It goes on and on and on and on.

The Commissioner of Police reported that during the preceding five years, before 1994, Constable X had been on duty from 1989 to 1990 and his productivity was negative; his performance was fraught with controversy and disharmony. That is Constable X's record. Look at what the service commission did with this man; look what "dey" do with him.

The Police Service Commission retired Constable X, in the public interest, with effect from 2001. The Commission did not institute disciplinary proceedings against the man; they did not do anything to the man; they just retired him. They said that an approach should be made to the relevant authority with respect to the payment of any benefits for which Constable X may be eligible. So "de" man misbehaving for 15 years: assault and battery, all "kinda ting". The police commissioner found him guilty 10 times; larceny, all "kinda ting"; "dey retire de man" and sent it to us. By us I mean the Executive, "Pay him his benefits." So we have to pay this man for 300 days leave. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, this is one example. It is one of the most graphic I have seen, but there are lots. This is the same commission that plays Pontius Pilate when you ask them, "What are you doing?" Wash your hands. If you change them, if you got rid of them, if you move them, it would be a police State. The commission never instituted disciplinary proceedings against Constable X. [*Interruption*] This passed through all governments: PNM, UNC, NAR, everybody. [*Crosstalk*] This matter passed through while all parties were in government. This was from 1987 to 2001; all governments in place.

The commission presided over this and said, "No disciplinary action. De man guilty; de Police Commissioner find him guilty of all kinda ting," no disciplinary action. Pay him his outstanding leave and some fantastic sum of money which he accumulated. He accumulated leave while on suspension and before the court and they paid him some \$139,000. It is the same commission that screams about political interference, police state and dictatorship.

The Police Service Commission is an anachronism; it has long, long past its time. It has no place in modern Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: The Public Service Commission is an anachronism too?

Hon. C. Imbert: Yes; the Member for Couva North knew that and that was why when they had the problem with Deochand Ramdhanie, it got to him. When Ramdhanie escaped from Princes Town—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: He walked out.

Hon. C. Imbert: Whatever, he was let out; I do not want to get into that. I think there are still matters pending on that, but he got out of the station. The Member for Couva North, the then Prime Minister, was so concerned about it that he asked the Opposition for help to deal with this problem. He knew that the only way to deal with that problem was the way Giuliani dealt with it; to have the authority to take swift action, that there is no insulated third part.

Nobody elected them; nobody voted for them; they do not have any manifesto; they do not account to anybody; they have no mandate; nobody asked them anything. They were just put there and that is why they could insulate themselves from the rest of us, the 36 Members of this Parliament, successive governments over time and say, "We do have to worry with you, man; we are constitutionally protected; we do not even want to hear you." That is why, from time to time, various heads of that commission would come out and just lambaste whichever government was in power, whether it was NAR, UNC, PNM. They would just come out and open "dey" mouth on whichever government was in power or whichever Prime Minister there at the time if they dared to criticize the institution. But they have long passed their time. This is why no reasonable person would really object to these Police Reform Bills. I want to deal with some misinformation in the system.

Mr. Ramnath: All of that to justify that?

Mr. Singh: That debate took place already.

Hon. C. Imbert: No; wait, wait. The Member for Couva North described the Member for Oropouche as being wet behind the ears and it was true. When you go into the Bills themselves and you listen to the puerile nonsense about how, "The Opposition is not going to allow any politician; it will not allow the present Prime Minister to have control of the police," very emotional statements, what does the Bill really say? I am reading from the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill:

"There shall be a Police Management Authority which shall consist of a Chairman and five other members...disciplines in law, finance and management...

The members of the Authority shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, and in the event that such advice is not forthcoming...the President may...exercise his own deliberate judgment and appoint..."

Let me dissect this, because it is clear that the Member for Oropouche needs a lesson in comprehension, English A and English B I think they call it in CXC.

The legislation says that the President shall appoint the members of the authority "on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition," which means that he has to do what they say. They have to agree, of course. They are both given equal status in the legislation. No one is superior or inferior to the other. So does it matter?

Mr. Ramnath: It is a PNM President you have in power.

Hon. C. Imbert: The former Prime Minister is now Leader of the Opposition for the time being and the former Leader of the Opposition is now Prime Minister, for a long time. Does it really matter, since the legislation says, "on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition"? It is the same two people; they have just changed roles, but they have equal authority and influence in the matter and if they do not agree, the President appoints. [*Crosstalk*]

I want to debunk this nonsense; there is some trivia out there that needs to be debunked. The Police Reform Bills do not give the Prime Minister the power to appoint the Police Management Authority; that is a lie and it is necessary for me to repeat it. [*Desk thumping*] It gives the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, if they are able to reach consensus, the ability to appoint the members of the Police Management Authority. It is a true model of power sharing between the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, no matter who it is. [*Laughter*]

That is why I said that the Member for Couva North did a lot of good work. I do not know why in the twilight of his years, he wants to disown his own child, because this is a brilliant child. This child would have won the President's medal. [*Laughter*]

That is the other thing, it is so disappointing when new Members—and that is why I agree with the Member for Couva North, you are wet behind the ears; you are a child in politics. "Doh" even bother to read; that is not it; that is part of it.

The movement to change the system to give us the one that works in New York, Los Angeles and all these places in the world that have been able to deal with crime in a meaningful way, it is not just that the politicians would attempt to agree on who should have the responsibility for managing the police service; that is not all; that is a part of it. But the major part of it is the powers given to the police commissioner; that is the other lie in the public domain. The other piece of good work that the Member for Couva North did was to come up with legislation that gave the commissioner the power to promote, appoint and discipline police officers below a certain rank.

Mr. Ramnath: He could do it now.

Hon. C. Imbert: No, that is nonsense. What is the saying about you give something and you take it back, you get a cattle boil; that is a puerile piece of nonsense. It is a fallacy promoted by successive service commissions, over the last 20, 30 or 40 years. They are being disingenuous; they are not telling the whole story. They delegated and they took it back. What the Member for Couva

North did was to give the constitutional protection to give the Commissioner of Police the power to discipline and promote police officers below a certain rank and that is the problem that the police commissioner faces at this time.

In the same way that the mayor of New York right now, if the Chief of Police does not perform, he could fire him, call him to account, deal with him, in the same way the Chief of Police could deal with all the lesser ranks. He could deal with all his precinct commanders if they are not performing; he could fire them too. This is the kind of control and authority that was intended to be given to the police commissioner by these Bills. That was the fundamental thing.

The appointment of the members of the authority, to me, is really neither here nor there, because if the two leaders do not agree, then the President "go" appoint them. I mean, it is straight mathematics. But the idea of giving the commissioner the authority, by legislation, to have the power of discipline and promotion over the ranks, is the kind of revolutionary concept that we need in Trinidad and Tobago. This is what the former Prime Minister came up with. I do not know what the problem is. I do not know why the Members opposite are worried about this. Why are they worried about this?

If you do not like the part about the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, well, take it out. The more important thing is to deal with the management issues in the police force and to give the police commissioner the authority that he requires. [*Desk thumping*] This thing has got muddled up and confused in a set of stupidity. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Ramnath: Why did you not move that amendment then?

Hon. C. Imbert: I will deal with that in due course. We are here to deal with some issues. We, as parliamentarians, are being called to account. The Member for Port of Spain North was absolutely right when he said that when you look at the ads it was all 36 Members of Parliament. [*Crosstalk*] You could say whatever. They could say what they want; whether they marched against them, us, "all ah we", it does not matter to me. The fact is that they have a problem. They are part of us; we are all members of this society; we live here; we have families here. We have to deal with the current environment; the current unacceptable crime situation and that is their way of expressing themselves; who vex loss. If that is the way members of the community want to express how they feel about something, that is democracy.

I am sure the Member for Couva North would agree with me, you know, being a fighter for democracy. As he tells me, he has been a fighter for democracy from the time he got involved in public life. But they have said what they have to.

They have made their protests and they do not, in my opinion, really fully understand the issues that we have. We cannot go inside there and root out all the bad policemen.

The beauty of this legislation is that an aggrieved policeman can always file for judicial review. The Police Service Commission is just a kind of intermediate step, because if the police officer who is denied promotion, has been fined or whatever, he goes to the court. If the commission takes action against him, he goes to the court and the judges then decide what is to be done. So if you remove the service commission, you are taking away an intermediate step, because if the police officer does not like what the commission does, he is still going in the court. If he feels that his rights have been infringed and he is not happy with the decision of the commissioner and he feels that he has victimized him, it is straight to the court to file for judicial review that the commissioner has abused his power. So there is no loss of protection for police officers in this system; the whole thing is just foolishness. We have to lift the level of discussion in this country; it is just an excuse. [*Interruption*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: May I remind hon. Members that there is, in fact, an amendment before the House and you can also speak on that.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, it is unlikely that I will take up the remaining 30 minutes, but there are some points I would like to make.

My colleague from Diego Martin West touched on some points yesterday about the various arms of the State. I know it is trite, but we cannot win this battle alone. I am not just talking to the Members opposite. There are others arms of the State. When I see repeat offenders getting bail like is doubles; you go down there and you buy two doubles. "And give me a bail too." [*Laughter*] We need to deal with these issues. There are those given the responsibility to deal with criminal offences. You have the police service, on the one hand, it is the enforcement arm; we need to be able to reengineer the enforcement arm of the State. There are no two ways about that and I do not think there is any dispute; the police system is not working.

The number of police officers we have in this country, 5,000, 7,000, some big number; if you look at the other police forces all over the world, in terms of the number of officers per thousand citizens, we do not really have a problem in terms of the number of police officers, but the whole thing is badly organized. There was some movement some years ago, to change the image of the police from a force to a service and, again, I am not blaming anyone; to change it from a 24-hour paramilitary organization into a kind of civil service something or an 8.00 to 4.00 job; all this has happened; this is real. You check any police station in this country after 4 o'clock and see how many police officers you find there.

The police force changed to the police service; it has kind of softened down to a service now, and they are working 8.00 to 4.00, with a trade union. Not that I am against that, because they need to be represented, but the whole point is that it has gone from a paramilitary organization to a public service. We need to deal with these things. I would expect that the Police Management Authority would deal with these issues, would reengineer the police force.

I saw one of the recommendations coming from the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre to make the service 24/7. In the present circumstances, I am sorry, you cannot, because they are working 8.00 to 4.00, so after 4.00 is overtime. If you asked them to work shift, well, the union would come in there. They need shift premium and hazard allowance and all those kinds of things. I am not saying that these things are not necessary, but we need to look at them.

Mr. Ramsaran: If you introduce OSHA that would cover all of that.

Hon. C. Imbert: We have all agreed that there is a problem with the police service; it is not working; it needs to be restructured and the police commissioner needs more authority. Anybody who tells me that is not so, is not speaking the truth. That is what came from the hon. Members opposite. [*Crosstalk*] I will come to that in my last minute.

On the other hand, we have the judicial arm of the State. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, could you protect me from the Member for Diego Martin West. [*Crosstalk*] The other arm of the State that we have to look at is the judicial arm. [*Crosstalk*] If bail is going to keep being given to repeat offenders and serious criminals, then we have to take it away. That is my view. [*Desk thumping*] You do not have to agree with me, but that is my point of view.

So for crimes like kidnapping, we need to think about that. If you look at the statistics, how many times a person charged with kidnapping is out on bail; he gets charged again; "he gone, he get bail again." If the way the judicial arm is exercising its discretion, which it is entitled to do and which it guards very jealously, is that repeat offenders keep getting out on bail, then we have to take away the bail; change the law. *[Interruption]* It is not an undermining of anything; it is for Parliament to intervene and say that we do not think that this type of crime deserves bail. That is how the question of no bail for murder came around. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: But you do not approach it that way; you go after the Chief Justice.

Mr. Singh: Hon. Minister, thank you for giving way. In the context of what you are saying, that there are rogue cops and you do not have faith in the police service and significant sections of it, and you give that discretion in the hands of police officers who can charge you then for kidnapping, then it does not make sense to me.

Hon. C. Imbert: Let me deal with that point.

Mr. Singh: How can you reconcile that?

Hon. C. Imbert: The fact is that courts are empowered to deal with police behaviour. *[Crosstalk]* You cannot have your cake and eat it too. That is risk aversion.

Mr. Singh: That is not risk aversion; that is protection.

Hon. C. Imbert: When the Member for Couva North became so frightened by the escape of Ramdhanie from Princes Town, he took the risk. That is the safe approach; do not change anything; leave the status quo; put your head in the sand; hope that when you get up tomorrow morning crime down in Trinidad and Tobago. Time for that done, Mr. Speaker. The way to deal with the police is to strengthen the laws that deal with misbehaviour on their part. I think this is the third piece of legislation.

I often wonder what is going on in this Parliament. I do not want to use bad words, but this uninformed commentary coming from the Member for Caroni East.

The third thing that the Member for Couva North did to complete the whole thing, because there are different elements, was to bring a bill to revamp the

Police Complaints Authority, to essentially create a department of internal affairs within the police service to deal with rogue cops. So recognizing that you could have a problem from the time you give the Commissioner of Police this power to appoint, promote, discipline and so on, that you could have abuse in the system, he came with the third piece of legislation, to revamp the whole system of police complaints and to put into law systems for dealing with errant police officers.

We could continue along this road for the next 20 years; governments come and governments go; governments come, governments go; the Police Service Commission remains; that is the only constant. Sometimes they stay there until in their 80s. Prime Ministers come and Prime Ministers go; ministers come, ministers go; but the Police Service Commission, as the Member for Caroni Central quite rightly said, is fossilized.

We could continue with this "ol' talk" that we do not want to do anything; we do not want to touch anything; we do not want to give the politicians power and so forth, and continue to see these kinds of crazy crimes taking place where someone is killed over a pair of sneakers, over a water fight and police are not behaving as they should. But I am very hopeful.

2.30 p.m.

I have heard something coming out of the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre; I know in his private moments, the Member for St. Joseph has particular points of view; I am pretty certain the Member for St. Augustine has particular points of view; I have no idea what is going through the mind of the Member for Couva North but I cannot see any political points that would be gained by resisting the reform of the police service and by not dealing with the question of refusal of bail for serious crimes. I do not know what political points will be gained by that because we have reached the point where the families of Members on both sides are now victims of violent crimes. You can continue with this of not supporting and not doing anything you know. No problem, go ahead, but there will be no progress in this country.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am not going to take up too much of the 30 minutes. All I will say is that the legislation brought to this Parliament by the Member for Couva North is an excellent piece of work.

If there are problems with political interference we can deal with that, take out everything that even smells of it. Once we can get movement where we can deal

with errant police officers, where the performance of police officers is based on result, and the commissioner can manage his men like any CEO of any corporation, once we can get to that point and to the point where, if judicial officers are unwilling to exercise their discretion in respect of refusing bail, that the Parliament intervenes. If they do not want to do it, we will do it, we will amend the law. Once we get there, then I think we are going to see some real progress in this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): Mr. Speaker, the Motion before the House is:

“Be it Resolved that this honourable House take note of Government's efforts to combat crime.”

With the amendment that has been circulated.

It should be noted, and I believe the point was made that this Motion was listed for debate on Private Members' Day, the same day on which the Opposition Member for Pointe-a-Pierre had a motion dealing with crime. The object therefore, was clearly to pre-empt that motion by bringing a motion here to note. To note what?

Mr. Speaker, let us assume that the purpose of this Motion was as it says: To inform the House, and by extension the public of what the Government is doing, and has done or intends to do about the escalating crime situation. Let us presume that was the intention.

After listening to the mover of the Motion, the hon. Minister of National Security, it occurred to me that they could have simply resort to their old practice of taking out a coloured centre page in the newspaper and publish what he said. He has said nothing new. [*Desk thumping*] They have used a lot of money simply publishing what the Minister has said in the House, they had already spent millions on newspapers, television and what have you. Why this Motion at this time? Why at this time you want the public to know what you are doing, what you have done, or what you intend to do? It appears to me that this is a knee jerk reaction to the rising anger of the population evidenced by a serious march in the country by people who do not march.

Be that as it may, having listened to the Minister I was left with little hope that there is going to be any change at all, that things will improve. He has said nothing to this House to indicate that the crime situation will improve. I have a

copy of his speech and I have tried to list the points made by him. He has spoken of equipment, three offshore boats, six fast patrol boats, radar, and helicopters.

I want to remind the hon. Minister that when the UNC demitted office in 2001 there were offshore boats and if they are not working—I do not know if they are talking about new boats—then they should have been repaired and kept in a state of repair.

When the UNC demitted office there were fast patrol boats. I even remember the colour of them, they were blue. I am not sure of the number, but I am sure there were not less than four patrol boats. I do not know if they were left to go into disrepair and I do not know if what the Minister is talking about are new boats. But the point about it is that it is nothing new. Is that what he said?

Dr. Rowley: You are talking.

Mr. B. Panday: Yes, but you are mumbling. Tell me. “If you want to tell me something, tell me, doh fraid.” I am not as bad as people say, you know. [*Laughter*]

My point is you are telling me that you are going to deal with crime now because you have boats? You had boats. Are you going to deal with crime now because you have six fast-patrol boats? You had them when you came into office.

The Minister tells us about radar. I again want to repeat that when the UNC demitted office in 2001, there were 360° radar services in this country. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, Mr. Speaker, we had an organization with the acronym JOC which was the Joint Operational Command Centre.

Mr. Manning: JOCC.

Mr. B. Panday: You are so right. I said that to really make sure that you knew it existed. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much, it was the Joint Operational Command Centre (JOCC) which I visited and I saw screens, and I saw the movement of boats in the Gulf of Paria. So do not come and fool people and tell them that you are going to deal with crime because you have radar now and you never had it over the past years.

Helicopters. As far as I am aware the army had helicopters and the Government had access to them through the Helicopter Company if that is the name.

Mr. Manning: The National Helicopter Company.

Mr. B. Panday: He knows. It is not that he does not know. He knows they were there and he sits there and allows his Minister to tell people that now things are going to be different because we have these things.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with one thing he said. We had no blimp at the time, but I do not know if it has done any service to the country since it has been there. He also spoke of coordinating the activities of the various services and I want to tell him, as the hon. Prime Minister has just admitted, that there was in fact such an organization which existed. I think Admiral Kelshall was in charge of that. I do not know what has happened to it, I do not know if a new organization has come into being. Be that as it may, it does not change the price of cocoa.

He spoke of the International Crime Network. Mr. Speaker, this is nothing new, it is nothing we have not heard about, it was always there. The drug trade was always there. I want to ask him if he remembers a person called Dole Chadee and the eight or nine members of his gang. So it was always there. I also want to ask him if he knows what happened to them.

Mr. Manning: You arrested him, you locked him up?

Mr. Ramnath: You bought his car.

Mr. B. Panday: I do not lock up people, I manage those who lock up people. Management; that is the part I am coming to. A Prime Minister cannot lock up anybody.

Mr. Manning: Was Dole Chadee locked up in your time?

Mr. B. Panday: The Minister spoke of young bad boys and so on and so forth. Has he forgotten a man by the name of Zimmerman "Shortman" Beharry? Was he locked up in your time?

Mr. Manning: Yes.

Mr. B. Panday: No, Sir. Zimmerman Beharry was a trader in drugs tracked down by the forces under a UNC government, extradited to the United States, and rotting away somewhere now in a jail in Miami.

So hon. Minister, with the greatest respect to you, I know you had to say something but you could have mentioned something new. Do not give us a lecture on the international drug trade, that has always been there.

Mrs. Job-Davis: It continues.

Mr. B. Panday: Of course, it is continuing, it was there when we were there but I will show you what we did when we were there. That is the whole point. It is comparing two situations and showing how different governments deal differently with things.

The hon. Minister spoke of guns accompanying drugs. Again, Minister, with the greatest respect, that is nothing new. Drugs are always accompanied by guns. You are talking to Venezuela; that too could not be anything new. I tried to write down as many things as you mentioned them.

You spoke of a “bad-boy” culture as if it began in 2002. Maybe you are right. That was when you came into office, was it not? So you may be right, that was when the “bad-boy” culture developed, but I do not believe that because I do not think that people like Joey Ramiah could be classed as a good boy. The “bad-boy” culture was there. But I will tell you what was not there. We did not put Joey Ramiah in charge of URP and CEPEP. Therein lies the difference. Those bad boys and gangsters were always there, the difference was how they were treated by a UNC government and how they were treated by the PNM Government.

Mr. Valley: What about Sean Francis?

Mr. B. Panday: I do not know what Sean Francis did him. The Minister also spoke of the reorganization of the police service. That has been on the books for a very long time indeed. He talked of recruits. Have we not on this side been saying for I do not know how long that one of the problems in the police service begins with the system of recruitment? We have been saying that and we quoted from the 2003 or 2004 report of the Chairman of the Police Service Commission in which he said that the recruitment in the police service was based on discrimination, patronage, and cronyism and so forth. So we have been speaking since then about that. So you have not enlightened us with anything new to give us hope that things are going to be different.

You have spoken of the Forensic Science Centre and we have heard about that so many times in your budgets over the years. What I found rather strange though was that you said you were now looking at a system and you want to know how to investigate crimes to secure convictions.

Hon. Joseph: I did not say that.

Mr. B. Panday: You did not say that? You did not say it that way? Forgive me if I am wrong. That is how it came over to me. You were saying that the way we deal with kidnapping has to be reviewed.

Hon. Member: He said that.

Mr. B. Panday: I think you said that. It does not matter. In either case if you did not say that you want to look at how crime is investigated to seek out convictions; I believe, if I may remind you, you were talking about the old police system and about confessions taken under duress and so forth. I agree that used to happen and there would be no forensic evidence and so forth and maybe that was what you were talking about.

Again, Mr. Minister, you spoke about the involvement in crime detection of the citizens. You did not say how you wanted the citizens to be involved in crime. You spoke of course, about the Crime Stoppers network, but you did not say how. Now, it would have been an act of enlightenment if you had told us how because you know that anybody who gives evidence against a criminal is likely to die, even when you keep them in safe houses.

You spoke of witness protection; again, this existed under the UNC government. In fact, there was one gentleman, whose name was Clint Huggins whom we had in protective custody and he could not take it one carnival, and you know when people are in protective custody, they are not in jail and they can leave when they want and he decided that he was going for a night out. He went out sometime around carnival and never came back. He was killed. So all those things about witness protection are there, they exist. What hope are you giving to the people that there is something in the air that will give them the confidence that there will be abatement in the spiralling crime rate? What have you said that gives them that hope?

Minister, you continued in the same vein to blame everyone for the Government's failure to act. Your colleague has just blamed the courts.

Mr. Imbert: What is wrong with that?

Mr. B. Panday: Let me take this opportunity to deal with this point. The reason the law gave the judges and magistrates discretion is because every case that comes for the request of bail is not the same. If you pass legislation, then you make them all the same.

Mr. Imbert: That is murder.

Mr. B. Panday: Yes, of course, and in the United States of which you speak there are first degree, second degree and third degree murders, some of which are bailable. So the way kidnapping is defined, do you know seriously if an 18-year-old boy runs away with a 16-year-old girl, there is no bail, they are two lovers? So the judges were given that power that when they charge this youngster for kidnapping he will be granted bail. I am not saying there is no problem. All can see that. As a matter of fact, I think I heard over the news that the magistrate denied bail and the person, a Venezuelan, went to the High Court and got bail and of course he has not turned up for the case yet.

You just cannot make that a non-bailable offence without qualifications otherwise why do you not make rape non-bailable? Or tell me why do you not make robbery non-bailable? What is the rationale of adding—there are only three offences as far as I know that are non-bailable offences: murder, treason and piracy.

Mr. Rahael: Kidnapping is piracy.

Mr. B. Panday: So when you are coming with these things about blaming Opposition and police, you blame everybody. There is only one group you do not blame, that is yourself, the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

But Minister, after all was said and done you did not come up with a single new idea of how we should deal with the problem. I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that I felt sorry for him when I heard him say: “Tell us what more we can do.” When you said that, I felt sorry for you because that was an admission of failure. [*Desk thumping*] If you are asking me or anybody what more can you do, it means you can do nothing more. At least you think so and if, therefore, you can do nothing more I do not know what to say that the Minister should do. I think he said if his resigning will end the crime he will resign in the morning. I think he should have rephrased that and say: “Since I cannot do anything about crime I shall resign.” [*Desk thumping*]

Do not give conditions that if crime does not abate, you will resign. I do not want you to resign. I want crime to spiral downwards instead of upwards. They called for the resignation of Minister Chin Lee and he resigned but crime did not abate. But after listening to the Minister of Housing, the Member for Diego Martin West, I do think he would make a better Minister of National Security. He sounded much more powerful.

Dr. Moonilal: The first person to lock up would be Emile Elias.

Mr. B. Panday: Mr. Speaker, so at the end of it all we are back to square one with many promises and no hope. If these promises were new ones, I would have had a tinge, a little mustard seed of hope somewhere, but not even the promises were new. There were promises made by the Minister of National Security or by the hon. Prime Minister and to prove what I am saying is correct I just want to draw this House to some of the things he said.

On November 23, 2004, Mr. Martin Joseph said the aerials were focused on 18 hot spots along the East-West Corridor, but that has not resulted in the abatement of murders in the country.

December 01, 2004, there was the Skywatch Sentinel, Eye in the Sky, a new state-of-the-art camera had been installed in downtown Port of Spain as Government moved a step further in tackling the escalating crime problem. The new camera known as the Skywatch Sentinel Unit was put up on the Brian Lara Promenade next to Cipriani Statue at the foot of Frederick Street.

This year's murder has been more than last year. So you get equipment but instead of crime going down it goes up. So we know that equipment cannot be the answer to the Minister's problem.

On December 22, 2004, \$5.7 million Mastroski Company. Government's anti-crime thrust is now being aided by United States policing expert, Prof. Stephen Mastroski, once attached to the US Justice Department who will formulate a transformation plan for the police service.

Mastroski was here since December 22, 2004 to reform the police service. Is the Government saying that Mastroski cannot do his job because of a lack of legislation? Did Mr. Mastroski say so and still collected some \$5 million? Was that the advice he gave? Please do not hire me; I cannot reform your police service unless I have legislation. If he did not say so, then what is the point of the contribution just made by my friend that they cannot do anything unless we support that piece of legislation?

3.00 p.m.

"T&T's business community—unaccepting of the Prime Minister's 'temporary' view—had another rude awakening Thursday when members met with Government's US policing expert, Stephen Mastroski.

Businessmen were angered by his revelation that he had been mandated by the Government to examine kidnapping, the crime problem which has increased most in the period since the PNM took office.

It was not a 'priority' in his brief at this time...."
On December 22, 2004.

"Mastrofski informed surprised (then outraged) businessmen. A spokesman added that he outlined things we heard from Joseph recently including police not following up matters such as intelligence, homicides and the significant amount of guns."

On December 22, 2004, the business community was saying what I am saying today. You told them the same thing too many times.

There was no immediate solution especially on kidnapping. His meeting gave no hope.

Businesspeople told Mastrofski that he'd been sent like a lamb to the slaughter to face them. Among comments pelted at him, he was mandated to 'go back' and relay their angered responses to his employers. He was also reminded his fee is being met by taxpayers..."

Tell me; money you have and advice you have. I am going through these things bit by bit to indicate or try to isolate or to find by elimination what is the problem. We know that it is not money. I will show you how as you spend more money, there was more crime. [Interruption] That is why I am looking forward.

Mr. Valley: You can get no comfort from the side or behind.

Mr. B. Panday: That is why I advance "forward" with my sword in hand.

"A top local pollster is questioning the validity of the \$2.5 million, UK-based Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) poll findings on crime in society that said 88 per cent of T&T's population felt safe."

You are paying this man to lie! "You coulda get somebody to lie for cheaper than that!" I have the wider article somewhere else, but I know that I would be constrained for time. I have this thing very well organized. This was published on January 26, 2005, I think in the *Newsday*. This man published a poll saying that 88 per cent of the population of Trinidad and Tobago feel safe; 66 per cent, two in every three persons feel very safe and only 6 per cent feel a bit unsafe, according to Government's measurement of public opinion. The survey findings published by the Ministry of Public Administration and Information publication entitled, *Opinion Leaders 2004 Newsletter* was conducted by US based research firm Market and Opinion Research International (MORI). [Interruption] I am reading fast. I am a human being and subject to faults and mistakes over time.

I think that the better piece of research I have been able to find is after the gentleman says that on January 27, 2005, "Manning calls for 'collective repentance'." That is funny. He said:

"I take this opportunity on the occasion of the launch of the Caribbean Life Resources Centre to call on the nation of Trinidad and Tobago to repent, so that Almighty God will hear from Heaven... will forgive our sins and heal our land."

No he is not going to come down and help you to do this. You did it by yourself. He did not do it! You did it! [*Interruption*] I am reading what you said. You said this in response to the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago. You are asking God to come and help you and asking everybody to pray that God would help you. God is not sitting in that seat. You are! You have a responsibility. Now you are putting the blame on God. If the problem is not solved now God is responsible; you called on him to help you and he did not help you.

The Minister spoke about an anti-gang plan in his contribution. I want to remind this country that on March 01, 2005, gang related killings would have been the target of a new anti-crime plan, the Minister of National Security, Martin Joseph said. Today, he comes to allay the fears of crime of the population of Trinidad and Tobago and repeats something he said on March 01, 2005.

On March 07, the interagency task force was beefed up. In a bid to combat gang related killings and shootings a new anti-crime programme was set in motion. I want to remind you that on that day there had been 64 killings for the year. Today, I think it is 322. I make these references because that was the content of his speech. Mr. Martin Joseph's anti-crime team, the interagency task force will continue revising its evidently failed strategies. On April 02, 2005, community co-operation.

"The T&T Police Service has enlisted the help of the Army, Special Anti-Crime Unit (SAUTT) and community leaders in its drive to deal with escalating gang violence in hot spots such as Laventille, Besson Street and Belmont..."

He repeated that yesterday. He did not repeat crime plans for Central.

After April 07, when by that time there had been 114 murderers and 18 kidnappings for ransom, the hon. Minister told us on June 07, 2005, in *The Guardian* of 27 April, 2005, that the situation was not as bad as it was being made out to be. Do you think it is bad now? Is it still not bad?

Resumption of hanging was a statement also made. Anti-crime legislative package was on June 10. After being the one to deliver official declarations of war on crime three times since taking office, Manning's war cry had been passed to the Government's duo of Attorney General, John Jeremie and the Minister of National Security, Martin Joseph. A plethora of lies, half truths and innuendoes; always on the verge of fooling the people. If you want to deal seriously with crime let us get together and deal with crime. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Ooh. Ooh. Ooh.

Mr. B. Panday: I am coming to that. I have been issuing a call to meet with you to deal with crime for two years. "Doh open yuh mouth, ooh, ooh." You sound like an owl. You probably think it is night. You just got up. For two years we have been calling on you to meet to discuss crime. You mean you will not meet; say that. You refuse to meet again and if that is the case, that is okay. Tell the public that.

Mr. Manning: Okay. I will talk after you.

Mr. B. Panday: You can talk after me, before me or during me, it does not matter. PNM's crime plan. On July 18, 2005:

“(Franklin) Khan said that during yesterday's General Council meeting, (Martin) Joseph discussed certain aspects of his ministry's anti-crime initiatives.”

On the same day an announcement was made that the blimp cost \$40 million. I can only read. You are the one who bought it. If you bought it, you tell them. I do not know. It is reported \$40 million. Maybe, it was a certain sum for the blimp; a certain sum for training and parts. It is \$40 million and the latest government initiative to arrest the spiralling crime situation.

TV6 news reported last night that the actual cost was \$32 million while the high tech equipment cost \$8 million. If that is not the case enlighten the public. That information is peculiar to you. TV6 said that the spy ship was bought in the United States and shipped here two months ago in containers and assembled on the army base in Wallerfield.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what bothered me about that blimp? Since that blimp has been here people have been kidnapped and they have paid ransom. I am thinking these things through in my imagination. One strange thing is that from the time you are kidnapped, the first question the police ask is how much you could pay. I heard a lady whose relative had been kidnapped say that on the radio.

My colleague there is shouting to me that they asked him that. That is the Member for Naparima whose son was not only kidnapped but also murdered. When the police came to him the first question they asked was how much money he could pay. That is not a question to ask. It cannot be a question to ask. Why do they want to know that?

If we have to negotiate, that is not the point I wanted to make. That was en passant. If people are kidnapped the blimp is there and this money has to be dropped somewhere and there is so much equipment inside this blimp. I am told you can monitor telephone calls and see over a wide area. If it is not true, I will look for an article in which the hon. Minister actually said what the blimp can do. How is it that this blimp cannot be deposited or positioned somewhere that you are transporting money from one place to the other—Trinidad is a small place—and you cannot catch the people who are collecting the money?

August 16, Trini style CIA coming to Trinidad. As I am on kidnapping, I read in a newspaper where one banker said that he has been passing information to the Government or the police, I am not sure; forgive me if I am wrong.

Dr. Rowley: To the authority.

Mr. B. Panday: To the authority—thank you my friend—about suspicious transactions at the bank probably related to kidnapping and the authority has done nothing about it. Surely the Minister of National Security would have known that because that information should have come to him.

Hon. Joseph: Thank you for giving way. Yesterday, someone made a similar comment in his contribution. I spoke with the banker. This was a sting exercise which occurred two years ago. Because of the nature of the sting exercise they did not want to interfere with the accounts. The subsequent exercise was completed and the accounts were closed. The impression was given that this was ongoing. This happened under certain circumstances and the sting was successfully carried out.

Mr. B. Panday: Thank you for that information.

Having listened to the hon. Minister of National Security, then came the Minister of Housing, the Member for Diego Martin West. I got the impression that he appeared to disagree with the Motion of the Minister of National Security. The Minister's Motion was to take note. Please take note of what I have to say. The Minister of Housing said do not worry about taking note. He said that he was not here to ask Parliament to take note of anything, but to invite the House to tell the Government what more it can do or what it is doing that it ought not to do. He

said that he did not come here to support this Minister and tell you to take note of anything. I come to ask this House to participate and to share information about how to deal with crime. That is the impression I got from his speech. *[Interruption]* It would not be the first time in my life that I have been wrong.

This cannot be in support of a motion to take note but a plea to share in the blame. It was a plea to share in the blame for the Government's incompetence. He was asking all of us to take blame for what is happening. It was collective blame not collective power.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. B. Panday: I thank the hon. Member for San Fernando East for his graciousness.

The point in the speech of the Member for Diego Martin West is let us all get together. That was the theme. I thought that it was a good theme. Let me say so.

Dr. Rowley: We are all in this together if you do not know.

Mr. B. Panday: He said, "Let us all get together and share the blame for what is going on." How can we get together? You cannot ask people to share blame alone. They must not share blame. You cannot give people responsibility without power. That cannot happen. I want crime to end. I ask the hon. Minister: How can we get together when this Government chooses as a political strategy, a policy of rank discrimination against large sections of the population? If you want to unite people you cannot discriminate against them. I agree that the citizenry should be united in the battle against crime. I want him to hear that. I want to tell him that I agree with him totally. I think that the citizenry should be united in the battle against crime. Hon. Minister, they should also be united in the battle against discrimination; inequitable distribution of state resources and resisting the use of coercive machinery of the State to persecute opponents. Let us unite together. How can the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West speak of uniting the society, when his Ministry of Housing is guilty of the most disgraceful discrimination in the allocation of housing?

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for Couva North for giving way. He has indicated his willingness to get together with the Government to discuss the question of crime and on behalf of my colleagues I accept his invitation. I would like to ask: Are there any preconditions to us getting together? Would you lay down any preconditions to us meeting to discuss this question of crime in the national interest?

Mr. B. Panday: If I were not limited to 30 minutes, I would carry on negotiations with him right now, but he knows that this is not the place. I have no preconditions about anything. The object of meeting with the Government or anybody is to end crime!

Mr. Manning: You are prepared to meet with the Government without preconditions?

Mr. B. Panday: Yes.

Mr. Manning: We are available to meet from Monday.

Mr. B. Panday: Whatever I have to do I would put aside. This is more important than anything else. The only thing that would prevent me from coming is death and I might even land up there in a coffin. *[Laughter]* Whatever I have to do I will put aside.

Mr. Speaker: It is expected that the Speaker ought to keep a very stern and strict face, but you are encouraging me to laugh. *[Laughter]*

Mr. B. Panday: Mr. Speaker, it fills my heart with great joy to see another human being happy.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin West in his speech was saying generally to tell us what to do. I want to advise him that I have the documents but I do not have time to read them out. If he really wants to know what to do he should read the recommendations of the Keith Noel 136 Committee—I think they are being circulated, I have a copy somewhere—and the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association (TTMA) when they met with the Government. Before answering, the hon. Minister of National Security made an excuse why he cannot implement them, blaming the law.

I want to bring to the attention of this House, and by extension the public, what the state of affairs used to be and what has happened under this Government. The years are very important because the UNC came into power in December 1995. These are the years and number of murders.

Year	No. of murders
1995	122
1996	102
1998	98
1999	93
2000	120
2001	151
2002	169
2003	230
2004	260
2005	321 or thereabouts

This year that does not include 23 unclassified deaths.

Figures for the same years in kidnapping are as follows:

Year	No. of Kidnappings
1995	80
1996	94
1997	80
1998	100
1999	136
2000	156
2001	135
2002	226
2003	160
2004	165 (28 for ransom)
2005	203 (52 for ransom)

I want you to compare that escalating movement of crime with the escalating expenditure.

Year	Expenditure (\$)
1996	896 million
1997	856 million
1998	844 million
1999	1.31 billion
2000	1.4 billion
2001	1.4 billion
2002	1.5 billion
2003	1.7 billion
2004	1.95 billion
2005	2.4 billion

What is the pattern that reveals itself from these figures? As we spend more money, more crime takes place. We can conclude on the basis of the logic I have been using—without malevolence I assure you—that money cannot be the problem. It has to be something else. We note that equipment is not the answer and money is not the answer. We shall try to find out what is the answer.

These figures that I have quoted—Prof. Deosaran said that most of the crimes are not even reported especially crimes of rape, robbery and extortion. Businessmen pay a tremendous amount of money in extortion and that is never reported by the very nature of it. With less resources, money, police, a larger population, less vehicles, less guns, less boats, less helicopters and less blimp, the UNC's performance in fighting crime was far superior to that of the PNM.

3.30 p.m.

We did not have any police reform bill, and we were dealing with a larger population than you are dealing with today. Mr. Speaker, I think that many persons do not realize that we are suffering from negative population growth. It used to be bordering on 1.3 million; it is down to about 1.1 million. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No, Sir.

Mr. B. Panday: Those are the figures I have.

Dr. Rowley: The growth rate has fallen.

Mr. B. Panday: Be that as it may, may I take this opportunity to ask: When would you publish the census for the year 2000? [*Interruption*] Anyway, that is my information. My information is that we are suffering from negative population growth according—

Mr. Manning: The growth rate.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: It is the same thing—less people.

Mr. B. Panday: Less people. Anyway if I am wrong, again, forgive me. Mr. Speaker, there was no police reform bill in those days.

Mr. Manning: There was.

Mr. B. Panday: There was a police reform bill? I am talking when UNC was in office; those years where I have quoted where murders went down to 93. In 1999 there was no police reform bill.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, having found out that the problem was not money, equipment and so forth; it is not even personnel, because Trinidad and Tobago has one of the highest policemen to population ratio in the world.

[*Pause*]

Mr. Speaker, that is the problem with being too well prepared. I think there are only five countries in the world in which—there are about five point something policemen to every thousand. Mr. Speaker, that is one policeman for every 200 persons in this country. That is why it comes up to 5.5 for every thousand. In fact, the only countries that have more policemen to people ratio is Montserrat, which has 7.8; Mauritius, 7.3; Dominica, 6.4; Italy, 5.6; the rest of the countries in the world have less, including Hong Kong, which has 4.8; Macedonia, 4.8; Portugal 4.6; Kazakhstan, 4.5; Latvia, 4.3 and down at the bottom, in India, it is one policemen to every 1,000 persons. Papua, New Guinea, one policeman to 1,000 persons; Zambia, 1.1 to 1,000 persons; Finland, Zimbabwe and all those countries are less than two. Switzerland had 1.9 policemen to every 1,000 persons. The United Kingdom has 2 policemen—that is the point. I just wanted to fortify what you were saying. We know now that the number of policemen is not the problem.

Mr. Speaker, if policemen, therefore, are not the problem; money is not the problem, equipment is not the problem, the Bill is not the problem: what was the difference between the UNC and the PNM? The answer lies in the word “management”. [*Desk thumping*] New ideas and proper management of resources are what made the difference between the UNC and the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, if I may give a little advice. I am going to let out a secret—it should not be a secret anyway—of how we dealt with crime. As the Chairman of the National Security Council, I used to call a meeting every Friday morning; a meeting of the National Security Council which consisted of the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security, the Attorney General and I think the Minister of Communications and I would invite to that meeting the head of the army, the police, the coast guard, all the services.

Mr. Manning: So what is new?

Mr. B. Panday: Wait, I will tell you what is new. If you are doing that and it is not working, and I did it and it worked, something is wrong with you! [*Laughter*] That is the only difference. What we would do at those meetings was that we would discuss crime—crime was a concern to us as well—we would discuss what we did last week about crime or whatever was the current problem relating to crime. We would discuss what we did last week, and having decided what we did last week, we would find out if there were any constraints. We would discuss why we did not achieve what we intended to achieve last week and what was stopping us.

We took decisions to relieve ourselves of those problems and we would take decisions as to what we were going to do the next week. When we reached Friday again, we said: Okay, let us see how we made out last week. I think the experts called it minute management. It is management, Mr. Speaker, but if my honourable friend on the other side is doing the same thing and it is not working, then it has to be the difference between personalities. I was able to inspire the men. That is the difference. I was able to inspire them to work—confidence—not hitting them over their heads everyday. We inspired the head of the services to perform. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Joseph: Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to ask the Member for Couva North: At what point in time during all that did he throw up his arms and say: We cannot deal with crime in the country?

Mr. B. Panday: At no time.

Dr. Rowley: So the press is wrong.

Mr. B. Panday: If you can find that, send it to me and we will have a discussion on the matter. In fact, we were doing so well, do you think that with 93 murders in 1999 I would say we do not know what to do with crime? What nonsense! What utter rubbish! We had crime going down from 101 to 93 and so on and will throw our arms up and say we do not know what to do with crime? If we said: "We did not know what to do with crime," it meant that we thought that even 93 murders were not good enough; we needed to send it down more. That is what it would have meant.

In addition to the normal things that we did, we built and repaired police stations; we built schools. We must never believe that crime could be solved in isolation of other things. I have always argued—you have heard me many times—that to fight crime you have to fight it at two levels: at the level of crime prevention and at the level of crime detection. I think one of my colleagues on the other side also made reference to that. Detection is after the crime has been committed and at the level of crime prevention, it is before the crime has been committed.

After the crime has been committed you need policemen who would arrest them and would go through the whole process, taking them to court and prison reform and all that follows after the crime has been committed. But you have to fight it before it is committed. In order to do that the Minister mentioned a few very important points, one was education. As you know, the UNC had launched a campaign of a revolution in education because we saw education as part of changing the culture of the people away for lawlessness.

Ministers on the other side mentioned lawlessness. I agree with those Ministers who said that there is a tendency towards lawlessness in the country, but to say that there is a tendency to lawlessness means that you have to change the culture, and to change the culture means to educate. It does not only have to do with changing of the mind, it has to do with changing of the physical circumstances.

For example, I have spoken before, and Members on the other side have spoken of the ghetto culture, the bad-boy syndrome and so on. Mr. Prime Minister, you have to dismantle the ghetto. If you want to deal with crime, dismantle the ghetto. Now dismantling the ghetto—I am about to get licks for that because people, just like they misinterpreted things that my friend from Diego Martin West said—does not mean picking up the ghetto and transporting it to

someplace else. Dismantling the ghetto means building communities—that is why I said it is not only here—so when you build a community you build a community of people who have jobs; who have a stake in their house; who would want to extend their house if they get married; who have a stake in living from day to day: there is a community centre there; there is a place for education; there is a health facility; you build a community that is how you dismantle the ghetto. We have to dismantle the ghetto if we are going to deal with the issue of crime.

You will recall when we came into office we changed the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) to the Employment Training Programme (ETP). Mr. Speaker, that was to indicate, not only a physical but also a psychological transformation in the minds of the people who were involved in URP. It was unfortunate that when this Government came into power they changed it back to URP. Mr. Speaker, do you know what the idea was? The idea was that with ETP you educate as well as you train. I think the original idea of the Special Works Programme was a good one, that is to say there are people in the society who are so poor that they cannot be trained and because they cannot be trained they cannot get good jobs, they remain poor and the cycle goes around. So you have to intervene at some point in time and say listen, they are poor but they still have to be trained and the Special Works Programme was a means of training them. But you have to provide them with work and the Special Works Programme or the ETP was to give them enough to live on while you train them to get out of the system. Do you know what that would have done? Once you were training them you would have also dealt with the ghost gangs. The report that came out was that there were persons on the ghost gangs named “JLo”, “Denzel Washington”, “Brad Pitt”—[*Interruption*] I did not see any of those, and that is because they probably passed through the ETP already. [*Laughter*]

The point is, Mr. Speaker, if persons who are working must also go to school it is a check on the system, that is to say, you would find out that “JLo” is not going to any school because “JLo” does not exist. “JLo” is a name on a ghost gang, so there cannot be any ghost gangs if the gangs are required to go to school. We would have avoided what the Government inadvertently—Today I am in a very generous mood, I think the Minister mentioned the word; he said we would try to give them another life, other than a life of crime.

Sen. The Hon. Joseph: An alternative to a life of crime.

Mr. B. Panday: That is correct. Thank you. That is what I was trying to remember. Therefore, what you may have done—I am going to give you the

benefit of the doubt that it may have been done with the best intentions. When you put these gangs under the control of criminals who create ghost gangs and go home with \$200,000 and \$300,000 a fortnight, you are putting money in the hands of criminals. Once you put money in the hands of criminals they buy drugs; if they buy drugs they have to buy guns; if they buy guns, they have to buy fast cars; if they have drugs they must have turfs, and if anybody comes on the turfs they shoot them. If you look at the pattern since the PNM came into power and they reintroduced that programme, that has resulted in the spiral of murders in the East-West Corridor. You set them up to fight gang warfare for turfs.

You may have said this is a social programme; the intention might have been well intended but the result is crime. You have the Government in a position where it is feeding crime now and I am afraid that you are going to have a difficulty getting out of that because you are riding the back of a tiger and if you stop it you are going to be eaten and if you do not, it is going to eat you eventually.

Mr. Speaker, that is basically what I wanted to say and I have said it with the best intention. I did not want to say this with my usual vituperative style because I wanted what I said to be accepted. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? I think crime is more important than this fighting one another. [*Desk thumping*] Had I said it with my usual style I might have alienated Members on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, that is my humble contribution. Thank you very much.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):

Mr. Speaker, the public of Trinidad and Tobago is very much aware that we have a serious problem in managing crime in our country. But the public, as well, perceives that there are some differences between the approach of the Government in dealing with this and the approach as recommended by the Opposition from time to time. The public of Trinidad and Tobago and even members of the international community want to hear precisely what the Government's position is and precisely what the Opposition's position is on the question of crime and the management of that social ill.

The public of Trinidad and Tobago, very quietly—and in some cases they have demonstrated their thoughts by way of marches against crime and other ways of expressing themselves—would like to see that the Government and the Opposition here in this Parliament find some common ground and work from that common ground to deal with this problem. That to my mind is the rationale and the good sense that drove this national debate in this Parliament on the question of crime.

I have listened very carefully to the contribution of the Member for Couva North, for the time being, Leader of the Opposition and I became more and more convinced as he went along, that he is simply not in step with the reality that subsists in Trinidad and Tobago. Nothing that the Member and other Members on the other side have said lends the impression that they understand, very clearly, the seriousness, the intensity, the trauma, the frustration, the pain, the tears and the loss that our citizenry suffer as a result of this business of crime.

Nothing that has been said so far convinces me that they understand that if this situation continues in the manner that it has been going then the economy of Trinidad and Tobago can become—

Mr. Singh: [*Inaudible*] on compassion!

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please!

Hon. F. Hinds:—very seriously affected by this problem. Mr. Speaker, it is not a joke. According to reliable statistics, the Jamaican economy fell by something like US \$71 million in 2004 and the analysts, the economists, the criminologists and commentators generally in Jamaica believe and have expressed that this has to do with the very serious crime problem that exists on that island.

In one day last week nine persons died in Jamaica; murdered. In the month of May when I was there, 187 persons died in a month. I was leaving Montego Bay to travel to Kingston a couple nights ago and as we got to Kingston, as we were about to disembark the aircraft, of course, someone announced to those of us on the flight: “For those of you who are going uptown Kingston, you should not pass through an area called Mountain View, because at that time there was some flare-up.”

The situation on the island of Jamaica was that the Government in its very aggressive and justifiable posture against the criminals and organized crime began picking up some of the head honchos—the “Dons” as they are called—extraditing them to the United States where necessary; arresting and charging them locally

where necessary or relevant, and the result was that the people who may have been sponsored and supported by those “Dons”, as well as other persons in those communities, against their will, were made to come out and demonstrate anger with the security forces and with the Government for taking a stand against crime and criminal activities. That is what Jamaica has come to. Trinidad and Tobago, a society similar to Jamaica in many ways, is not exempt from those possibilities. The situation is deadly serious. We are not only talking about murders and kidnappings.

Mr. Speaker, I have a note here that I have kept for probably a year and a half. I read in the newspaper on that occasion and I made some enquiries to find out after. We are talking about murders and kidnappings but crime is a very serious thing. I consider the note before me to have represented one of the worst crimes I have ever heard about. It was reported in the *Express* dated Monday, July 29, 2004 headlined:

“School girl raped twice by men she trusted”

The report indicated that this schoolgirl, a 14-year-old went to the home in south Trinidad of someone she knew and she was raped by the occupant, a man many years older than she was. When she left that house ravished, traumatized, distressed, dishevelled she was making her way back to her home; she saw a car that she recognized and asked the driver for help, in her distress. Mr. Speaker, that man took her into his car; took her into a trap and raped that baby again. So that daughter of ours, within the space of about two hours or probably less, was raped twice by people she knew and trusted.

The business of crime is very serious, indeed, and we have come here to discuss the matter and to be guided by an understanding of that seriousness. The Member for Couva North pointed out in his discourse that all of the things the Minister of National Security, Sen. Martin Joseph described in his contribution in this debate existed when he was Minister of National Security; existed when he was Prime Minister and continues to exist as we speak. But if it was so in existence and if all was so hunky-dory, if I may be permitted a colloquialism, why then did the Member for Couva North, as Prime Minister, find it necessary to entertain an approach by the then Leader of the Opposition to discuss the situation of crime; to discuss, particularly, the problems that were unearthed in the Ramdhanie affair concerning service and to have gone through the entire process—that everyone knows they went through—to appoint Sir Ellis Clarke to investigate the matter? Sir Ellis Clarke appointed a technical committee; that

technical committee made recommendations, including the three Bills that we have talked so much about since then and including in this debate. If the Member knew that everything was all right, why did he find it necessary to get into those matters? I ask the Member for Couva North, what has changed? The situation is the same! The drug trafficking, as he pointed out, is the same perhaps even more, because we are now estimating that something like 3,000 tonnes of cocaine passes through this region on an annual basis. What has changed? I think nothing has changed. We are dealing with the same old Member for Couva North.

Mr. Speaker, most young persons in Trinidad and Tobago today would not know the Zephyr motorcar or the Austin Cambridge; those are old models that I knew as a child. They would know the more American brands; the Almeras, the Benz and what have you. Mr. Speaker, I think it has already been borne out, explained and accepted by all of us that the police service today is much like the Zephyr motorcar. It is a car, but it is not a car that is suited to do the Grand Prix of 2005 and our modern existence in this society. The Government; the Minister of National Security; the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; visitors including investors, are depending on us to convert this necessary vehicle from its antiquated state to a more modern, sleek and powerful machinery, that could get us to where we want to go, particularly in the light of our ambitious plans to get to developed country status by 2020.

The Minister of National Security in my humble view, clearly and carefully, outlined the measures that he proposes to rectify some of the many problems that we have identified in respect of the police service. He indicated, and I am sure we have now all accepted that, short of legislation, he has implemented several changes, improvements, administratively and in terms of resource allocation and including training to improve the police service.

I think we have also accepted that if the police service as an organization were more effective and more efficient, our crime-prevention strategies and our detection strategies would be improved. Enough has been said to highlight these very clear positions relating to the police service, and enough has been said to demonstrate, acceptably to all of us, that we must do something about our police service to make it more able; more capable of defending the society against crime and the criminals.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend some time going lower down the chain in terms of the process; the administration of justice. The process begins with the police officer suspicious of someone committing an offence or about to commit an offence; it may lead to an arrest; it would lead to prosecution; it would lead to a

trial process and at the end of the trial process, if the person is found guilty that person would be incarcerated or some other sentence brought to bear upon him or her.

4.00 p.m.

The prison service is at the end of the chain of the process that I have described because it is the prison service that is responsible for keeping the citizens or visitors who have run afoul of the law and would have gone through the process that I have just identified. The prison service, it is clear to us, is therefore as important as the police service and all the other elements of the process so described.

We experience the same kinds of problems with the prison service because the prison service is governed by the Public Service Regulations, very similar in many ways to the Police Service Commission Regulations. The Police Service Regulations under the Constitution possesses some inherent weaknesses and the antiquated provisions therein govern the prison service, making it very difficult for the Commissioner of Police to impose the standards of discipline on police officers as is necessary by the Commissioner of Police in relation to police officers and, therefore, it is clear to us that this very important part of the process is also suffering from afflictions, it is also suffering from weaknesses that we recognize and we must improve.

The prison service is very important in all of this, because the academics and the researchers have pointed out that some 60 per cent of the crimes that we have been talking about in this debate are crimes committed by persons who have already been in the system or already convicted for similar and other crimes. They call it recidivism and there is a situation where there is constant repeat offending. It is as if the sentences imposed on those who offended or the treatment or rehabilitation programmes imposed on them are not really or properly working and, therefore, there is a 60 per cent recidivism rate. And clearly, something has to be done about that.

Mr. Singh: I know that you have a portfolio responsibility for the prisons. Having full regard to the statistics you have just indicated to this honourable House, are there any innovative measures that you intend to implement within the rehabilitation structures of the prisons of Trinidad and Tobago in order to have that level of recidivism?

Hon. F. Hinds: Indeed, the answer to your question is yes and I shall highlight a couple of them as I proceed.

Mr. Speaker, it is also a fact that big criminals graduate from committing small offences and, therefore, clearly if you are able to deal and treat with offenders in the early stages of their criminal careers when it evolves into that, then the society is better served. They grow from smaller offences up the scale to committing very big and nasty ones.

In 2001, as the Prime Minister arranged portfolios he added on to the Ministry of National Security the rehabilitation portfolio recognizing and saying on behalf of the Government, that it recognizes that was a very important aspect of dealing with the crime issue in Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2001 a task force reported, having been appointed by Government to look at the prison system as it were, and to make recommendations. The Task Force reported in 2001 with recommendations but at the heart of those recommendations really was the transformation of the penal system from the retributive system that now exists, to a restorative system of justice simply meaning that you seek to restore the disturbance caused by the crime, to restore the discomfort on the victims and more generally on the society by having in many cases, the offender make amends to his victim and to the society.

As it stood then and to some extent now, there were two parties involved in the sentencing process: the State, through the judge in the court or the magistrate and the offender represented, of course, by his lawyer. But in this new programme of restorative justice it was to become a tripartite arrangement with the State through the judge, offender represented by his lawyer and also the victim. The victim would have had an opportunity or is supposed to have an opportunity to bring to bear his experience, his views on the appropriate sentence in respect of the restorative system and, of course, Mr. Speaker, many people consider very wrongly that this new mode of restorative justice excludes the issue of punishment—far from the truth. The restorative system of justice, as I understood it, does not exclude punishment. Punishment remains an inherent integral and, in my view, a necessary part of it.

Mr. Speaker, a transformation committee was therefore established to transform the system as recommended by the task force. As it stands now there are about 4,000 plus prisoners in the system kept in seven facilities. Carrera, the Maximum Security Prison, Golden Grove, the Women's Prison, Port of Spain Prison, the Youth Training Centre, and the facility in Tobago.

In answer to the question from the Member for Caroni East, the new philosophy suggests that prison should be reserved for the most persistent and dangerous offenders and those who could otherwise be categorized, could be controlled by the State through other means but not necessarily inside of the prison. It is clear to societies—England is a good example, Canada is another, the United States yet another—that large and increasing and burgeoning prison populations are simply not sustainable. All it means is that you have to continue to construct more and more prisons to accommodate more and more souls, and it takes us nowhere. There are some individuals who must be incarcerated. Those who are dangerous and persistent in their offences.

Mr. Speaker, I have before me as well a list, as has been circulated by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, highlighting as she sought to amend our Motion, that we take note of some of the recommendations of the Keith Noel 136 committee and I went through the list and in one part of it there is the rubric “jails”. There are six suggested items, and I would not squander my precious time to identify them all, unfortunately, but it has been circulated to Members. Five of those six recommendations are already at work and in vogue. We understand the importance of these and we are proceeding to do that.

In 2004, we issued contracts to all the persons who would staff this very important transformation unit as decreed by the Cabinet on the basis of the task force report, to transform the prison service. I have already established a parole committee and that committee has been working now for close to a year looking at other jurisdictions, looking at the experiences in terms of parole, a very important item and putting together a package as mandated by Cabinet to recommend to us the best system for Trinidad and Tobago. Again, permitting persons to be released from prison on certain conditions after thorough studies and investigations of their own record and to ease the burden on the prison system and exert some control on persons who have been released on parole outside of the jail and not necessarily on the inside where appropriate.

I am highlighting to answer the question from the Member for Caroni East, some of the things that we have been doing to deal with the crime problem in Trinidad and Tobago having established that the prison is an important component of the whole management of crime.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

We have established—because we need to train prison officers in modern correctional approaches—a brand new training facility and it is up and running and in August of this year 109 persons began training in that facility. So this is not “woulda”, “coulda” and ‘shoulda’. I am talking about what has been done to answer the Member for Caroni East and, of course, to inform the population of what we are doing in this regard. And that is one of the recommendations of the six points that I have just spoken about, and it already exists to some extent and we propose to improve the whole question of the prison industry because there is experience in many countries where prisoners are permitted to use their skills—skills they may have acquired while they were in prison—and to work and to earn money which they could have when they leave the prison as a start in the new life that we expect them to follow.

In this regard, the Government announced recently a programme for prison inmates where, once a prisoner is within one year of the date of his discharge he is now permitted to participate through the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in a training programme—all the training programmes that are available on the outside would be made available to them on the inside: life skills, skills in plumbing, tailoring, carpentry, and all the skills we are familiar with, information technology skills as well, and they would be permitted to undergo training within one year of their date of discharge. So that they could not be heard to say and no reasonable citizen or observer could be heard to say that these offenders are not given the best opportunity to learn something to rehabilitate themselves.

An outstanding feature of this measure is that for each day that they subject themselves to the benefit of the training that we would be providing in the system, they would receive a stipend of \$25.00. This would not be given to them while they are in the system, but it would be accumulated and held safely for them and upon discharge they would be given this sum of money as they leave the institution with the new skill, with a new spirit, an understanding of what is required to live sociably among human beings and not be as aggressive, violent and dangerous as they may have been on entry and to earn a living thereafter.

We have seen this at work in many countries. I went to Costa Rica and visited a couple of prisons there recently and I saw it at work, very, very helpful indeed. In fact, the prison in Costa Rica developed and maintained by way of repair, all of the furniture that they use in all of the schools across Costa Rica and I saw the work, I saw the chairs, the desks and it was really commendable. The same thing

happens in other jurisdictions and we are proposing to introduce that here. Of course, it would mean more space and we are in the process of identifying more space to establish a major prison complex where we can expand these programmes for the benefit of our citizens who are on the wrong side of the law, incarcerated and who, one day, in most cases, may return to the society to be among us again. We have a duty therefore to attempt to rehabilitate and to reform them.

Mr. Speaker, animal husbandry is one of the programmes of training that we want to add to the list and, in fact, they are already doing some of it but I am talking now about expansion.

The Ministry of National Security recognizing the need for far more prison officers and correctional officers so to speak, has engaged itself in an activity to design a new staffing plan for the prison and it got the PMCD under the Ministry of Public Administration to review its staffing plan. We have almost signed off on it; we have spoken to the CPO and we are trying to identify the staffing problems in the prison service and we would see from their report the staff that is necessary to operate a very expanded modern prison service with the elements I have just described, the prison industry and what have you. So that has been happening and we are just about signing off on that staffing plan and as soon as that is done—I am talking about another four weeks or so we would be able to begin to implement that and to deal with some of the shortages in the prison, because when there is a staff shortage in the prison it has a direct impact on security and this society does not want to get up any morning and hear that 19 prisoners from death row, or prisoners, generally walked out of jail and all over Trinidad and Tobago, as happened in the past and as happened in many other countries. The society does not want that. We are cognizant of that and taking action to deal with it.

So staffing is important in all of this just like the police service, we have the problem of delinquent prison officers and this is why I cannot understand why our friends on the other side and those who comment upon these matters clearly not understanding the issues would be hard-pressed to give the Commissioner of Police the authority to discipline and to deal with delinquency among his ranks. As it now stands, it is a burden.

I did a little check among six police corporals recently, a very crude test. I asked three police sergeants and three police corporals, when last or if at all did you ever lay a disciplinary charge against a police constable and among the six of them, three sergeants, three corporals, a total of about 120 years service, none of

them as middle-ranker, supervisors ever charged a constable for a disciplinary offence, in a time when the public is complaining about police misbehaviour and that sort of thing. I found it strange.

The same thing exists with the prison service, the same issues of discipline, the same lack of accountability, the same taking the law and the Constitution for granted, the same acceptance that they could do what they want and beat the system easily with the help of counsel sometimes. It is a real issue, the issue of accountability, high performance, the same issues we have discussed and identified with the police exist in respect of the prison service.

In terms of the Police Service Regulations there is regulation 51 which permits the Police Service Commission the authority to dismiss a police officer on the grounds that he is unfit for service as a police officer on the basis of adverse reports. I am reliably informed that has never been used in Trinidad and Tobago since our Constitution in 1962.

When you have police misconduct of a grievous kind or level then police officers are arrested for murder or manslaughter, they are charged, for drugs, firearm possession, kidnapping, those measures are dealt with by the court in the normal way, but offences and misbehaviour—inside or short of those grievous criminal offences—very often go unattended and this is one of the reasons why the public has lost confidence in the police.

The same thing, I am arguing, exists in respect of the prison service, but there is no similar provision regarding prison officers. So we have to move from the regulations that were constructed in the old colonial days when people behaved differently to a situation now where people are more adventurous, more daring, bolder, and are prepared to do anything in today's world. So prison reform is as necessary as police reform, in my humble opinion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, recently a prison officer, exercising due diligence in the course of his work, was able to identify a plot to break out of our prisons and we commended that prisoner highly. He saved us a tremendous amount of headache and stress, and saved the society from perhaps further injury or harm to it. As a result of that and having commended the officer very highly, we conducted more than routine searches of the area of the thing where this thing emanated. We found hacksaw blades which they do not manufacture inside of the prison but clearly they got into the prison. Hacksaw blades were used to cut the bars and they were replaced very neatly with glue. We found containers of glue which they do not make in the prison

but which were imported into the prison and all the enquiries led us to the conclusion that there was a distinct possibility, just like in the Ramdhanie affair, that prison officers were involved in this in terms of assisting inmates to have access to the instruments described.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, more than routine searches were carried out as a result of that and you would be amazed, Mr. Deputy Speaker that I have brought some today so Members of this House would understand—I just have a couple instruments that I would like to show. These are some of the items, when we conducted searches in the prisons, that we found in the possession of inmates and in cells in the prison and the prison authorities found these weapons among the inmates of the prison. Among these there are improvised weapons, for example, where a piece of steel may be used from a fence and a handle made and this could commit a serious offence, take a life. There are other improvised weapons where one may take a tool and just sharpen it, they do it with toothbrushes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is not exactly improvised.

[Weapon shown]

This could go straight through an individual and, of course, some of the prisoners work, for example, in the kitchen so with the best efforts sometimes they are able to access weapons. When I saw this particular blade, this is clearly a very dangerous weapon and they were found among prisoners. We are satisfied that there are delinquent prison officers, just like there are delinquent and errant police officers, who are engaged for very small inducements to act in a way that brings their colleagues and the society to grave danger.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when inmates are in possession of items such as those, and they are attempting to make a breakout, they are prepared to use those weapons in their bid to escape. We know in 1994 a prison officer was killed while inmates were attempting to break out of the prison. So when we talk about rehabilitation and reform we understand the implications of these, but, from the learning, it appears as though some persons are amenable to rehabilitation and reform and there are others who are clearly not and this is why in all of our programmes, we have to do complete and thorough assessment of individuals as we talk about rehabilitation and reform.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a profile just to demonstrate what we are talking about. Recently, and in fact, not so recently, the prison service has been allowing inmates to participate in training programmes and academic courses even outside of the prison. We have prisoners who have done very, very well in the exams that

we usually call CXC. CXC, as you know, is really called Caribbean Examinations Council but the subject that you pass is not a CXC pass, it is the CSEC, that is the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate. There are prisoners who have done very well in different areas of that programme. We have had in Trinidad and Tobago all the candidates—there was a prisoner who came first—and they have performed very well. Of course, there are others who, the best you do to expose them to training and rehabilitation, that did not work. But we will continue with our great work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, time does not permit, but I would have liked to continue to highlight many more of the very important projects that we are undertaking in an effort to reform and rehabilitate our citizens who find themselves within those institutions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see we are approaching tea time, and I will continue at some other stage in the future. I thank you.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Deputy Speaker, without prejudice to any contribution that I may wish to make in this debate, I would just like to report to this honourable House that I have met with the distinguished Leader of the Opposition behind the Speaker's Chair a few minutes ago, and we have agreed to suspend further deliberations on this debate and that a team from the Government will meet with a team from the Opposition. We meet at 10 o'clock at White Hall and following those deliberations we would return to the Parliament and report and whatever further actions we need to take in respect of the debate, we are prepared to take at that time. There has been agreement between Government and Opposition on this matter.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to suggest therefore that we set a resumption of the debate for Wednesday of next week at 1.30 p.m. if it is acceptable to the Opposition. That should give us enough time to meet and to be able to report to the Parliament. I beg to move.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of this House is adjourned to Wednesday, November 16, 2005 at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.30 p.m.