

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Wednesday, November 16, 2005*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**2006 WORLD CUP QUALIFICATION**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, in view of the impending victory of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago over Bahrain, I get the feeling that Members would like to suspend the sitting of the House for half an hour to 2.00 p.m.

So with your leave, and with your agreement, the sitting is suspended and will resume at 2.00 p.m.

Agreed to.

1.32 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

2.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, continuing under announcements by the Speaker I will now call on the Leader of Government Business.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, in your wisdom, you suspended the House so that we could have enjoyed the remaining 30 minutes of the Trinidad and Tobago/Bahrain encounter.

I will have you know that Trinidad and Tobago was victorious, knowing that you were not there—[*Desk thumping*] and, therefore, it is with much pride that on behalf of the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago I congratulate the Trinidad and Tobago Soca Warriors on their expected victory and wish them all the best in Germany in 2006. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (Caroni Central): Mr. Speaker, when we speak on this side, we usually speak on behalf of the Members of this side of the House. Today, I want to speak on behalf of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in extending congratulations to the Trinidad and Tobago Soca Warriors. It is indeed a historic moment for us and we wish and hope that we advance beyond the first, second and third rounds in Germany. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Speaker, it would have been a travesty of justice if, on an occasion as auspicious as this, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago did not make a comment, however brief, on the recent developments to which we have been witnesses.

Mr. Speaker, I was present at the stadium in Port of Spain on Saturday last when the Soca Warriors had their first encounter with Bahrain, and there were those who felt that the game could have been better. For my part, I thought that the Soca Warriors had played extremely well. The result of that match was one/nil.

Hon. Members: One/all.

Hon. P. Manning: Okay, I just want to see who is awake and who is asleep. The result of the match was one/all. It was a draw, Mr. Speaker, and there were many who felt that the Soca Warriors had not done as well as they might. The reality of the situation is that it was a draw on the home ground, and, to my mind, the real test of football supremacy would have been the ability of any team to win away from home, and that is what the Soca Warriors did. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I mirror the tremendous pride which the people of Trinidad and Tobago are now experiencing as we celebrate this victory and the very first occasion on which Trinidad and Tobago goes to the World Cup semi-finals.

On behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, I would like to congratulate our team once again and to let them know that a proper welcome awaits them when they return to Trinidad and Tobago tomorrow. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I, too, join in the joy. Unlike most of you, I had predicted that Trinidad and Tobago would win. [*Laughter*] You would recall that when I suspended the sitting of the House I said that we were going to adjourn to see Trinidad and Tobago win, so I am not surprised at all. Impending victory!

So, likewise, I join with the entire House and the national community in congratulating our Soca Warriors, and wishing them a very successful sojourn when they get to Germany, and I know the entire country would be with and behind the Soca Warriors.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members seeking leave of absence from today's sitting of the House: the Member for Chaguanas (Mr. Manohar Ramsaran), the Member for Caroni

East (Mr. Ganga Singh), the Member for Couva South (Mr. Kelvin Ramnath), and the Member for Oropouche (Dr. Roodal Moonilal). The leave which these Members seek is granted.

CONDOLENCES

(MR. GERARD MONTANO)

(MR. EPHRAIM PARTAP)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, whilst we celebrate the victory of the team, we are also saddened by the passing of two persons; the father of the hon. Member for Nariva, and on behalf of all Members I wish to extend to him and his family sincere condolences. We also had the passing of a former Member of this House, Mr. Albert Gerard Montano, and I would call on Members to pay their condolences.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I recall the passing of Gerard Montano; politician, businessman, father, family man and friend.

Gerard Montano began his career in business in San Fernando as part of the Montano family and rose to prominence and success in the business world at a very early age as a consequence of which, together with his involvement in his community, he was able to gain the support of the electorate to become Mayor of San Fernando in 1950, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, that was a time when there was a decolonization movement active around the world and where countries that had been part of the colonial empire were one by one seeking to shake off the shackles of colonialism. It happened to India in 1947; it happened to Ghana in 1957 and to Malasia a little later on in that year.

In Trinidad and Tobago at that time, in the mid-50s, Eric Williams came to prominence and following a major fallout with the Caribbean Commission, began a series of lectures in Trinidad and Tobago seeking to sensitize the national community to a perspective of the decolonization movement that he harboured and which he thought was worthy of consideration by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It was that series of lectures that attracted the young Gerard Montano and he began to follow Dr. Eric Williams.

So when the PNM was formed in 1956, and when Dr. Eric Williams was seeking to assemble a team of people who were committed to the country's development and to party politics as opposed to the rampant individualism that preceded that period, Gerard Montano was a natural selection by Eric Williams.

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Mr. Montano was a reluctant bride. His family was of the view that perhaps that was too big a plunge to take at such an early stage—not just in his own life, but in the life of his young family—he had young children at the time and I think his wife might have been pregnant.

Eventually the young Gerard Montano decided to come forward and he was an immediate hit in San Fernando and in Trinidad and Tobago and, in fact, his oratorical skills earned him the sobriquet of “the man with the golden voice” and Gerard Montano, of course, loved it. He charmed audiences all over the country, and when, as a Minister of Government, he was able to travel abroad to represent Trinidad and Tobago, he charmed audiences outside of Trinidad and Tobago at that time.

Mr. Speaker, he brought to the politics of the country a business background and a determination to get things done in a way that the politics of the country had not been exposed to prior to his advent. So when he became the first Minister of Housing of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in 1956, he was very elated only to discover shortly thereafter that there was not enough money in the Treasury to be able to embark on any housing programme. But, of course, necessity became the mother of invention and, therefore, he has to be credited today with being the author of the aided self-help approach to housing construction.

The very first one begun in his own constituency, and today we see the manifestation of the active and vibrant community of Pleasantville of which Gerard Montano was the author and, in fact, in his first five-year term as a Government Minister of Housing, he was credited with being responsible for the construction of about 5,000 houses starting as he did without any money with which to do it. This was a record of success.

Mr. Speaker, he held many portfolios in the government and the politics of the country and those who knew him, especially those who sat as Members of the Executive Council in the first instance—and later as Members of the Cabinet with him—were able to say that he was a very frank and forthright man, but the one thing which was never in doubt and particularly known to his leader, was his loyalty.

He was a man of tremendous loyalty and that is something for which he also became well known. He was forthright and never easily agreed with anything. He disagreed very often, but never did it in such a way to make disagreement disagreeable in any way. He was very respectful in the way he conducted his

business, but he was forthright, and by that mechanism, he was able to influence his colleagues and have many of his views prevail in the conduct of Executive Council politics and Cabinet government in its embryonic stages in the early days in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, inevitably time marched on and circumstances changed, and the movement which began as a decolonization movement—having achieved independence by 1962 in Trinidad and Tobago—began to be transformed to a movement with economic considerations whereby the people of Trinidad and Tobago were more concerned. Not so much with internal self-government; not so much because they had achieved it; not so much with independence which they had achieved at the time, notwithstanding the breakup of the West Indies Federation, but their quality of life and their ability to carve a path for themselves and their families in this young emerging nation that Trinidad and Tobago was.

And so we had the events of 1967 and the Black Power developments of 1970, and it was in the circumstances of 1970 which need not detain us at this time, which are well known by all Members of the Parliament. That is to say, he ceased to be a Member of the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago and when election came in 1971, he was not identified as a candidate.

That event is significant for many, but I think it has more significance for me than it had for many others because he was the representative for San Fernando East in the Parliament at the time and my immediate predecessor in office. I succeeded Gerard Montano who served for 15 years. In the history of the constituency of San Fernando East, there have only been two parliamentary representatives; Gerard Montano who served for 15 years, and at this time, Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am enjoying my 35th year as a Member of this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, politics, some say, is a very thankless profession and the normal rules that apply to the conduct of life do not apply to politics. There are some who say that. In other words, the principles of decency to which we have become accustomed in this country are not to be expected in the conduct of public life, and those were my views when I first sought to come into public life in 1971.

But I remember that honourable night on Harris Promenade in San Fernando when Gerard Montano entered the public meeting to address the people of San Fernando for the last time as their parliamentary representative and among the things he said to them was: “I am now taking my leave of you, but I give to you a young man, Patrick Manning is his name and I ask you to support him. I give him to you.”

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Mr. Speaker, what Gerard Montano did was to endorse his successor in a way that politicians have not become famous for today, and that, among other things, caused him to stand out as a man with a tremendous difference in the politics of the country at that time.

I am not surprised, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if Members of this Parliament are aware, but it was Gerard Montano who gave me my first job when I was still in college in the early 1960s around Christmas time. The Montano's owned seven stores on High Street and I went to Gerard Montano and he gave me my first job.

I worked as a wrapper in five of the seven Montano stores that Christmas, I believe it might have been in 1961 or 1962. I worked as a wrapper getting \$30 a week, that was the salary at that time, but it was my first job. It was also my introduction to the world of work while I was still a student and I owe Gerard Montano a debt of gratitude for the opportunity that he presented to me.

Mr. Speaker, Gerard Montano was a family man, and if you talk to any of his children you will realize that all of them have some kind of passion for politics so much so that two of them are in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago both having cut their political teeth in the same political party that Gerard Montano served so well, the People's National Movement, and today his son, Danny Montano, also holds the distinction of not only being Minister of Housing himself, but also of having been responsible for a significant addition to the housing stock in the community that was started by his father in 1957 or 1958, the Pleasantville community.

Mr. Speaker, today we are just about completing the commissioning of about 500 houses that have been constructed as a result of Danny Montano's term of office as Minister of Housing. Where the father left off, the son took to conclusion. Danny Montano also, I may say, commissioned the further expansion of the Pleasantville area and it continues to expand.

Mr. Speaker, at an appropriate time, we are going to decide how we are going to honour Gerard Montano. I think it is a little too early and it is fresh on our minds, and perhaps the emotion of the event is a little too great at this time for us to consider matters as fundamental as this. But Gerard Montano certainly is worthy of recognition by the national community of Trinidad and Tobago and certainly on the basis of his contribution to life in San Fernando, in Trinidad and Tobago, and in particular on the basis of his contribution to the People's National Movement, we are going to carefully sit and consider what accolades we will accord to him and how we are going to record his tenure with us on this earth for future generations.

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I mourn the passing of Gerard Montano and extend condolences of the Members on this side, the Members of the PNM, and I believe that I speak for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago when I say, well done Gerard Montano, gone now to be with the Father.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): Mr. Speaker, this is a moment of both joy and sadness for us: joy on having firmly planted our footsteps on the road to Germany, and sadness on the news of the passing of a former Member of this House.

The Opposition therefore joins with others in this House in expressing our deepest sympathy to the bereaved family on the passing of Gerard Montano. He belongs to a family whose name has almost become legendary, not only in San Fernando and the south, but almost the entire country.

He was, as the hon. Prime Minister said, a businessman, and a politician who served in so many ways in the Government and Cabinet while he was a Member of this honourable House. Before he was a Member here, he was a mayor and an ambassador so he is a man whose career has spanned a rather wide field.

I join with the others of this House in extending to his family our sincerest condolences and ask that this House do send appropriate words of sympathy to the family.

In addition, we have learned of the death of the father of the Member of Parliament for Nariva, Mr. Harry Partap, and I also ask that condolences be sent to the bereaved family.

As an aside, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for adjourning the House and giving me an opportunity to see parliamentarians look at football under the eyes of the Speaker and I am afraid it gave me a rather—I do not know if it would be considered—useful idea but I think this House would be much better run if you were permitted to issue yellow and red cards. [*Laughter*]

Thank you.

Hon. P. Manning: Mr. Speaker, please forgive me if I was a little remiss in my contribution a few minutes ago in omitting to extend condolences also to the Member of Parliament for Nariva, Mr. Harry Partap, on the passing of his father.

Mr. Speaker, the passing of any loved one is something that is never easily taken and when it is somebody as close as that to you, then, of course, it is a source of great grief and we have no doubt that the Member for Nariva is at this

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time experiencing great grief notwithstanding he is with us today. I would like to extend to him the condolences of those of us on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Whilst we grieve, we can also be happy in the sense that I note that the father of the hon. Member for Nariva lived to be about 93 years. So Members, I am putting you on notice that Mr. Harry Partap can be with us for many years to come.

Hon. Members, I, too, wish to join with both sides of the House in paying tribute to Albert Gerard Montano. The Montano brothers: Gerard, Kenneth and Bobby; Bobby being the only survivor of those three brothers lived not too far from where my family lived. We lived on Norman Tong Street in Vistabella; they lived at the Corner of Aleong and Montano Streets and as a young boy growing up in Vistabella I had the opportunity of growing up with all the sons of the Montano brothers: Sen. Robin Montano, Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano and their cousins. And incidentally, where the Prime Minister lived prior to his appointment as Prime Minister was known as the savannah and we enjoyed many a good game of football and cricket and all the young boys in the area played on that field.

I, too, had the opportunity of having my first job as a college student at the Montano store in San Fernando which was run then by Kenneth Montano. In those days I was selling socks and handkerchiefs and you had a little card where you got your commissions and that was my first introduction into what business was all about and what one can achieve in business.

I recall very well the radio programmes when the broadcast of proceedings were aired on radio Redifusion and in those days on the government side there were two noticeable voices: that of Winston Mahabir, he was called the silver tongue if I am not mistaken, and Gerard Montano. One of the things I remember of Gerard Montano, he was always impeccably dressed, he was a dapper “fella” in his days and he lived that way to the end, always immaculately dressed.

I, too, wish to join Members in extending condolences to the entire Montano family. They have been a very close-knit family, they would miss Gerard, he was like the godfather of the entire family. I express my condolences to his wife, Gladys, his sons and daughter and the entire Montano family on his passing. I now ask hon. Members to stand for a minute’s silence.

The House of Representatives stood.

I would ask the Clerk of the House to send appropriate letters of condolences to the family of the father of Mr. Partap, and the wife and family of the late Gerard Montano.

Supreme Court (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill

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SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL

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

FAMILY PROCEEDINGS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Family Proceedings Act, 2005, brought from the Senate [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual report of the Freedom of Information Act, 1999 for the year 2004. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Annual report of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation for the year ended June 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Annual audited financial statements of the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) Limited, for the year ended September 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

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

GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO COMBAT CRIME

(SUSPENSION OF DEBATE)

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Let me caution you that if you are going to speak on the Motion—or you are going to make an announcement?

Hon. P. Manning: An announcement.

Mr. Speaker: Because if you speak on the Motion you may lose your chance later on. So I would take it under “Announcements”.

Hon. P. Manning: Mr. Speaker, a word to the wise is sufficient. Therefore, may I say that without prejudice to any contribution I may wish to make in the substantive debate that has been suspended, permit me to indicate to this honourable House, when we suspended the debate on a Government Motion on crime on Monday last, we did so to allow a team from the Government side to meet with a team from the hon. Members opposite to discuss this question of crime, and we confidently anticipated at this time that we would have been in a position to report comprehensively to the Parliament on the way those discussions

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have gone today. Unfortunately, the discussions are not yet complete, but I am in a position to say that the discussions are encouraging and that we propose to meet again today and possibly tomorrow and we believe that we would be in a much better position to report to this Parliament at a sitting on Friday at 10.30 a.m. Therefore, with your kind leave, that is the request that we make of this honourable House.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, in the circumstances, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, November 18, 2005 at 10.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as I have indicated earlier, the statement by the Prime Minister would have been made under the adjournment item "Statements by Ministers".

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 2.32 p.m.