

*Leave of Absence**Friday, April 07, 2006***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 07, 2006*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members requesting leave of absence from today's sitting of the House: Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, Hon. Member of Parliament for Arouca South; Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Member of Parliament for Siparia and Mr. Harry Partap, Member of Parliament for Nariva. The leave which the hon. Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2000. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Deposit Insurance Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Annual administration report of the Betting Levy Board for the period July 01, 2004 to June 30, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
Papers 1 to 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
4. Annual audited financial statements of Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. Annual report of the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission for the financial year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
Papers 4 and 5 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
6. Annual report of the Integrity Commission for the year 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
7. The Revised National Environmental Policy. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Medical Doctors
(Disciplinary Action of)**

7. **Dr. Fuad Khan** (*Barataria/San Juan*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:
- (a) Could the Minister state whether there are any medical doctors facing disciplinary action for ‘failing to treat patients because of their political affiliation’?
 - (b) Could the Minister also state whether there are any administrative procedures at present that indicate the political affiliation of doctors and/or patients prior to medical/surgical management?

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Speaker, in response to question 7(a), there are no medical doctors in the Ministry of Health who are facing disciplinary action for failing to treat patients because of their political affiliations.

With respect to (b), there are no administrative procedures in force in the Ministry of Health at present, whereby medical doctors and/or patients are required to indicate their political affiliation prior to medical/surgical management.

Dr. Khan: I have a supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister of Health indicate therefore, based on those answers that any supposition of the fact that somebody is either a UNC doctor or a PNM doctor or vice-versa—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, that is out of order; that is not a proper supplementary question.

[Dr. Khan remained on his feet while the Speaker was on his feet]

Dr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, could you indicate why?

Mr. Speaker: I am ruling that that is not a proper supplemental question.

Dr. Khan: I would like to understand your ruling.

Mr. Valley: The Speaker is on his feet.

Dr. Khan: Sorry.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member take your seat. That is not a proper supplementary question and I am ruling it out of order.

**Redevelopment of East Port of Spain
(Area Earmarked)**

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

Could the Minister state:

- (a) what are the exact boundaries of the area earmarked for redevelopment in east Port of Spain?
- (b) what legal mechanism is being used to relocate the residents of that area?
- (c) where will they be housed during and after the redevelopment process?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, the answer to question No. 8 is that there are three areas being demarcated for redevelopment in East Port of Spain which are as follows:

- (a)
 1. Area bounded by lands adjoining and surrounding the existing HDC apartments on the city block, bounded on the north by Duke Street and the south by Independence Square north, on the east by the St. Ann's River, East Dry River and on the west by George Street.
 2. Area bounded by Besson Street to the south, State lands on which the St. Paul Sport Complex is located to the east, St. Paul Street to the north and St. Ann's River, East Dry River to the west.
 3. Area bounded by the HDC's apartments and the Old St. Joseph Road in the North, on the west by the St. Ann's River, East Dry River, on the east by the overpass of the Beetham Highway and on the south by the Priority Bus Route.
- (b) The area has been declared a redevelopment area in accordance with the requirements set out in the Slum Clearance and Housing Act, Chap. 33:02. The relocation to be undertaken in the area is temporary and only for the duration of the demolition and construction phases of the project.
- (c) During the demolition and construction periods the current residents would be temporarily relocated outside of the project area. The

first areas for relocation would be the HDC housing estates in and around Port of Spain, as well as suitable units available in schemes islandwide.

If none of the units available within the HDC's portfolio are suitable, the corporation will access units within the private rental market as necessary.

Dr. Khan: I have a supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister indicate if (c) is part of the voter-padding movement?

Mr. Speaker: Please, hon. Member, take your seat.

Dr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I have one more question. With respect to part (b), you have indicated that the legal mechanism that is going to be used is the Slum Clearance and Housing Act, is that correct?

Hon. K. Valley: Yes.

Dr. Khan: Is that then for me to assume that you have kept your supporters in slum for all this time?

Mr. Speaker: Again, Hon. Member, please take your seat.

Coat-of-Arms (Use of)

9. Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister state what official vehicles are legally allowed to use the Coat-of-Arms instead of a number on the vehicle's licence plate?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the Member and I am asking for a two-week deferral of this question.

Question, by leave, deferred.

VERNON PAUL (ALLEGATIONS)

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas the allegations made by Vernon Paul as reported in the Sunday Guardian newspapers of January 22nd and 29th 2006 are of grave concern to all law abiding and patriotic citizens of Trinidad and Tobago;

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And whereas notwithstanding repeated calls in the public interest by the Political Leader of the opposition party and the Leader of the Opposition for an independent commission of inquiry into these allegations, the Government has failed so to do;

Be it resolved that this House:

- (i) affirm its adherence to the rule of law;
- (ii) call on the Government for the appointment of an independent commission of enquiry;
- (iii) condemn the Government for its failure to act in a manner consistent with the national and public interest.

Mr. Speaker, it is my view that this Motion before us gives us the opportunity to begin the process of morally cleansing our society. When I first saw the picture of Sean Luke and read the story on March 29, 2006, and I saw the vulnerable tenderness and innocence of this young child, that image has never left me. Mr. Speaker, maybe it is because of the gruesome and heinous nature of that crime which brought to my mind that that heinous and gruesome nature of that crime is emblematic of the moral decay in our society. [*Desk thumping*] Maybe, Mr. Speaker, it is because I have a three-and-a-half-year-old-boy that I empathize so closely with parents of that child.

I rise to speak on this Motion in the context of our society which is so graphically captured in an article entitled: "Losing our soul". I would read the article because I think it captures the current state of affairs of our country. It was carried in the *Guardian* dated Friday, March 31, 2006.

"Where is there a heart so hard that it would not be stirred by the brutal murder of six-year-old Sean Luke?"

What kind of police force do we have in this country that some members would only take a mother's report of a missing child seriously, when the US Embassy gets involved?

Massa Day done? Man, is only Massa we respect and fear!

Forty-four years of Independence have done nothing for the emancipation of the minds of critical sectors of this society.

Who cares about a little child? We have more important things to do.

But American citizenship means something, and so when the American Embassy inquires into the welfare of one of their citizens we get busy.

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Wearing the uniform means nothing and our citizens are nobody. Our citizens are not worth bothering about at all; our children are not worth bothering about either. And so that poor, brutalized, murdered child received due attention only because a foreign power cracked the whip and only after he was dead.

But it is not only the police.

Which government of any country that has an iota of civilised instinct will stand by and go on with business as usual as if the murder of 102 of its citizens in less than 90 days means nothing at all?

The citizens of this country do not matter to those in authority in this country, who have been elected to govern on their behalf, and whose responsibility it is to ensure the existence of an environment of peace and security, so that ordinary citizens can pursue business interests, work commitments, leisure opportunities and options for happiness as part of the process of living their daily lives.

In any other country the private sector would do something, but in this country, in this time of state abundance, fragmented opposition, and weak citizens' organizations, the private sector leaders are more interested in getting something than in doing anything constructive to improve the condition of lives in this country.

Why waste energy on moral outrage when there is so much money to be made?

Yesterday, it was mainly the kidnapping of citizens, largely of Indian descent. Then, it was and continues to be the elimination of young African men reputed to be gangsters linked to drugs. Now, it is the little children.

So we have racially motivated crimes in the society. We have drug-linked crimes in the society and we now have what seem pedophile murders probably linked to homosexuality. What don't we have in T&T?

I cannot believe that the detection rate is so low for crimes in this country because of the sheer incompetence of the police. Criminals involved in these various types of crime must be favoured with protection by elements in the society who are in a position to do so. Or else how could they get away with it so consistently?

Up to now Akiel Chambers' murderer has not been identified. The Guardian on Wednesday identified three other children who have been molested and/or

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murdered. I write their names to give them dignity to stress the value of these innocent individual lives lost: Ricardo McKenzie, Shernelle Codrington and Dane Andrews.

How can the leaders of religious bodies maintain silence in such circumstances?

I read Pastor Dottin from time to time like a voice in the wilderness, courageous and blunt, but who is reading, listening, paying attention?

Who really cares?

I hear Rev. Cyril Paul from time to time trying to appeal to our collective conscience and our moral sensibility.

Poor man, criminals actually beat him up, for all his good works!

To what further level do we need to descend before we take stock, arrest and take control of the situation and then move on?

Are we going to allow ourselves to fall below the point of any redemption?

In this climate where our country is decaying at its most rapid rate, where crime is at its highest level in history, where kidnappings have become commonplace, where life is cheap, where crime detection has become the exception rather than the norm, where we have all become powerless to protect our children from evil—at this time in the life of our country—we have been threatened to keep our mouths shut and mandated to sing praises to our leaders and, if we cannot summon the words to sing, then hum the tune.

There is a great book which tells us that there is a time for everything under heaven.

This is not a time to sing or hum. This is not a time to keep your mouth shut.

The framework for governance in this country is established by the Constitution of the Republic of T&T and under the Constitution all citizens have the freedom to think and the freedom to express their point of view. When we suppress our voice, the next thing we will lose is our soul.”

Mr. Speaker, that is the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Dr. Bhoë Tewarie, writing in the *Guardian* of March 31, 2006 entitled “Losing our soul”. He gives graphic illustration of what is happening in our society today.

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Mr. Speaker, it is clear that when we look at the allegations made by Vernon Paul we must recognize that those allegations—Mr. Speaker, do not be worried, I am not going to call names, because the names are well known to all and sundry—When we look at the genesis of the findings of cocaine and missiles at the home of a sitting Member of Parliament, Mr. Sadiq Baksh, it was a first for our society and, therefore, in the highly charged political environment at the time you would recall, Mr. Speaker, the 18/18 gridlock. At the time of the deadlock in Parliament, inevitably, this finding of cocaine and missiles had political implications.

When you look at the chronology, Mr. Speaker, you would find that it started in the *Guardian* newspaper dated July 18, 2002. This is not a matter that is dated only a few weeks on the genesis of the January articles of Vernon Paul, Mr. Speaker. This goes back to a political period; part of the history of our politics in the country. The headline of that *Guardian* newspaper article, by Radhica Sookraj, is dated July 18, 2002. It reads as follows:

“Drugs and missiles at Baksh home:

Policemen and soldiers swarm the residential community on Lazzari Street Palmiste yesterday as they recovered two missiles and five kilos of cocaine at the home of San Fernando West, UNC MP Sadiq Baksh.

Police estimated the street value of the cocaine at about \$1.5 million.

While police were seizing the cocaine, army explosive officers were called in to take the missiles, described by officials as anti-aircraft missiles.”

Mr. Speaker, that is the genesis, the finding of the missiles and the cocaine at the home of a sitting Member of Parliament, at a time in which the society was at a political gridlock. It is our view, and it has consistently been our view, that it is because of the lust for power by those on that side that that cocaine and arms and ammunition were planted at the home of Sadiq Baksh. That has consistently been the UNC’s position since 2002.

Mr. Speaker, one must look at a society and this evolving democracy; what is the response to something that is happening in your society for the first time? What is the political response? I make reference to the statement carried in the *Guardian* of July 19, 2002. Mr. Speaker, listen to the political response at the time.

“PNM not involved in any plot—Manning”

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I would read an article by Gail Alexander:

“PRIME MINISTER, Patrick Manning has dismissed the UNC’s claim that the PNM planted cocaine and missiles at UNC MP Sadiq Baksh’s home.

Manning said the accusation was ‘...the ramblings and machinations of a frustrated political mind.’”

Mr. Speaker, when Vernon Paul made his revelations, Manning then got silent. When they asked him about it he said: “Absolutely no comment.” Now in July 19, 2002 he said:

“Manning said the accusation was ‘...the ramblings and machinations of a frustrated political mind.’”

I continue to quote:

“While he said he was not surprised, Manning added, ‘Violence has never been a hallmark of PNM activity. I would like to distance the PNM very definitely from any such activity that is taking place and we propose to take every step to ensure that this matter is properly investigated and anyone culpable in the matter will be brought to justice.’”

Mr. Speaker, this is the Prime Minister of the country in 2002 saying that they were distancing the PNM and that they proposed to take every measure. We would examine the extent to which the Government of the day took every measure. What was the police response? In the same *Guardian*, same date, same page.

“Guy: UNC’s claims are scandalous

Police Commissioner Hilton Guy has described UNC claims that police officers have been in collusion with the PNM Government as ‘frivolous and scandalous’”.

We will come to see, subsequently, from the very mouth of his police officers that there is the link between the political directorate and certain police officers.

Mr. Speaker, it appears to me, having raised this matter consistently, that there appears to have been every effort to block the investigation of this criminal act, an act against democracy in this country. I would read into the record a letter written to Sen. Sadiq Baksh from Supt. Dyo Mohammed who was the assigned investigating officer, which is dated 28 February, 2003:

“Update re items found at your home on 17 July, 2002.

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Sir, I have to inform you that investigations are still being pursued in respect to the findings of a quantity of cocaine and missiles in your water tank on 17 July, 2002.

I have checked all available information but I have not unearthed anything substantial as to how these items came about in your water tank.

With regard to the missile that was found, I must also inform you that the manufacturer and the origin has not yet been traced, however, continuous effort is being maintained through Interpol and the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearm Unit in the USA to have same traced.

The US Embassy in Trinidad is also assisting in this regard. I will update you as to any further development.

/s/ Dyo Mohammed

Superintendent of Police”

So July, 2002 this action took place. In February 2003, the police had not traced the missile. It was not yet traced as to where were the origins of these missiles! Therefore, Dyo Mohammed was saying that there is, indeed, almost a conspiracy of silence; a conspiracy of some sort to block this investigation. He wrote to Sadiq Baksh. But, Mr. Speaker, the plot thickens! When you look at an article in the *Guardian* dated Friday, May 07, 2004, written by Wendy Campbell, it says:

“Junior cop alleges colleagues knew of plot to discredit former MP Baksh

EIGHT TO TEN policemen knew about an alleged plot to plant missiles and cocaine in a water tank at the home of former San Fernando West UNC MP, Sadiq Baksh.

This was the claim on Wednesday by a junior policeman who has been under the watchful eyes of the seniors.

He alleged that the cops conspired with officials of a political party to set up Baksh, because the San Fernando West seat was a marginal one.

It was felt, the informant alleged, if members of the constituency could paint a bad picture of Baksh, then he would lose the seat...

‘It was made known to Ganga Singh because it was unfair and not worth it,’ the informant said, adding that a lot of underworld people knew about the plan.”

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Mr. Speaker, keep in mind what the commissioner said in his response when the UNC made the allegation. He said “scandalous.” A junior policeman and an undercover cop is saying that eight to ten policemen knew.

Mr. Speaker, because we regard this matter as a grave assault on our democracy we then decided that it should be as a matter of “Definite, Urgent Public Importance”. On May 14, 2004 we raised that matter as a matter of “Definite, Urgent Public Importance”. Mr. Speaker, having regard to the Standing Orders, the matter did not qualify, but having regard to the new information in accordance with—and the matter of “Definite, Urgent Public Importance” that I attempted to raise on May 14, 2004, was namely “The failure of the police authorities to diligently investigate and bring to closure the finding of illicit drugs, cocaine and missiles at the home of Sen. Sadiq Baksh, a sitting Member of Parliament.”

I then raised on July 17, 2002, in accordance with the appropriate Standing Orders, a “Motion on the Adjournment”, in accordance with your guidance, on Friday 21, 2004 and it read: “The failure of the police authorities and the Government to diligently investigate and bring to closure the finding of illicit drugs—cocaine—and missiles at the home of Sen. Sadiq Baksh, a sitting Member of Parliament.”

Mr. Speaker, in speaking for 15 minutes on Friday, May 21, 2004, I indicated to this House, and I am quoting from the *Hansard*, just for the purposes of the continuity of chronology:

“This investigation is now suffering from a lack of credibility and legitimacy.

2.00 p.m.

"It has assumed the mantle of a crime that has been covered up. It appears that, in this country, only when someone dies, as when Mark Guerra was killed, we then found out that he was, by virtue of the police authorities, the person responsible for shooting up the President's car. At that time the President was Noor Hassanali.

In order to appreciate why the Government is not providing the necessary resources to solve this crime, one can perhaps harken back to July 2002. It was the time in our political history of a parliamentary deadlock, 18/18, when the incumbent Prime Minister was removed...unconstitutionally by the then President A.N.R. Robinson, who is now obviously enjoying the fruits of his action. Mr. Manning was installed as Prime Minister and, having convened Parliament in April of 2002 and having failed to elect a Speaker, he was in a political bind. Elections had to be called.

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The operators of the PNM, after six years in political wilderness, were desperate to hold on to power for its patronage and perks. It was power at all costs. The so-called marginal seats of Ortoire/Mayaro, Tunapuna, St. Joseph and San Fernando West were selected for special treatment. The hon. Sadiq Baksh was at that time the incumbent Member of Parliament for San Fernando West and he was especially targeted.

It has been said in Trinidad and Tobago—and today it is a truism—that how you are elected will determine how you govern. It is my considered view and the view of many that, in order to win the election, the PNM entered a pact with criminal elements in the society. They abandoned the sacred and embraced the profane."

Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Minister responded to that matter, to my pleadings on the Motion for the Adjournment, the hon. Minister of National Security indicated that they had in fact gotten the location of the origin of the missile, but interestingly he said something. We were calling for FBI and the New Scotland Yard's involvement in the matter. In the *Hansard*, the hon. Minister said:

"The question of calling in independent investigators has not been raised by the police. These investigations are continuing and I do not propose to anticipate their outcome."

It is convenient to take a soft investigative approach when there is the allegation that PNM members are involved, otherwise they would bring in Interpol, Scotland Yard and the FBI. There appears to have been a soft approach with its obvious results. As the chronology continues, you would recognize why.

I have in my possession a note from the Interpol, Washington to the police in Port of Spain, dated May 20, 2004. We have to keep in mind that the Motion on the Adjournment was scheduled for May 21. I quote:

"YOUR REF 192/09/2002"

The request was made since September 2002. Several months after in 2004, you are now getting a response. What was the Interpol doing all the time? What was Sergeant Williams of the Interpol doing with a matter that is so grave to the democracy of our society? There was a conspiracy to let sleeping dogs lie. Let us have a sense of political amnesia, so that we will forget this matter and institutional amnesia will set in so that the police will not investigate this matter. I quote:

"This message is in response to your request for a trace of a mortar seized by authorities in south Trinidad on 17 July 2002.

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Please be advised that the mortar, 120 MM M5 TPSR with a date shift code of POL88G-01-01 was manufactured at a company named Pocal Industries located in Scranton, Pennsylvania, USA and is described as a training mortar. Records indicate that this particular mortar was sold to the Venezuelan Government on 7 June 1988. The name of the foreign consignee is Century Comunicaciones C.A. located in Caracas, Venezuela and the end-user is the Venezuela Ministry of Defense.

Regards.

End"

There was not a diligent pursuit of the investigative aspect of this matter. It is only in response to a parliamentary issue before this Parliament. There was the investigative process moving forward. You understand the recalcitrance of the police to pursue this matter? Therefore, the conspiracy to cover up this matter existed at the level of the international police, because they only acted on the basis of when the matter was raised in this Parliament.

If this Government was operating under rule of law, the rule of law allows for equality of treatment. As stated in a compilation of the Commonwealth Caribbean Constitutional Law, it makes reference on page 9 to Paul Johnson in his book, *A History of the Modern World*.

“‘The essence of the rule,’ he asserts, ‘is its impersonality, omnipotence and ubiquity.’ For him, the law must apply to every citizen with equal force—‘kings, emperors, high priests and the State itself’—this principle admitting of no exceptions. Indeed, he declares that: ‘If exceptions are made, the rule of law begins to collapse—that was the grand lesson of antiquity.’”

Equality before the law. The rule of law allows for that equality before the law. What is happening is that in this situation, if you have equality before the law, then Cpl. Morrison who, unceremoniously and illegally stopped the Bajan fisherman’s prosecution on the basis, from what I have read in the newspapers, of a telephone call from the Minister—Why was Cpl. Morrison, on the Bajan fishermen issue, not disciplined?

In the same manner those policemen in Couva did not engage the mother of Sean Luke have been disciplined, similarly, Cpl. Morrison ought to have been disciplined, but there is one application of the policemen in the Sean Luke

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situation because of the public outcry, but when there was public outcry against the stopping of the prosecution of the Bajan fishermen, nothing has been done. I would not be surprised to learn the kind of inverted thinking we have, that Cpl. Morrison might soon be promoted because he is following the dictate of the political directorate.

We then move to the substantive matter—because that gives you a background of the chronology of how events developed. You can imagine the consternation for those who participated when they saw the *Guardian* of January 22, 2006 when the headline screamed:

"Ex-DEA associate in Caracas:

4 PNM Jefes plotted to frame Baksh...and blow up Balisier House Page 5"

It is important that we read into the record the whole content of this without editorializing because this forms a substantive part of the motion itself.

"Special investigation

PNM plot against Ganga, too

Robert Alonzo

A former associate of the US Drug Enforcement Agency, now in protective custody in Venezuela, says he knows who put the five kilogrammes of cocaine and two mortar bombs in United National Congress MP Sadiq Baksh's water tanks in 2002.

The ex-DEA man, who has a south Trinidad address but lives in Caracas, said he wanted a meeting with Director of Public Prosecutions Geoffrey Henderson to give him the facts.

Vernon Paul, 42 in an interview last week in Caracas, said he will give the DPP information that certain high-ranking People's National Movement politicians were responsible for hatching the plan, together with a former senior man in the Jamaat al Muslimeen, to frame Baksh and Opposition Chief Whip Ganga Singh.

The intent of that plan was to help destabilise the UNC in the 2002 general election, he said.

During two days of interviews in Caracas, Paul, who appeared to be well known by top business executives in the bustling city, gave details of how he came to know of the plot and what it entailed.

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Among Paul's shocking disclosures was that a Venezuelan operative smuggled into Trinidad:

- 25 kilos of pure cocaine;
- 2 boxes of C-4 explosives, each containing five kilogrammes;..."

Mr. Speaker, I understand the police are still finding C-4 explosives all over the place.

- "■ seven FAL assault rifles;
- nine hand guns;
 - four missiles;
 - one launcher;
 - 250 boxes of 7.62 mm ammunition;
 - 12 boxes of 9mm ammunition; and,
 - seven hand grenades.

Paul said of the four missiles and the launcher that came to Trinidad, two of the mortar bombs and the launcher were still unaccounted for, along with:

- the 250 boxes of 7.62 mm ammo, each box containing rounds;
- the seven FAL assault rifles, each carrying two magazines taped together;
- the 9mm pistols with magazines; and
- 12 boxes of 9mm ammunition, each containing 50 rounds.

He said the weaponry was still in T&T, in possession of someone he code-named The B Man.

Paul gave the dates when meetings were said to have taken place at the homes of certain politicians. The DEA associate said the plan was that Baksh and Singh would be charged with drug trafficking and possession of ammunition after the illegal drugs and missiles were found at their homes.

Paul said: 'While Ganga was talking on the news that cocaine and missiles were found in Sadiq's water tanks, cocaine and ammunition were also planted at his (Singh's) home and he knew nothing.

'The plan was to set up both of them, but the cocaine and ammunition were pulled back secretly from Ganga's house and he (Singh) did not even know that he, too, was to be set up.'"

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Mr. Speaker, since this story broke, and subsequent to the story of January 29, I received a phone call from Mr. Vernon Paul and he suggested to me that I should take a metal detector and go to the southwestern corner of my yard because when they were retrieving the ammunition, some fell out. I did a cursory glance, but I do not have a metal detector and I would hope that the authorities would make one available to search my property—

I do not know where to fork up. [*Laughter*]

This is not a joking matter. If it is that there exists, because Mr. Paul told me and I have no reason to believe or disbelieve.

“The plan, Paul said, was that while Baksh and Singh were busy trying to get bail after their arrests, the PNM would call a meeting at its Balisier House headquarters in Port-of-Spain to discuss the arrests. One of the C-4 explosives would have been planted at Balisier House hours before, programmed to blow up the building before the arrival of any official.

The intention was that it would look like political revenge by the UNC for the arrests of Baksh and Singh, said Paul.

He gave the names of four PNM politicians, whom he claimed brokered the deal to frame Baksh and Singh. He gave code names for three of the men: Los Angeles, The Institution Man and The B Man.

'The most stupid and dumbest man I have ever met in my life is The Institution Man. He arranged meetings at the homes of politicians, with politicians,' Paul said.

Paul claimed he was 'wired' at those meetings and taped the conversations. He said the tapes would be his trump card to prove the guilt of the people whose names he was calling.

He also claimed a whopping US \$100 million had been the price negotiated to set up Baksh and Singh.

Paul said the Venezuelans who smuggled the items into T&T were paid only US \$500,000 and that they wanted the rest of their money now. He said that apart from himself, two Venezuelans, one of whom is currently in jail in Caracas, also wanted to talk to DPP Henderson.

Paul named the actual 'planter' of the bombs and cocaine in Baksh's water tank as dead kidnapper Riad Abdool-Quadir, aka Apache, a former member of the Jamaat al Muslimeen who lived in East Dry River, Port-of-Spain.

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According to police reports, Abdool-Quadir was shot dead in January 2003 in a 'gang shooting' in Princes Town, hours after he was fined in a magistrate's court for possession of ammunition.”

Mr. Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that out of the five persons who participated in the planting of the arms and ammunition and narcotics at the home of Sadiq Baksh and my home, three of those persons are now dead. There are now only two alive. Mark Guerra was one and Abdool-Quadir was another and also another person. There are only two persons now alive who participated. This is not a matter. We have to keep in mind that the trail goes cold very quickly. Instead of bringing closure to these matters—

When Selwyn Richardson was killed in front of his yard, subsequently two members of the Jamaat al Muslimeen were found dead at different points in Trinidad and Tobago and it is the general feeling that the matter came to a close. There was never closure as to why and who. Why was Selwyn Richardson killed and who killed him? In this society, the trail goes dead, because people are killed but there are two persons alive currently.

“Paul also said he had evidence that the arms and ammunition found at the Jamaat al Muslimeen's headquarters at Mucurapo during the police raid last October came from the same batch as that brought into T&T by the Venezuelan operative.

Yesterday, the *Guardian* reported that gun and ammunition possession charges against Muslimeen leader Yasin Abu Bakr were dropped. Douglas Mendes, SC, who appeared for the State, said the decision was taken 'after carefully considering the evidence.'

Bakr had been charged, along with two others, with unlawful possession of a firearm (a high-powered rifle), 569 rounds of ammunition and a prohibited weapon (hand grenade).”

When you think of the contents of what came into the country, through the accessing and conspiracy to import the arms, ammunition and cocaine, you can relate it to the arms and ammunition that were found at the Jamaat al Muslimeen's headquarters. Now the matter has been withdrawn.

This is the gist of the article. Mr. Vernon Paul goes on to say:

“‘All I want to do is to come to Trinidad and testify against them because politics should not be so dirty.’

Paul also said that certain people in Trinidad wanted him dead, and that contracts were out on his head.”

Vernon Paul (*Allegations*)
[MR. SINGH]

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I do not disbelieve him.

"He said a Trinidadian hit man had already been arrested by the Venezuelan Guardia Nacional and was 'singing' in Caracas.

He said he did have security in Venezuela but he was angry that people in Trinidad were trying to kill him.

'That's why I am ready to talk now,' he said.

Asked why he waited so long, almost six years, to decide to give evidence and call names, he said:

'Because I have a conscience and a heart. And because I know they want to kill me.'

Paul said he is willing to take a polygraph test to prove his story and issued a challenge for those whose names he called in his story to take the same test.

'If I fail the lie detector test, then let the DPP lock me up for perjury or conspiracy to frame them fellas,' he dared..."

Mr. Speaker, this is the gist of that article of January 22. What is emerging is that the criminal elite in this society had joined together with the political elite in this society and created an axis of criminality, whose fruits we are reaping up to today.

The *Sunday Guardian* of January 29 states:

"How the plot was hatched

Bigwigs in midnight rendezvous with 'Spanish' boatman"

In an article by Robert Alonzo, at page 5 of the *Sunday Guardian* it states:

"Are you with us?

Vernon Paul, who, in interviews on January 19 and 20, described himself as an ex-associate of the US Drug Enforcement Agency, provided a signed and dated statement to the *Sunday Guardian*.

He said he was visited by The Big Man (name given) at his (Paul's) home in La Romaine. He said The Big Man 'said to (him) that he would like (his) assistance in helping the Government in framing and putting away Sadiq Baksh and Ganga Singh.'

Paul said The Big Man told him 'there are police personnel within the Police Service that are apprised of the situation and will assist in this operation by all means possible.'"

Vernon Paul (Allegations)

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You remember Commissioner Hilton Guy saying that the allegations we made were scandalous?

"Paul said he told The Big Man: 'What are you saying to me man? I don't trust Trinidad police. Are you a madman?'

Paul said The Big Man's response was: 'Vernon, but you working with the DEA. I know you could help us, having your US training.'

Paul said The Big Man further said to him: 'Look, come with me and I would show you how good I am with the PNM Government and the people that connected with me.'

Paul said The Big Man took him, in a white Mazda 626, to the home of Los Angeles (name called) at Ste Madeleine. He said he, The Big Man and Los Angeles spoke for about an hour, after which he said The Big Man suggested to Los Angeles that the discussion include a third person, to which Los Angeles agreed.

Paul said he, The Big Man and Los Angeles got into the Mazda 626 and headed to the home of The Institution Man (name called) who lived in Port-of-Spain. Paul said the meeting continued in The Institution Man's living room.

'They started taking turns and asking me questions about my work with the DEA and the US Government...and my work in the Colombian and Venezuelan territories. I indicated a few situations about things that happen which I had a part to play in.

'Having heard what I had to say, The Institution Man then said they formed a plan and they would like me to help them cripple the UNC by targeting Sadiq Baksh and Ganga Singh of the UNC.

'Then The Institution Man said that if the UNC wins this election, he would have to 'run back' to Jamaica to his family because there would be no hope for him in Trinidad.'

Paul said Los Angeles added: 'I am for anything—just do it right.'

He said he asked The Institution Man specifically, 'What was the plan?'

'Immediately, The Big Man interjected and said, 'All we want to know is if you with us or not?'

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'I said I cannot answer that question without knowing what is the plan, (and) then The Institution Man said, 'Like you don't understand that you are on the side of a Government and the Police?'

The Institution Man told The Big Man to tell him the plan, Paul said, but The Big Man was frightened to do so.

'He said; 'Vernon, you don't have a tape on you,' and I said, 'Why should I have a tape on me in the Institution Man house?'

'Then he asked me to take off my shirt and I said, 'No! This is not my plan; it is yours. If you don't want, don't speak.'

Paul said The Institution Man added: 'Please, let's just make it happen.'

He said The Big Man then proceeded to detail a plan to get some military equipment and illegal drugs to set up Baksh and Singh.

Paul said the discussions about how the plan would proceed also included his asking, 'Gentlemen, does Mr. A (a senior PNM official) know about this?'

'The Institution Man said, 'Yes!' And he said if something should go bad, 'I (name called), me, I would be the fall guy.'

Paul said after the discussions, the three men asked him to give them five minutes in private. He said they spoke together for about 20 minutes after when he, together with The Big Man and Los Angeles, left and went to The Big Man's office on Picton Street for ten minutes, and then back to Los Angeles' house in San Fernando. Paul said The Big Man dropped him off at his (Paul's) house in La Romaine and stayed there until 11.30 pm.

One month later

Paul said about one month later, The Big Man came to his home telling him the plan was 'right and ready.'

He said The Big Man took him back to the Port-of-Spain home of The Institution Man where 'all three sat down again and The Big Man disclosed to (him), in the presence of The Institution Man, that the plan was to put smuggled military equipment in Sadiq Baksh and Ganga Singh's houses and they will get the police to buss/raid them after.'

Paul said: 'The Big Man also said if he get the type of equipment that he had made firm arrangements for, it has a next plan to blow up Balisier House while the two UNC MPs are in prison, and then all fingers will be pointing at UNC for trying to kill all of the PNM MPs by blowing up Balisier House.'

'The Institution Man then said very openly that after discussions with Mr. A they would arrange a party meeting, and on the day that this meeting would be scheduled, a couple of hours before, they would have the operation completed by blowing up the entire facility.'

Paul said a few days after that meeting The Big Man came to his home. After telephone discussions involving him, The Big Man and another person 'in Venezuela,' a 'Spanish man' turned up in a boat at the beach 'where the Edgewater hotel used to be opposite TJ's by the Sea.'

Paul said The Big Man picked him up in the Mazda 626 and they went to the arranged place that was close to his (Paul's) home.

'At approximately 9.30 pm, a boat came at the location. A Spanish man came off the vessel and the vessel left. The Big Man told me we taking him (the Spanish man) to my (Paul's) home.

'I said, 'What kind of nonsense is this, boy?'

'We started to argue and The Big Man said, 'Vernon, oh gosh man, is 10.30 in the night. This man come here illegally in the country and we have a big job to do. What hotel I go put him in, eh? He just here for two days...Help me, nah. This is for the Government. You know how we need for this to be real low key.'

Paul said the Spanish man spent the night and the next morning at his house.

He said The Big Man and Los Angeles returned to his house at around 10.30 am the next day and that he, Paul and the Spanish man were taken to Los Angeles' home. He said Los Angeles and the Spanish man had a drink together, and they went off to the home of The Institution Man 'where the planning took place.'

Paul said The Big Man, Los Angeles and The Institution Man held a discussion after 'the Spanish man asked (him) to find out when they will give (the Spanish man) the money.'

He said after they left The Institution Man's house, they went back to South where Los Angeles invited the Spanish man in for a drink again at his house and then he, the Spanish man, stayed at Paul's house for another night.

Paul said the next day, The Big Man and Los Angeles came and took the Spanish man with them. He didn't go, he said, because he had to do something

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at his mother's house in Oropouche. He said, however, that when he got home to La Romaine, 'I saw the Spanish man was at my home.'

'I spoke with him and he said they give him plenty money but the money was Trinidad money.'

Paul said the Spanish man had checked the money, which amounted to \$260,000, and that he, Paul, saw this money himself.

Paul said two days later The Big Man and Los Angeles came to his house in a Toyota pick-up and told him the 'goods' were coming in.

'They told me to tell the Spanish man to get ready...his transport coming so get ready to leave. The boat arrived like 12.45 am with its captain and two other people.

'When they started to take out the boxes, The Big Man said to the Institution Man, 'Go in the vehicle. Start it and wait.'

Paul said two men came off the boat offloading boxes and bags. He said The Big Man told the captain and him (Paul) to check the boxes and bags to see if they contained what he, The Big Man, had ordered.

'The captain told one of the persons who came with him that the man want to know if he get all of the materials, and the man opened the boxes in front of all of us. It was a lot of ammunition.'"

That is the same set of arms, ammunition, missiles and cocaine that I outlined previously.

Under the paragraph "Set and ready to go", it is stated:

"Paul said shortly after the shipment of illegal arms and ammunition was claimed, The Big Man told him that everything was 'set and ready to go for Sadiq Baksh and Ganga Singh.'

'And I told him I think here is where I hop off. He was very upset with me.

'The Big Man told me that Mr. A (the senior PNM government official) would like to sit down with me because The Institution Man and Los Angeles had already informed him of the activities that had taken place.'

Paul said that subsequently, at a massive political meeting in San Fernando, he met and spoke with The Institution Man who told him 'things moving smoothly.'

Paul said the following day The Big Man visited him, telling him Mr. A was calling him (The Big Man) every day and that 'you could imagine that Mr. A want this thing done so bad.'

Paul said The Big Man told him that former Jamaat al Muslimeen member, Abdool Quadir, aka Apache, was lined up to do the job.

Paul said some days later he spoke with Apache (who lived next door to him in La Romaine), who said:

'Paul boy, The Big Man give me a real nice play. I have to put some equipment and drugs in Sadiq's house to set him up.'

'I said, 'You could do that?'

'He said, 'Why not? I could make plenty money.'

Paul said, subsequently, The Big Man came to his house one rainy night and said, 'Tonight is the night.'

He said Apache drove up in a car alongside The Big Man's Mazda 626, and that The Big Man opened the trunk of his car and took out one box and a bag.

'I was very inquisitive and wanted to know what was in the box and the bag, so I opened the box and I saw two missiles, and I opened the bag and realised this was the same bag the 25 kilogrammes of cocaine (in) from the boat.

'The Big Man came out from his car and handed Apache the box and the bag and Apache placed it in his car trunk and got into the front seat of his car and his driver drove off.'

Paul said he and The Big Man sat in the latter's car until 2.30 am outside his (Paul's) home until Apache returned.

Paul said The Big Man and Apache spoke briefly, shook hands, and The Big Man wished Apache 'im shallah ('In-shallah'—God willing) before leaving.

Paul said he and Apache chatted for a short while, saying he told Apache he 'is a real fool.'

Paul said Apache told him: 'I am not a fool. I put five kilos of cocaine and keep 20 kilogrammes for myself because I know that they will not pay me.'"

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That carries enormous potential because it is a signed statement which is in the possession of the police authorities and in which there is that kind of detail that points to a conspiracy to import cocaine, arms and ammunition and these things and the actual importation and subsequently the planting. It is a fact that on July 17 or 18, these things were found at the home of Sadiq Baksh. I cannot understand why there is this kind of delay in pursuing this matter.

Having regard to the revelations made by Vernon Paul on January 22 and 29, one would expect that the police would act with a degree of expedition in this matter.

Prof. Deosaran, in a recent article on page 7 of the *Sunday Guardian* of April 02, said:

“Who are those lecturers with political agendas?

And at the same time we have a problem in this country with professional independence.

It seems to me that sucking up has now moved from an art into a science.”

I would demonstrate how the Commissioner of Police, with respect to this instance, is a scientist in this regard. Commissioner Trevor Paul has flip-flopped and then flipped again on this issue. On Tuesday, January 24, 2006 in the *Guardian*, under the heading:

"Cops to question top PNMites.

Police Commissioner Trevor Paul is admitting that the names of three government officials are contained in a statement which incriminates the PNMites of plotting to frame UNC Senator Sadiq Baksh and Opposition Chief Whip Ganga Singh.

However, Paul said the statement purportedly prepared by former US Drug Enforcement Agency associate Vernon Paul was not signed.”

He said that on the Tuesday, these PNMites will be interviewed, but on the Friday he flip-flopped and said: “No, no, they will not interview the three top PNMites.” The *Guardian* editorial of Monday, January 30 brings Commissioner Paul to task; speaking of a tale of two Pauls. I would read part of it.

"It is the worst of times. With the murder rate...

So it was doubly unusual to see the CoP on Friday shelving an investigation into allegations of political dirty tricks as witnessed by a former DEA informant, Vernon Paul.

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At Friday's press conference, the Commissioner of Police was full of statements about what the police were not going to do: they would not proceed with the investigation into Paul's allegations, they would not be talking to the PNM officials named in Paul's statement, they would not offer any witness protection to him and they would not be taking his story seriously."

They would not be doing a series of things, but they took Sean Parris and Richard Bickram seriously. They took Morris seriously, but they would not take something that points to the PNM and senior PNM officials seriously. Sucking up is beyond a fine art; it is a science. Perhaps, Commissioner Trevor Paul, when he retires, will teach at UTT, the Art of Sucking up, the Science of Sucking Up. This is a grave matter if you have a commissioner of police who is anchored in the rule of law, because the role of the police is to be independent, impartial and autonomous from political interference. If the police authorities are anchored by the rule of law, the law is their master. If law is their master, you cannot have this flip-flopping taking place.

Mr. Speaker, what we have is the contamination of the criminal justice system by political interference. Therefore, today the police is regarded as an extension of the PNM's political party, because they are not investigating this matter in the manner in which they ought to. You must view this in the light of an article carried in the *Sunday Express* of February 05, 2006 in an article by Darryl Heeralal in which it is stated:

"Police knew conspirators

The identity of the conspirators who planted cocaine and arms in Sadiq Baksh's water tank have been known to police since 2002 when the incident took place.

This according to Police Special Branch reports on the matter and information gathered by investigators on the alleged involvement of three top PNM officials and others.

Special Branch sources also say that there are at least 12 police officers who can corroborate the information on the identity of the conspirators and how the plan was hatched and carried out.

In fact the *Sunday Express* was told that it was an undercover police officer who had informed UNC MP Ganga Singh that the five kilos of cocaine and two mortar bombs had been planted at the Baksh's water tank at the back of the family's Lazzari Street, Palmiste home.

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Yesterday Police Commissioner Trevor Paul through his communications specialist Ann Marie Rant said that he was not in a position to comment on the matter.”

Special Branch reports to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the recipient of Special Branch information. Since 2002, one can assume, in the aftermath of the finding, that the Prime Minister of this country knew of the existence of the conspirators; who they were and for what purpose they planted it. That was the response of Mr. Guy, in the first instance and then subsequently of Mr. Paul, fine art. What now is the response of the PNM in the aftermath of those shocking and chilling revelations?

In the *Guardian* of Monday, January 23, 2006, it is stated:

"PNM tight-lipped, but UNC wants answers

Yesterday, Manning, National Security Minister Martin Joseph and PNM ambassador Jerry Narace declined comment on the exclusive report carried in yesterday's edition of the *Sunday Guardian*.

'Absolutely no comment,' Manning and Joseph said...”

This is the Prime Minister, in 2002 who said: “We would leave no stone unturned in order to find the perpetrators.” When it is placed in front his face, as to who the perpetrators were, he said: "Absolutely to comment." No wonder we are in a state of decadence and are near what Malcolm Gladwell calls The Tipping Point. Prime Minister Manning knew who they were but remains totally—since 2002, based on the Special Branch report. He offers no comment now and no question of solving the crime anymore or bringing the culprits and perpetrators to justice—no comment. A politician who is loquacious says: “No comment.” What does he have to hide?

In order to bring some measure of sanity to the proceedings, both the Leader of the Opposition and the Political Leader of the UNC wrote to Prime Minister. It is in the public interest that we bring closure to this matter and we do not seem, out of a sense of institutional or collective amnesia, to forget this matter because it will remain a stain in our democracy. How can we proceed? There is no confidence in the police service to bring this matter to a closure. They have been dealing with it since 2002. The fact that Supt. Dyo Mohammed retired and the file has been passed to Errol Dillon—I do not know his rank but there is no confidence.

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I have no problem with the use of the New Scotland Yard, but we have been asking for that since 2002 and we are waiting until all the witnesses are dealt with before they bring in New Scotland Yard.

The Member for St. Augustine wrote Prime Minister Manning in a letter dated January 24, 2006. It reads:

“Dear Prime Minister

The allegations contained in a newspaper report last weekend, which alleged that the PNM officials were part of a plot to plant illegal drugs, arms and ammunition on two Members of Parliament, are deeply troubling to this nation. Such allegations, if left unanswered, only serve to deepen the mistrust the public has to politicians from all sides and undermine the creditability of our political process. It is up to us, Prime Minister to show the nation that when the public interest is at stake we have not only the ability but also the political will to put partisan differences aside and act in the interest of our nation.

Even since the events of 1990, I have always been very disturbed that the leaders in our society do not defend as vigorously as we should, the basic principles of our democratic way of life.

You will recall that at the first meeting between the Opposition and the Government on the issue of crime, we agreed on a number of principles that must inform our legislation, which include:

1. Protection against the abuse of power.
2. Protection of civil liberties.
3. The political process must be free from criminal influence.

Clearly, criminality has no place in our political process. The public interest now demands that we act to deter any erosion of confidence in the rules by which we govern ourselves. Although I know that a police probe is under way, this will not be able to clear the air on the broader issues and implications of the allegations raised.

Moreover, by the Police Commissioner's own admission, even though more than a month has gone by since he was formally made aware of these recent allegations, some of those alleged to be involved are yet to be interviewed. In any event, the scope of such a probe will necessarily be limited and run the risk of not inspiring the full confidence of our society.

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The report of the allegations has already reached the international community. If left unanswered, confidence in our investment climate may be further affected. At home, confidence in the system is being undermined with each allegation and counter allegation in the absence of a full and accurate exposure of the facts. These allegations are even more worrying given the fact that cocaine and ammunition were indeed found in the water tank of a then sitting Member of Parliament.

Since, after some four years, it appears as though the police service has been unable to make any significant headway into the matter, I recommend to you to have a comprehensive and official investigation and set up an independent commission of enquiry into the matter under the Commission of Enquiry Act.

I also suggest that to avoid the perception of bias in such an enquiry, suitably qualified commissioners be sought from the Commonwealth and a timeline for reporting be agreed upon.

I am willing to work with the Government in whatever way that may be required to get to the truth in this matter. However, it is my firm opinion that in this situation, the ultimate power lies in the Commission of Enquiry Act and, therefore, in your hands.

In addition, the commission should also be asked to look into the manner in which the police handled the matter and the apparent ease with which contraband items were brought into this country.

Regardless of the findings of such an enquiry, the public's right to know and the national interest both supersede any other consideration either of us may have.

I look forward to your action on this most urgent and pressing matter.

Winston Dookeran.

Political Leader”

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in receipt of that letter.

Subsequently, the Leader of the Opposition, in the aftermath of the crime talks and ongoing through the crime talks, wrote to the Prime Minister on February 14.

Mr. Valley: Let us get a copy of that.

Mr. G. Singh: It is coming. I will use it in my winding up. Therefore, the Opposition entered into dialogue with the Prime Minister and made this request,

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consistent with the request to have a commission of enquiry. We must keep in mind that these allegations and the corroborative facts to support these allegations, take place in an environment in which our Constitution guarantees you the right to equality, respect for family and private life and the right to join political parties and to express political views. If we do not take action now, on this matter, to bring it to closure, the pathway for us is very clear; Zimbabwe beckons.

I read into the record, the *Daily Telegraph* of Friday, March 10, 2006.

"Mugabe police arrest coup plotters after arms find

At least 15 men have been arrested by Zimbabwean police amid allegations of a plot to launch an armed rebellion against President Robert Mugabe. A clutch of weapons was reportedly seized and those held included some senior officials of the Opposition Movement for Democratic Change."

Do you understand how Zimbabwe beckons? The article goes on:

"The State-controlled *Herald* newspaper has recently made several extraordinary claims about the arrest. The latest being that the police believe that there was a plan for a tear gas attack on Mr. Mugabe's 82nd birthday celebrations in Mutare on February 05.

A clutch of automatic rifles, AK 47 rifles and some weapons more than 40 years old, were allegedly found along with thousands of bullets and a two-way radio system at the Mutare home of Michael Peter Hitchman, who is also said to be a member of the democratic party."

What happened in Trinidad and Tobago happened subsequently in Zimbabwe. It seems to me that instead of following the path of Zimbabwe, we are now ahead of Zimbabwe.

It is clear that this House ought to affirm to the adherence of the rule of law to ensure equality in the application of the law. That is not so in this matter and that is why we call upon the Government, as enunciated by the Member for St. Augustine, to have an independent commission of enquiry into this matter.

It has been four years since three persons associated with this matter have died and two remain. Three persons out of the five who planted the arms and ammunition have died and two remain alive. Are we going to wait until they are all dead, as in other matters, before we bring closure to this?

Mr. Speaker, all our vaunted efforts at redeeming our society and our vaunted efforts of moral and structural redemption to bring change will flounder if we do not bring closure to this matter.

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Whilst we live in fear and we listen to the silent screams of the grieving parents of those young children, whilst we think of the tears, pain and suffering that is taking place, we see that the axis of criminality in this current regime started in 2002, because of their lust for power and that combination of the political elite in bed with the criminal elite has unleashed the evil that pervades this land today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I beg to move.

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (Caroni Central): Mr. Speaker, I second the Motion and reserve my right to speak at a later stage in the debate.

Question proposed.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. John Jeremie): Mr. Speaker, once again I am delighted to speak on a matter which involves the question of integrity in public life and to reaffirm what cannot now be questioned; this Government's unswerving commitment to integrity in public life. This afternoon's Motion goes beyond that issue to the question of criminal conduct, alleged by one Vernon Paul, against both private and public figures.

To judge the merits of his Motion, we need to look beyond the mock sincerity. I will explain as I go on, what I mean by that expression "mock sincerity", which is expressed in words, and to examine not just the track record, but the motives of those who are bringing this Motion.

The Motion seeks to condemn the Government for its failure to act in the national interest—based on some sensational reporting in one newspaper—from an individual who has offered no evidence whatsoever to support his wild allegations, save that of his own reliable word.

This Motion is being brought by the Member for Caroni East. The Member for Caroni East is my friend. We were at law school together, but he is the same person who called for a commission of enquiry into matters related to the construction of the Scarborough Hospital. That is a fact. It is on the record. No sooner had the Prime Minister acceded to that request, that he began to complain about the composition of the commission. Although they could find no ground on which to challenge any member of that commission, they still complained some more and then dropped the complaints when the enquiry started.

What is instructive, however, is that when the enquiry began, the Member, who claimed to have all this information at his disposal, was missing in action. The Member for Caroni East who raised the matter, who is my friend, as he has

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done again today, refused, even to bother to attend the enquiry, even when specifically invited by the Chairman of the Commission. His colleagues also refused to show up, but that is another question and we will deal with that on another occasion.

The reason for that is quite simple; they never really wanted an enquiry. They never wanted to find the truth. It was always just an attempt to smear persons' character and to hope that they would advance their political ends. That is their modus operandi. They call for an enquiry, the Government gives in, at great expense to the public purse, because these things cost money, they put up some of their criminal friends to give false testimony and then they "duck" and run, hoping that something comes out of it. We do not intend to be caught with this trick another time.

It is for this reason that—remember it, the teacup matter destroyed the facade of unity in the ranks—the Members for Barataria/San Juan and Pointe-a-Pierre did not understand the morality of telling untruths and indulging in tricks and political character assassination and so they are where they are today.

My friend, whom I believe is a man of some integrity, is for the time being where he is; disappearing in the distance. This is what I speak of when I spoke earlier, of mock sincerity.

Mr. Speaker, in the Landate Commission of Enquiry, which we set up, from the report of that Commission of Enquiry, which was appointed, following the matters raised by my friend, the Member for Caroni East, and which was chaired by Madam Justice Annestine Sealy, it is stated under further recommendations and observations as follows:

- "That notices inviting comments from the Hon. Ganga Singh were forwarded to him requesting a comment on submission to the terms of reference of the Commission.
- This was remitted to him on May 25, 2005 and received by one J. Seepersad at 2.45 p.m. on his behalf on that said day.
- A notice was also dispatched requesting a written submission or comment to Sen. Wade Mark, dated May 25, 2005 and was received on that same day by one J. Seepersad on his behalf.
- Neither the Hon. Ganga Singh nor Sen. Wade Mark responded to the Commission of Enquiry."

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[SEN. THE HON. J. JEREMIE]

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This is what I refer to as “mock sincerity”. Here we have a commission of enquiry set up by His Excellency the President, to investigate allegations made by the Member for Caroni East, my friend in this Parliament, in full glare of the media as they are here today. At this point, we might feel a sense of déjà vu, being ignored by the Member of Parliament, upon whose insistence the Commission was set up. In other words, the Government's resolve to learn from experiences in the past, in dealing with corruption and misconduct in public life, exposing where evidence exists, has turned on itself by scandal and rumour and by my friend.

It should also be noted that the Commission, set up in good faith, considered the evidence of Rev. Barrington Thomas. I am told he goes by the name of “Skippy”, who was quoted with great respect and reverence by my friend; the mover of this Motion in this place. The Commission found his evidence to be unreliable and found that acceptance of Dr. Rowley's evidence, on a balance of probabilities, would negate any allegations of impropriety as was alleged by Rev. Thomas. You see the modus operandi, Mr. Speaker; find a convicted felon; someone willing to tell lies at the drop of a hat, without any concern for the damage it would do to his already sullied reputation, get that person to make wild accusations against otherwise blameless persons, have those accusations repeated in this Parliament and then call for a commission of enquiry.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is my friend, the Member for Caroni East, who now comes before this House to ask that the word of a career criminal, which that individual refuses to swear to and to verify under oath, be used to impute the character of public and private officials in a commission of enquiry. The waste of time and resources do not matter to them. Hopefully, some mud will stick and the chances of the hon. Member for St. Augustine or the hon. Member for Couva North—I do not know which one—may be improved to move into Whitehall.

My friends on the other side are not interested in the truth and integrity in public life. I say this with great pain, but it is the truth. Despite calls for enquiries into several transactions occurring during the term of office of that administration, the UNC refused to call all but one commission of enquiry.

You will note that the standard now being applied by my friends opposite, in calling for an enquiry, was totally absent when they were in government. Despite allegations of corruption and serious official wrongdoings in several matters, one commission of enquiry was appointed in the six years while they were in office.

Now, a number of things happened during that time, including the shocking death of one of their members, Hansraj Sumairsingh. What is even worse is that

their very attorney general, when he had had enough, attempted to initiate enquiries into official wrongdoings, only to have his efforts frustrated. Eventually, he was fired. The staff of the Anti-Corruption Bureau which he had set up was starved for cash and resources. This has never been said publicly before, but a valuable bundle of documents, relevant to a trial of corruption of a very important person sitting in this House, went missing en route to our solicitors in England. It was found opened, I was told by the Director of Public Prosecutions, in New Delhi.

Mr. Speaker, truth be told, the Member for Caroni East should be the last person in this House calling for a commission of enquiry into anything. He was the person who, as Minister of Public Utilities, presided over the take or pay contract signed with InnCogen, as well as the Desalcott contract which saddled the people of Trinidad and Tobago and our children by paying \$175 million a year for 20 years to Desalcott. More on that matter is to come very shortly. As scandalous as that situation was, and as grave as the implications of those matters have been for the public purse, the Government did not appoint commissions of enquiry then or now. We have simply referred those matters to the police or to the integrity commission, and provided the police with the resources which they require to complete those investigations.

Those investigations have been ongoing for approximately five years with evidence being gathered and no arrests have yet been made. That is about to change very shortly. I continue to have great confidence in the police to bring the perpetrators to justice, just as I have confidence that the perpetrators of the incident at the home of Sen. Sadiq Baksh would ultimately be exposed.

This administration has appointed, for the time that we have been in office, commissions of enquiry into the Piarco International Airport Project, the conduct of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, the operations of the health sector and the Landate matter—the matter that “Skippy” triggered on his request. On occasions where members of the public have expressed deep concern over issues or credible information have been put forward, we have sought the involvement of the Integrity Commission in investigations of Members of Parliament on this side in this House. We have true respect for the rule of law. The Prime Minister has made it clear to each Member of his Cabinet that the intergenerational crimes of the past which saw persons turning public positions to private profit, at great costs to generations yet to be born, be it in scholarships or otherwise, would no longer be tolerated.

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We on this side have many faults. Each day we make mistakes: mistakes of judgments; mistakes of inattentions; and sometimes mistakes of arrogance, but never again would we put our people through the agony of criminals being protected by Government conspiracy. The Prime Minister shall not allow that and neither shall I.

Mr. Speaker, there is a minimum threshold in law to be met before one takes a decision to expend time and money on holding a commission of enquiry. If it were otherwise, we could find ourselves pursuing every piece of “mauvais langue”. The test is that where the existing law enforcement mechanisms are inadequate, and the commission can prove them to be useful in revealing the truth, the use of a commission which is independent of the Executive may be warranted to get at the truth.

Mr. Speaker, my friend wants us to spend taxpayers’ money and time on an enquiry based on one newspaper report from which my friend quoted extensively—the *Sunday Guardian* in particular—and was riddled with contradictions and inconsistencies. At one point, Mr. Vernon Paul, the man, is a DEA associate, a designation that does not exist. He then becomes a former informer after the United States Government denies that claim. One day he claims to have no previous criminal convictions and then on another day he admits to involvement in criminal activities. What is even worse is that seven months before Mr. Paul’s sensational allegations appeared in the *Sunday Guardian*, another affidavit, ostensibly under his hand, appeared in another newspaper on May 15, 2005 under the headline: “Colombians plant coke in Sadiq’s water tank”. My friend conveniently forgot to mention this article.

In that report, he claimed that cocaine and missiles which had been found in Mr. Baksh’s tank had been smuggled by Colombians, not Venezuelans, and that the plot involved collaboration among senior policemen, a UNC financier and members of the Jamaat al Muslimeen to smear the PNM. The story said a senior Opposition politician was part of a conspiracy to prevent Sadiq Baksh from replacing the Member for Couva North as UNC leader.

Mr. Speaker, the police are in possession of yet another statement to essentially, the same effect, by another person entirely unconnected with Mr. Vernon Paul. So, let us tell the truth this afternoon; the complete truth. Do not be selective.

This story was given great prominence. It was never retracted by the paper or contested by Mr. Paul before the about-turn in the *Sunday Guardian* seven

months later, when Mr. Paul claimed that his signature had been forged electronically. Mr. Speaker, which statement should be investigated? Should we give some credence to the first because of the public fallout between the Chief Whip and the Opposition Leader, or among any number of persons on the other side who would prefer to see the Member for Couva North permanently absent from this House? Should we take the other three statements with different perpetrators named, all signed by the same Mr. Vernon Paul? Should we take the last one which was prepared under the advice of counsel provided by the UNC?

Mr. Speaker, where Mr. Paul, who is clearly no saint appears to have had a conversation on the road to the Demascus or perhaps it should be to Caracas, he now comes up with a mind-boggling story about explosives to be planted in Balisier House. You would note that nothing was heard from my friends on the other side when that report first appeared with Mr. Paul purporting to have information on the planting of cocaine at the home of Sen. Baksh. There was no concern for the public interest, or for the democratic process in this country or for their country. It is either they gave Mr. Paul no credence or they preferred to keep the matter quiet. We on this side ignored it. We knew of his background and we trusted the police.

It should be noted that Mr. Paul claimed—one of his wives claimed—to be the brother of the now Commissioner of Police, Mr. Trevor Paul, much to Mr. Paul's amusement. [*Laughter*] Let us return to the version of the story preferred by the Members on the other side, and that is the story which appeared in the *Sunday Guardian*.

In the *Sunday Guardian* on January 22, 2006 Mr. Paul claimed to have a tape recording of his meetings with PNM officials. He subsequently backed away from these claims and has been able to produce no tape, doctored or otherwise, to support his story. The *Guardian* which published the report did not seem to concern itself with hearing the tapes.

If you read the reports, all five of them—it was my unfortunate job to do so—Mr. Paul purports to be a big player in the alleged transaction, but yet provides what appears to be a manifest for an illegal arms shipment which was catalogued by my good friend, the Member for Caroni East. He named different persons at different times as being involved. He accounts for every kilo of cocaine and every bullet and every kilo of C-4 explosives.

He also made the astounding claim that a rifle recovered by police from the premises of the Jamaat al Muslimeen only last year which he had not seen, is part of that arms cache. My friend, while he was making his contribution, confirmed

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this to be the case. I ask this question: How could he know this since the gun was in the possession of the police? He did not have a chance to examine a serial number, to conduct a ballistic test, but hiding far away in Venezuela, he stated conclusively that a rifle found on the Jamaat compound was part of a shipment four years old, which he has chronicled in extensive detail, and which the Member for Caroni East, my good friend, provided us with all the particulars of.

No one bothers to question that the rifle recovered on the Jamaat compound was widely reported in the media—I heard him talking about the media—to be a sniper rifle with a scope. While the meticulous manifest which he provided—down to the last bullet and down to the last kilo of cocaine—by Mr. Paul to the *Guardian* made no mention of a sniper rifle with a scope among the shipment, but it does speak to seven FAL assault rifles, as my friend remarked. He was very specific. Mr. Speaker, this is the story the Member for Caroni East wants us to spend taxpayers' money to investigate. This is a story filled with holes but, perhaps, the biggest of all is that the PNM which had just come out of six years in Opposition was willing to pay \$US 100 million for this conspiracy. Mr. Speaker, that is TT \$630 million at the prevailing exchange rate.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you know that the PNM does not have that kind of money; the PNM has never had that kind of money, and I suspect will never have—not now, certainly not then and not ever. If they did, I would ask my Prime Minister right away to cease my monthly salary deduction to the party. Mr. Speaker, this party had no one with a diamond reserve account in London; no one with accounts in the British Virgin Island; no deep-pocket financiers upon whom its political leader or persons close to him could call for millions of dollars at the drop of a hat for being in Opposition. The story does not make any sense whatsoever. It probably explains why, despite the fact that Vernon Paul was calling every newspaper and television station in town—he called my offices and I refused to speak to him, but only the *Sunday Guardian* ran this story.

I would advise my friend to discount any calls that he receives from Mr. Paul. He says that he has called him recently to tell him that there is something in his backyard, as a friend, I would advise him to ignore Mr. Paul. It probably explains why the police to their credit, after spending hours in Caracas, Oropouche and on international phone calls to Malaysia, have a file on Vernon Paul which has more on his criminal activities before this allegation. It probably explains why the independent police commissioner, whom I, myself, interviewed at length on this matter, and the Director of Public Prosecutions with whom I sought counsel, have

concluded at this time that there is absolutely no need for the police to interview anyone other than Mr. Vernon Paul. Incidentally, he has refused several invitations by the police to be interviewed. That is the question which you asked and I have provided the answer.

There is nothing in that newspaper's report meriting a commission of enquiry. The allegations were so incredible, including a PNM plot to blow up Balisier House, that no other arm of the media bothered to publish them.

Mr. Speaker, as Attorney General, there is no reason for me in this case to conclude that the existing enforcement mechanisms are inadequate to get at the truth. That is the test for triggering a commission of enquiry. Out of an abundance of caution and because I take my responsibilities very seriously, I proceeded last evening, on my own initiative, to meet and interview for the first time—I have never met him before—Mr. Bilaal Abdullah. I must confess, I did not have the temerity to approach Mr. Donaldson, although I did have the temerity to approach and talk with Mr. Achong. I was fortified in my view that there is nothing to merit any commission of enquiry at this time.

I would like to suggest to the Member for Caroni East—now that he has been fortified and armed with the facts of the matter—that the Motion brought this afternoon be adjusted in the following manner: Under “*Be it resolved*”, I propose: “*Be it resolved* that this House affirms its adherence to the rule of law.” I propose that “(ii) and (iii)” be replaced with the following:

- “(ii) note the reluctance of the said Vernon Paul to corroborate his version of the facts stated in the articles above;
- (iii) commend the police for the initiatives taken to get to the truth of the matter concerning the discovery of the arms and drugs in the water tank of Sadiq Baksh.”

Mr. Speaker, I believe this amendment reflects the reality and the position that this honourable House should take. I am sure that even my friends, all of them on the other side, now that they have been enlightened, would be willing to support the amendments.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk on the Motion:

Whereas the allegations made by Vernon Paul as reported in the *Sunday Guardian* newspapers of January 22nd and 29th 2006 are of grave concern to all law abiding and patriotic citizens of Trinidad and Tobago;

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And whereas notwithstanding repeated calls in the public interest by the Political Leader of the Opposition party and the Leader of the Opposition for an independent commission of enquiry into these allegations, the Government has failed so to do;

Be it resolved that this House:

- (i) affirm its adherence to the rule of law;
- (ii) call on the Government for the appointment of an independent commission of enquiry;
- (iv) condemn the Government for its failure to act in a manner consistent with the national and public interest.

Mr. Speaker, as I start my contribution on this particular Motion, I want to make reference to an article in the *Los Angeles Times* dated April 04, 2006. The article is headlined: “Rise in Bloodshed Beclouds Caribbean Paradise” and it states:

“Contrary to the islands’ laid-back, reggae-rocked, calypso-serenaded image, the Caribbean is awash in murderous anger.

Homicide rates have soared—Jamaica last year achieved the alarming distinction of being called the homicide capital of the world, and Trinidad isn’t far behind. With suspects walking free because of ineffectual courts and corrupt law enforcement, vigilante justice is also on the rise.”

The article goes on:

“Trinidad and Tobago, with 386 homicides last year, or 35 per 100,000, may have joined the list of the most violent countries in the world. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has yet to update its most recent statistics, a comparative analysis of homicide rates through 2000, when only Colombia and South Africa ranked higher than Trinidad’s current figure.”

Mr. Speaker, this is the context in which I introduce my contribution. When the article of the Vernon Paul allegations appeared in the newspaper, the UNC recognized the importance of these particular allegations, and it is in this particular debate that I am going to put on record the process of the UNC, in terms of the chronology of events following these allegations in the *Sunday Guardian*.

I am going to read into the record a letter sent to the Caricom Secretary General, His Excellency, Mr. Edwin Carrington:

“As the International Relations Officer of the National Executive of the United National Congress, I have been mandated to bring to the attention of

CARICOM, some shocking revelations by a former associate of the US Drug Enforcement Agency, Vernon Paul, now in protective custody in Venezuela.

In a newspaper report of January 22, 2006 in the Sunday Guardian, Vernon Paul said that certain high-ranking officials of the People's National Movement, and a former senior man in the Jamaat al Muslimeen, were involved in a plot to help destabilize the United National Congress, on the eve of the 2002 General Elections.

Among Paul's shocking disclosures was that a Venezuelan operative smuggled into Trinidad the following items:

- 25 kilos of pure cocaine
- Two boxes of C-4 explosives, each containing 5 kilogrammes
- Seven FAL assault rifles
- Nine hand guns
- Four missiles
- One launcher
- 250 boxes of 7.62 mm ammunition
- 12 boxes of 9 mm ammunition
- Seven hand grenades

The plan was that the former United National Congress MP Sadiq Baksh and the Opposition Chief Whip, Ganga Singh, would be charged with drug trafficking and possession of ammunition after the cocaine and missiles were found on their premises. The said items would have been planted by the police on their premises.

The plan, Paul said, was that while Baksh and Singh were busy trying to get bail after their arrests, the PNM would call a meeting at its Balisier House headquarters in Port of Spain to discuss the arrests. One of the C-4 explosives would have been planted by Balisier House hours before, programmed to blow up the building before the arrival of any official.

The intention was that it would look like political revenge by the UNC for the arrests of Baksh and Singh. He gave the names of four PNM politicians, whom he claimed brokered the deal to frame Baksh and Singh.

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Since the newspaper report, Political Leader of the United National Congress, Mr. Winston Dookeran, and the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Basdeo Panday, have supported calls for an independent foreign inquiry by Scotland Yard or the FBI. The vacillating Commissioner of Police, Mr. Trevor Paul, has finally appointed a team of investigators to probe the allegations made by the ex DEA informant Vernon Paul and Venezuelan national Wilfredo Quintero. The Prime Minister, Hon. Patrick Manning, has not yet heeded the call for an independent foreign inquiry.

This lack of action by the Prime Minister strikes at the heart of our democracy and we kindly seek your intervention, supporting the call for the said inquiry.

Copies of Vernon Paul's Statement as well as newspaper articles reporting on these shocking revelations are enclosed for ease of reference.

Yours truly,

Dr. Adesh Nanan

International Relations Officer

United National Congress"

Mr. Speaker, subsequent to this letter to the Secretary General, letters have been sent to all Caricom Prime Ministers and all opposition parties in Caricom. Copies of this particular letter which was sent to Mr. Edwin Carrington were also sent to 22 ambassadors and high commissioners, as well as 34 honorary consuls and consul generals based in Trinidad.

Mr. Speaker, I have correspondence that I would like to read into the record that was sent by the Secretary General and it reads:

"10 March 2006

Dr. Adesh Nanan

Internal Relations Officer

United National Congress

Rienzi Complex, Exchange Village

Southern Main Road, Couva

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary-General dated 1 March 2006 and which was received on 3 March, 2006.

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The Secretary-General has taken careful note of the content of your letter and as it relates to justice and governance issues internal to one Member State of the Caribbean Community, has transmitted your letter to the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Dr. the Hon. K D Anthony, who has lead responsibility for Justice and Governance in the Community's Quasi Cabinet.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Winston Anderson

General Counsel"

Mr. Speaker, there has been a reply from the Embassy of the United States of America dated March 02, 2006.

"Dr. Adesh Nanan
International Relations Officer
United National Congress
Rienzi Complex, Exchange Village
Southern Main Road, Couva

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter dated February 20, 2006 in which you asked me to lend my support to the call for an independent foreign enquiry into the allegations recently made by Mr. Vernon Paul and reported in the press.

I am grateful for your efforts to keep me informed about what is clearly a matter of great public interest. However, my government and yours I presume, expects me to avoid interference in Trinidad and Tobago's political arena, therefore, I must decline your request.

Again, I very much appreciate your letter and the wealth of background material you attached to it.

Sincerely

Dr. Roy L. Austin

Ambassador"

Mr. Speaker, I also have a reply from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China dated March 06, 2006. [*Laughter*]

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“Dr. Adesh Nanan
International Relations Officer
United National Congress
Rienzi Complex, Exchange Village
Southern Main Road, Couva
Republic of Trinidad & Tobago

Dear Dr. Adesh Nanan,

It is a pleasure for me to write to you to acknowledge your letter dated February 20th 2006 to His Excellency Mr. Hung Xing, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China.

While thanking you for your letter and information, I wish to continue our relations and look forward to meeting you in person in future.

Yours sincerely,

SONG Yumin
Counsellor
Embassy of the P.R. of China
in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago”

Mr. Speaker, following on the letter received from Prof. Winston Anderson from the Caribbean Community Secetariat—this particular follow-up is within Caricom—I would advise this House later on measures to internationalize this particular situation.

Mr. Ramnath: That is a very significant move.

Dr. A. Nanan: This letter is dated April 05, 2006.

“Dr. The Hon. Kenny D. Anthony,
Prime Minister,
Office of the Prime Minister
5th Floor
Graham Louisy Administration Building,
Castries,
St. Lucia.

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Dear Prime Minister,

We have been advised by the Caricom Secretariat that our correspondence to the Secretary General in relation to the planting of drugs, arms and ammunition in the water tank at the home of a sitting member of Parliament by the Police and members of the ruling Party has been forwarded to you for consideration and action.

A copy of that letter is attached for your ease of reference.

We therefore draw your attention to this matter which we regard as a threat to the democratic institutions of our beloved country Trinidad and Tobago.

We now look forward to your urgent deliberations and action of the said correspondence.

Sincerely

Dr. Adesh Nanan

MP for Tabaquite

International Relations Officer”

Mr. Speaker, I detect an air of surprise when I mentioned China. I am going to go through the list that letters were sent to just for the House information. This is for the record and it is important to know: the Embassy of the Republic of Argentina, the High Commission for Australia, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Brazil, the High Commissioner for Canada, the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China, the Embassy of the Republic of Costa Rica, the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba, the Embassy of the Dominican Republic, the Embassy of the French Republic, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, the High Commission for the Republic of India, the High Commission for Jamaica, the Embassy of Japan, the Embassy of the United Mexican States, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the High Commission for the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Embassy of the Republic of Panama, the Embassy of the Republic of Suriname, the Embassy of the United States of America, the Embassy of the Republic of Venezuela, the Delegation of the European Commission of Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada and the High Commission for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

We gave the Prime Minister one month.

Mr. Ramnath: We shall expose you. [*Laughter*]

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Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I have the list of the honorary consuls: The Honorary Consul for Austria, the Honorary Consul for Barbados, the Honorary Consul for the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Honorary Consul for Uruguay, the Honorary Consul for Turkey, the Honorary Consul for Ukraine, the Honorary Consul for Suriname, the Honorary Consul for Sweden, the Honorary Consul for Switzerland, the Honorary Vice Consul for Spain, the Honorary Consul for Sri Lanka, the Honorary Consul for Portugal, the Honorary Consul for Senegal, the Honorary Consul for Philippines, the Honorary Consul for Mauritius, the Honorary Consul for Mexico, the Honorary Consul for Norway, the Honorary Consul for Korea, the Honorary Consul for Lebanon, the Honorary Consul for Ireland, the Honorary Consul for Italy, the Honorary Consul for Finland, the Honorary Consul for Grenada, the Honorary Consul for Guyana, the Honorary Consul for Denmark, the Honorary Consul for the Dominican Republic, the Honorary Consul for El Salvador, the Honorary Vice Consul for Costa Rica, the Honorary Consul for Czech Republic, the Honorary Consul for Belgium, the Honorary Consul for Belize and the Honorary Consul for Chile.

Mr. Ramnath: The whole world knows about your activities.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, this is no laughing matter for the House. This is a very important matter. The lives of MPs are under threat from the PNM. In fact, all citizens are under threat, and that is why the party recognizes the importance of having this particular issue ventilated, both nationally and internationally. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I am now going to read the internationalization of this particular struggle. Letters were sent to the United Nations, Juan Somavia, Director General, Geneva; the European Commission in Guyana; the Carter Centre, Mr. Jimmy Carter, President, Atlanta, Georgia; the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, chaired by Sen. Richard G. Lugar, Washington, D.C.; the Human Rights Bureau in Washington D.C.; the Organization of American States, General Secretary, Washington D.C.; and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland.

Mr. Speaker, I took the time to outline the approach taken—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be distracted because I have a lot of information to share with the House this afternoon. I am showing the chronology of events. When we listened to what the Attorney General said in this House, we recognized that the Prime Minister would change his mind on setting up this independent commission of enquiry.

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Mr. Ramnath: He tried to undermine the Chief Justice. Do not worry with him; he has no credibility. The Attorney General and the DPP have no credibility. None!

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, earlier in my contribution, I read into the record this situation with the *Los Angeles Times*. This is a very difficult article to get right now. This particular article is now in the archives—when I talked about the ratio 35 to 100,000 and that shortly we would be classified as one of the most violent countries in the world, this Caribbean paradise, Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recall what the BBC said. This article is dated February 01, 2006. The headline is: “Muslim Group vows to topple Trinidadian Government”. The article states:

“One senior Jamaat official said the organization intended to provide the police with independent evidence to corroborate the statements of Vernon Paul, who accused top PNM officials of being involved in a plot to frame two former United National Congress (UNC) government ministers on drug and weapons charges in order to win the general elections in 2002.”

Mr. Speaker, we have the *Los Angeles Times* that also picked up this story. The UNC is ensuring that there would be no trampling on our democratic institutions. Elections are constitutionally due in 2007.

Mr. Ramnath: They are quaking in their boots.

Dr. A. Nanan: As the International Relations Officer for the UNC, I want to signal very early that I would be writing on behalf of the party to the Carter Centre for international observers for our elections in 2007, based on the situation of 2002. We have to write now for international observers for the 2007 general election. We are seeing a situation where our country is in a state of anarchy and chaos.

In Chemistry, there is enthalpy and entropy, and you must understand the chaos and confusion. Presently, we have in this country a situation where there is massive anarchy, chaos and disorder. We need to come back to that initial steady state. I am sure the Member for Diego Martin East would understand that. We are dealing with enthalpy and entropy. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnath: It would revert to its original state.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly. It is like osmosis and diffusion. What you are trying to get is a stable state. This country is waiting for the UNC to return to government

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so that we could handle that steady state. [*Desk thumping*] If you look at the particular situation in terms of crime, I want to make an appeal to the Prime Minister, because it is unfortunate that in a 21st Century situation, our country that is now being promoted as a developed country by the year 2020; we are now looking at a situation where in 2020 we would be an under-developed nation once more. [*Desk thumping*] I am pleading to the Prime Minister as a citizen, not as a Member of Parliament.

What we have seen in 2001, when the UNC was in government, there were certain control measures in place. We laid the platform for progress. In fact, one of our budget themes was called "Platform for Progress". To hear the Attorney General come to this House today and talk about the situation with the desalination plant and other things, this was all in the interest of providing a better quality of life for the citizens.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Are you saying that the end justifies the means?

Hon. Member: I knew you were going to ask that question.

Mr. Ramnath: Do not take him on. You are doing well.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am glad that he stood up. He recognized that I am appealing to him. I am appealing to him on behalf of the citizens of this country. Do you know how many citizens are terrified when they read the newspaper about what is happening here? The Minister of Foreign Affairs cannot hide everything. I want your Foreign Affairs Minister to go to some of those websites and take a look at what is being said about Trinidad and Tobago. You should get your Minister of Public Administration and Information and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to screen those things for you and you are going to see what is happening. Those websites are taking links straight from the front page of the *Express* newspaper where there are heinous and horrific crimes. [*Interruption*] Your High Commissioner to Canada was charged for drunk driving.

Mr. Speaker, all these websites are sending you straight back and they are saving all the pages with the homicides and murders. The country is being blacklisted, not only when I talk here in terms of statements from these embassies and their travel advisories, but it has gone beyond that. You should read some of the comments that are coming from persons abroad about what is happening in this country.

Let me explain something to the Prime Minister that he does not understand. The Soca Warriors have put this country on the map. The achievement of the

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Soca Warriors is of such a zenith, in terms of what is happening presently in this country. Do you know on eBay, people in Norway and Turkey are selling Trinidad and Tobago one dollar bills? They are selling coins, flags, banners and tickets for the World Cup on the eBay sites.

Mr. Speaker: What you are saying is very interesting, but I do not think that this debate is the place for that. Could you please come back to the Motion before the House?

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, this debate is dealing with a criminal event.

Mr. Ramnath: The Attorney General went to New Delhi to get some documents.

Dr. A. Nanan: This Motion is dealing with a criminal event and we are dealing with crime. This is a debate on crime. We are dealing with allegations of international reputation. I am sure the Prime Minister wanted to hear what I was going to say. The reason I am going in that direction is to show that the crime rate in this country is affecting the citizenry in this country. The Vernon Paul allegation is just a small aspect of that. To try to shut me up in this debate is not really relevant in this particular area. I am dealing with a situation that is affecting every citizen in this country. [*Desk thumping*] This is not something that is foreign. The Attorney General opened up the matter. If the Attorney General had kept in line and talked about the amendment—he went all over the world. I am shocked that I am being warned about this particular issue.

Mr. Speaker: I hate to see you when you are quarrelling with yourself. [*Laughter*] Could you just address the Members on the Motion before us?

Mr. Ramnath: That is a brilliant point that you are making.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, just give me a little leeway, because I want to get something to the Prime Minister. The point I was making about eBay and you thought that I was going too far is that we are now on the map. People are attempting to sell our flags, bands and other emblems of the country. That is happening now. When they go to the website to see Trinidad and Tobago, you have a situation where you have an article in the *Los Angeles Times* saying that we are one of the worst violent countries in the world. That is the point I was making. I did not go to eBay to waste time and waffle.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister must understand that while we are on the map, our tourism industry is important and it is collapsing, because of the crime situation in this country. That is why we are calling for this independent commission of enquiry; and that is why we took the time to internationalize this struggle. This

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was not an attempt to blacklist the country for political mileage, but to protect the country. [*Desk thumping*] We are protecting the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago. We are here to protect the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago. That is why the international aspect of the struggle has gone in that direction. I am not here to preach that what I am saying is not factual. You could go to any website and see that. There is intensification in all the various areas with respect to the crime situation in this country. I am going to get back to the Vernon Paul matter as you so directed.

So, what we are seeing here with this particular Vernon Paul issue is that we have cocaine, guns and ammunition. When we read the newspaper every day they are finding cocaine and ammunition, but they are not holding anyone. The detection rate is at an all time low in this country. Mr. Speaker, the relevance here is the detection rate. I also have to talk about Tobago. The detection rate in Tobago is so poor, and there are no detectives in Tobago. The crime situation in Tobago is out of control. When I came here with a Motion on the Adjournment to deal with crime it was adjourned.

If you look at cocaine and other drugs, our society is being destroyed. It is common knowledge that we are a transshipment point with respect to cocaine.

Mr. Imbert: Did you read the United States report?

Dr. A. Nanan: I read the United States report, but if you go to any website they have identified Trinidad and Tobago as a transshipment point. [*Interruption*] In this particular Motion, we are dealing with the allegations of Vernon Paul; we are dealing with hand grenades, ammunition and handguns. There are so many illegal firearms. They have amended the Firearms Act and we are having so many murders.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that in 1988 in Washington, the crime situation was so bad that you would get up in the morning and you would want to know if five persons or 13 persons were killed for that morning. It is exactly like that. It is like in Belfast. When you get up in Belfast, you want to know how many bombs went off. The society has become accustomed to hand grenades, shootings, kidnappings and heinous crimes. That is what the society is getting accustomed to. We must not let that happen here.

Mr. Ramnath: All under the PNM.

Dr. A. Nanan: All under the People's National Movement. That is the party in Government. Their policies are not working. It does not matter what policy

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they bring, it is not working. The Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) has been recognized as a source of funding for these criminal gangs. Vernon Paul mentioned that he was a URP foreman. We are seeing, particularly in the East/West Corridor, a proliferation of guns and drugs, and we are not seeing a police presence. The reports are that more vehicles are being purchased and more motorbikes are being purchased. Where are the police? There are no police on the highway.

Mr. Speaker, on my way to this Parliament, I saw someone just flying through the red light at 100 miles per hour. That is the kind of situation we have in this country. Everyone is breaking the law. That is why I talked about anarchy.

Mr. Ramnath: Lawless people.

Dr. A. Nanan: And there is no police presence. Where are the highway patrols? There is none and they are buying more motorbikes. I saw the Minister cutting the ribbon for a new highway exit. I am very happy for that new exit in the Gasparillo area. That is only a part of it. We must have that police presence. Every day we are reading about robberies in Palmiste.

Mr. Speaker: Let me appeal to you one more time to be relevant.

4.00 p.m.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I would read from the *Sunday Guardian*, dated January 22, 2006:

"PNM plot against Ganga, too

A former associate of the US Drug Enforcement Agency now in protective custody in Venezuela, says..."

Mr. Speaker: You are sure the hon. Member for Caroni East did not read that same article just now?

Dr. A. Nanan: No, he did not.

Mr. Speaker: You are sure?

Dr. A. Nanan: Yes. No, he did not read this. [*Interruption*] The *Trinidad Guardian*. No, no, no.

Hon. Member: Yes, but the record does not have it.

Mr. Ramnath: If you do not want to hear it, go outside.

Dr. A. Nanan: This is important, Mr. Speaker. It says:

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"A former associate of the US Drug Enforcement Agency, now in protective custody in Venezuela, says he knows who put the five kilogrammes of cocaine and two mortar bombs in United National Congress MP Sadiq Baksh's water tanks in 2002.

The ex-DEA man, who has a south Trinidad address but lives in Caracas, said he wanted a meeting with Director of Public Prosecutions Geoffrey Henderson to give him the facts.

Vernon Paul, 42, in an interview last week in Caracas, said he would give the DPP information that certain high-ranking People's National Movement politicians were responsible for hatching the plan, together with a former senior man in the Jamaat al Muslimeen to frame Baksh and Opposition Chief Whip Ganga Singh."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the letter I wrote to the Secretary General had extracts of this particular issue, but there are certain parts of this:

"Paul gave the dates when meetings were said to have taken place at the homes of certain politicians."

He was so specific.

Mr. Ramnath: You would investigate and if it is false—

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly. The DEA associates said the plan was that Baksh and Singh would be charged with drug trafficking. But hear this:

"Paul said: 'While Ganga was talking on the news...'"

That was not heard before.

"that cocaine and missiles were found in Sadiq's water tanks, cocaine and ammunition were also planted at his (Singh's) home and he knew nothing.

'The plan was to set up both of them, but the cocaine and ammunition were pulled back secretly from Ganga's house and he (Singh) did not even know that he, too, was to be set up.'"

So, Mr. Speaker this is detailed information; this is not hearsay as the Attorney General tried to point out here this evening. This warrants an investigation. That is why we had called, and we continue to call on the Prime Minister for an independent commission of enquiry. The plot went on to even specify:

"...that while Baksh and Singh were busy trying to get bail...the PNM would call the meeting...to discuss the arrests."

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And they would be blown up. This is a specific plan, this is nothing that just came out of thin air; then there were names called:

“The most stupid and dumbest man I have ever met in my life is The Institution Man. He arranged meetings at the homes of politicians...”

We heard about a whopping US \$100 million being placed. The Attorney General said here that there is no money like that available to the PNM. But we did not hear about this part:

"Paul said the Venezuelans who smuggled the items into T&T were paid only US \$500,000 and that they wanted the rest of their money now."

We did not hear that part.

“He said that apart from himself, two Venezuelans, one of whom is currently in jail in Caracas, also wanted to talk to DPP...”

The Attorney General never mentioned that.

“Paul named the actual ‘planter’ of the bombs...”

This is so specific. And for the record, Paul declared that he was not fabricating the story for personal gain, although it was said that he was.

"I want nothing from nobody; the UNC or the PNM. I'm no pauper in Venezuela."

That was said here today.

"I own an SUV that is sold in Trinidad for about \$2 million; a CL55 AMG Benz and two motor bikes, one an R1 Yamaha valued at US \$15,000 and a CBR 1000 Honda, which goes for about the same money."

Mr. Ramnath: You might be a conspirator in this.

Dr. A. Nanan: He said:

"All I want to do is to come to Trinidad and testify against them because politics should not be so dirty."

This is a citizen crying out for help, which they are denying, Mr. Speaker.

“Paul also said certain people in Trinidad wanted him dead...”

We want to know who.

"and that contracts were out on his head. He said a Trinidadian hit man had already been arrested by the Venezuelan Guardia Nacional and was ‘singing’ in Caracas."

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So, is that why they are afraid to have an independent commission of enquiry?

Mr. Ramnath: Yes, yes, they are scared to death.

Dr. A. Nanan: Imagine:

“He said he did have security in Venezuela but he was angry that people in Trinidad were trying to kill him.”

That is the scenario on what we have here before us. A situation of a detailed plot, and look at this part; the Attorney General said there is no DEA connection. Paul is:

“A fluent Spanish-speaker, who also holds Venezuelan citizenship, Paul appears to live an expensive lifestyle, announcing that he wears only designer clothes from Italy.”

He said:

“...he no longer did undercover work with the DEA, Paul said he now worked with the petroleum industry in Caracas.”

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Nanan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you to the Members for extending my time. I would not use all my time because I gave the House the information that I came here to give and to point out to the Prime Minister that it is necessary to have this commission of enquiry. But the article is very interesting, because it also goes on to say:

“He had worked with a special unit within the DEA...”

Probably the Attorney General is not aware.

Mr. Ramnath: Let the DEA say no.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly.

“which tracked down ‘big’ South American drug dealers and gun runners. He left that unit in 2002.”

It is clear. We have to ask the question, did the Trinidad and Tobago police use the services of Paul for a fee?

Mr. Ramnath: At any time.

Dr. A. Nanan: At any time? We need to know. And this is the last part of this particular contribution on this. Paul said:

"...the Sautt officer accused him (Paul) of trying to frame some politicians. Paul said the officer told him to 'deal' with the Police Commissioner Trevor Paul."

And that is why he went to Commissioner Trevor Paul. And you would recall in the letter, I said that the Commissioner of Police was vacillating; one minute yes, one minute no; one minute yes, one minute no.

So, Mr. Speaker we are seeing here from the information that we have gathered and the information that is in the public domain, that there is a necessity for an independent commission of enquiry with foreign assistance, FBI or Scotland Yard. That amendment that the Attorney General brought has no relevance, really, to this particular Motion.

Mr. Ramnath: What did the police discuss with Paul in Caracas?

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly. We need to have that information. I thought the Attorney General would have come to the House and said that. What did the police discuss in Caracas with Paul?

Mr. Speaker, with that particular question still unanswered, I end my contribution.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned to Friday, April 21, 2006 at 1.30 p.m. On that day we would be following the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the Motion on the Adjournment; we have one motion? What about the other one? Are we going to do the other one?

Hon. K. Valley: My information is that the Minister of Local Government should be here imminently.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. In that case, if we are going to do the Motion, may I call upon the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan?

**El Socorro South
(Destruction of Roads)**

Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I was hoping that the Minister of Local Government would have been here.

Mr. Speaker: Do you want to take tea and come back or adjourn?

Dr. F. Khan: But if he is going to be here any minute. Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to indicate and I would like to move the Motion—

Mr. Speaker: All right, continue, the Minister is here. Please, Member for Barataria/San Juan your time is running, you could continue.

Dr. F. Khan: That is okay, I am just waiting for the Minister since he is a bit late.

Mr. Speaker, thank you and I want to thank the Minister for coming. I just want to indicate to the Minister, that the roads in El Socorro South—which is my constituency—the southern part of the constituency off the highway, has been experiencing destruction in the roads and the lack of maintenance by the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. I wrote to them several times to ask about repair of the roads.

That is an industrial part of the constituency; there is a large population living there and at the same time, exit and entry into the area seem to be curtailed because of large potholes and destruction on the sides of the road from large vehicles. After writing the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation and indicating the level of incompetence, I was forced to ask the Minister to come to this honourable House to give me a commitment time and date when he could start repairing those roads. That is basically what I wanted him here for.

The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member is an experienced parliamentarian, and therefore it is with some degree of concern and confusion, I was wondering why this matter was addressed to me. As far as I know the representative for that area should be a colleague of the hon. Member of Parliament, and we want to suggest that the Member of Parliament is quite aware that we have had a significant change of allocations made to the regional corporations.

In fact, the philosophy and practices we have had in terms of allocation and in terms of management of the budget of the regional corporations, constitute a mechanism in which the councillor for that area and local government representative

has a direct responsibility for the identification of the activities that are to be pursued by his corporation.

He would know that in the past three years, the Road Improvement Fund; the Infrastructure, Renewal and Development Programme; the Secondary Roads Programme; the recurrent expenditure as part of the budget, and the development expenditure of the budget, have all been mechanisms with which the representative of the local government can determine the exact and specific activities of the corporation under each of these votes. Therefore, he would be aware that the programming of the activities of the regional corporation would be a function of the regional corporation. The regional corporation in the philosophy of this administration, following the drive to decentralization, is such, that the councillor and the regional corporation in collaboration with the Member of Parliament would have determined the programme.

It therefore leaves me in a quandary as to how he could ask the Minister to determine the specific activities, the specific programme of the councillor or of the regional corporation. But what we would do is assure the Member that in consultation with the regional corporation and the councillor from the area—who he should be talking to—we would devise a programme to ensure that the residents of that area, the burgesses of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, citizens of this country, do not continue to be deprived.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Crosstalk*]

[*Dr. F. Khan stood*]

Mr. Speaker: Excuse me. No, no! Please, please please, please!

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.15 p.m.