

*Leave of Absence**Friday, April 21, 2006***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 21, 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 seeking leave of absence from today's sitting of the House: Mr. Ganga Singh, hon. Member of Parliament for Caroni East; Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, hon. Member of Parliament for Siparia; Mr. Hedwige Bereaux, hon. Member of Parliament for La Brea and Mr. Nizam Baksh, hon. Member of Parliament for Naparima. The leave which these Members seek is granted.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Audited annual financial statements of the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2002. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Audited annual financial statements of the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Audited annual financial statements of the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Annual audited financial statements of Taurus Services Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]  
*Papers 1 to 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*
5. The Registration of Deaths (Form) Order, 2006. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
6. The Report of the Statutory Authorities Service Commission for the period October 01, 2004 to September 30, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Definite Urgent Matter*

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**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER  
(LEAVE)**

**Lack of Water Supply**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter as a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the national crisis surrounding the lack of a water supply to thousands of domestic and industrial consumers across Trinidad and Tobago by the Water and Sewerage Authority.

The matter is definite since it refers to the specific and declared shortage of such a basic necessity as water and the consequent reduction in the supply to citizens and industrial enterprises, which has affected the functioning of public offices, private businesses and households that now buy water per tank to use per bucket.

The matter is urgent since this islandwide crisis has affected citizens, many of whom are unable to maintain their homes to cook, wash, bathe, properly care for babies and young children; rear animals and undertake community and religious activities, as this emergency now threatens to escalate into community-based health hazards.

The matter is of public importance since it suggests that the state authorities have failed to provide the most basic of all commodities notwithstanding the windfall oil revenues that the Government has at its disposal, while unscrupulous contractors in the new water trade now defraud vulnerable and poor citizens by extorting excess moneys in return for water.

**Mr. Speaker:** The motion as moved by the hon. Member for Oropouche does not qualify under Standing Order 12. It would have imminently qualified under Standing Order 11. May I appeal to Members to use Standing Order 11 when you know something would qualify under that.

**BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY BILL**

Bill to revise the law relating to bankruptcy and insolvency; to make provision for corporate and individual insolvency; to provide for the rehabilitation of the insolvent debtor and to create the office of Supervisor of Insolvency [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance*]; read the first time.

*National Carnival Bands (Inc'n) Bill*

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**NATIONAL CARNIVAL BANDS ASSOCIATION OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (INC'N) BILL**

Bill to incorporate the National Carnival Bands Association of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto [*The Minister of Trade and Industry*]; read the first time.

**STUDENTS' REVOLVING LOAN FUND (AMDT.) BILL**

[Second Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question* [February 10, 2006]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** On the last occasion the hon. Member for Tabaquite was on his legs and he has eight minutes of his original time remaining.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill deals with the amendment to the Students' Revolving Loan Fund Act. Two institutions that would be important are the University of the West Indies and the University of Trinidad and Tobago. There are reports that the University of the West Indies is being run down deliberately. I speak with respect to the classrooms at the University of West Indies, St. Augustine. Many students who attend classes there have to stand because there is no proper accommodation. In many faculties requests have been made for upgrade in laboratory equipment, especially in the research areas and nothing is happening. They are using outdated equipment especially in the food and nutrition department.

Is it a plan by the Government to run down the University of the West Indies for the benefit of the University of Trinidad and Tobago? We are seeing better compensation packages being offered by the University of Trinidad and Tobago and they are trying to capitalize on the same lecturers at the University of the West Indies. Is it a deliberate plan? Does the plan involve the lowering of matriculation requirements at the University of Trinidad and Tobago? We know that the standards at the University of the West Indies are extremely high. Matriculation requirements rely not only on the grade but the students are also competing at a higher level. Is it a deliberate plan to lower the standards at the University of Trinidad and Tobago as compared to the University of the West Indies? Is it also that the PNM supporters will have easy access to the University

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of Trinidad and Tobago, so in the long term there would be a cadre of graduates holding top level jobs in society? We have to ask these questions when we see the state of the University of the West Indies which is a pillar in the Caribbean region.

If the trend is to do that in the education environment, we have already seen it in the Ministry of Education with respect to performance at certain levels. Are they going to indoctrinate the children from the early childhood level? The Government wants to take over the early childhood sector.

I reflect a little with respect to the universities at Havana, Cuba and Venezuela. It is an approach like that where standards are being reduced or compromised at all levels. We have seen it with respect to the introduction of Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) in this country. From time to time we have said that was a bad idea. We should have taken a watching brief. We went ahead. Will our students be competitive? They will have a diploma or a degree in their region, but how will it be competitively?

The same students have to access the students' revolving loan. Are they running down the University of the West Indies? In all areas the standards are deteriorating. Is it to facilitate PNM supporters and give them an impetus for the next general election? Will the students from Chatham who have to access these loans be able to go to university, or would they have health risk? The Government is hell-bent on putting an aluminium smelter in Chatham.

We heard about the critical water shortage in this country from the definite matter of urgent public business. They said that the desalination plant was not necessary and today it is reported that the plant has broken down. Now there is a crisis in the country in terms of water. Students from all parts of the country may not be able to access these loans to go to university.

In terms of the situation of crime the students are at risk. In every area of governance by the PNM we are seeing a deplorable situation. Our country is in crisis. All the advisories are against Trinidad and Tobago. Our health and education systems are in shambles. I see the Minister of Health is looking at me with surprise. That little thing about bag of goodies would not help you, Mr. Minister.

**Miss Beckles:** Where "yuh livin'?"

**Dr. A. Nanan:** He came to open the health centre at Williamsville in my constituency. That cannot help you. That is a smokescreen. *[Interruption]* I did not say anything about it not being opened. You have to face facts. We are saying

every day that you have to go the extra mile. You cannot have this petty piecemeal approach to health; you have to go further. I am hearing rumbles from the Minister because I touched a raw nerve. All the propaganda and public relations are failing in that ministry and every sector of the Government. We have seen it in the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and the Unemployment Relief Programme. We are seeing handouts. The students who have to access this fund will suffer in the long run. The future of this country is at stake under the PNM Government.

**Mr. Speaker:** 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. [*Dr. H. Rafeek*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that on this occasion I will take all my allotted time because it is important.

This amendment deals with students accessing the University of the West Indies, the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the Hospitality Training Institute. These students will graduate from the university to fulfill roles in society. They would become managers in various areas and hold top jobs in the health sector and other areas. We have to ensure that standards are maintained at all levels.

You would recall that when the United National Congress government came in 1995, there was a sum of \$300 million in arrears at the University of the West Indies and it had to pay the arrears almost immediately. How much is the University of West Indies being owed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago? I am sure that it is more than \$300 million. It is probably \$1 billion by now because the Government is not paying any debts. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** It is current.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I hear the Member saying that it is current. I know that he is no longer in that ministry so he might not be aware. I want to go on because I do not want to be distracted.

With respect to that university in terms of upgrade we have seen only recreational facilities. In terms of accommodation and the particular agenda, how are the students entering that facility being streamlined? Are they going in there with a haphazard approach to the future? No direction is coming from the Government

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with respect to the University of the West Indies. There was a strategic review and a direct plan for the University of the West Indies, but it has been totally derailed for the University of Trinidad and Tobago. It is indoctrination within the nationalization of the country. We cannot let that happen. As parliamentarians we must put down our “foot” and maintain our standards.

There was a report about the situation with people not being able to speak English and compromising a situation. We warned them about that where people coming in must be proficient in English. Of course they said that was so. There is a report that they are causing confusion and chaos. Questions must be asked in every area. What is the Government’s plan? It is compromising all areas. It destroyed the increase in water for the population and that has gone back to the way it was before. When we entered government there was a serious problem with water distribution in this country. Now we are heading back. They are forever saying that they are moving to Vision 2020. We are seeing quite clearly that our students would suffer because the water situation is in a crisis. We cannot get water in our homes. We have to rely on when WASA says you will get a little oil in your line. That is the drip-drip that we are getting. When you call WASA they say that is low pressure.

It is not only within the UNC-controlled constituencies but also throughout the country. It is terrible management. When you look at the students in this particular area and those who are coming into the country—not too long ago we saw a water shortage at the agriculture school. Foreigners are also being threatened. There is a water crisis in Tobago. The tourism sector is being affected.

What is the management? The Government went on retreat and nothing is coming out of that retreat in terms of performance. It is total chaos in this country from crime to health to education to social services to energy. We have not heard anything from the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries with respect to this particular aluminium smelter in Chatham.

Mr. Speaker, for your information and that of the House, aluminium smelters are normally built where there is a—

**Mr. Speaker:** You have me confused. I thought that we are talking about the Students’ Revolving Loan Fund (Amdt.) Bill. We are not talking about aluminium smelter.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** These same students who are going to the university would get jobs in the aluminium smelter plant. They are applying for loans. We are going in that direction. It has to do with the smelter effect and those particular students

who would be working in that area and suffering because of the hydrochloric acid. We have moved from probably 6 or 7 per cent to 36 or 40 per cent in terms of access to tertiary education. We are not against access to tertiary education but it must be of a certain standard. We cannot compromise in every area.

The Multi-sector Skills Training programme (MuST) is another one where everything is discriminatory. Our programmes must be designed in such a way that is relevant and applicable to all. Housing programmes are springing up all over the country. Those same university students would be applying for houses. University students can be in every area. In this debate it could be in every sector of the country because they would be graduates. *[Interruption]* What is the problem with the Member for Diego Martin Central who is talking about futuristic times? We are talking about the present.

The university students are being threatened. The same students would be accessing these loans. Whether they are compromised with standards, these same university students who are suffering—I hope that we do not have blackouts now because we had that before. If there is a water shortage that is affecting us so critically, can you imagine if we get a power failure? Those same students who are suffering for water would be suffering to study because of the failure of the Government in that particular sector.

In every sector students are suffering. They are suffering for transportation because of the bad roads in the communities. Every day we hear about landslides on the radio. Minister of Works and Transport, have some mercy on these students! We heard on the radio a child called in to say that in certain parts they have to walk because of land slippage and then the taxi would take them up. They also have to pay increased rates. High food prices are killing everybody in this country. University students are suffering. They cannot get accommodation. Because of inflation they are suffering at all levels. The pocket money is reduced. *[Interruption]* It is not roaming, it is factual.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Yuh good. Yuh roaming like Digicel.”

**Mr. Valley:** I like the hand movement.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Inflationary trends are killing everybody even in the construction sector, Member for Diego Martin Central.

There is a situation where the Government and the university students would be responsible. They would be going to university to learn about the generation of energy and solar power. That is why in Barbados they are using so much solar power and here we cannot use any of the natural resources. To save the university

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students in Chatham, I am recommending that they put the aluminium smelter in Guyana where hydroelectric power would be readily available. The fear of those students in Chatham can be reduced. Every day children in that area are calling and saying that they are afraid. They are so educated in terms of what is happening. Their aquifers are being threatened.

University students have to face serious pollution problems. In Forres Park, in my constituency there is a landfill. In Port of Spain when there is a fire, a cloud covers the area and the environs. While you are looking at closing the Beetham landfill you should also consider Forres Park residents.

**Miss Beckles:** You did not hear we are closing it too. You think we would leave you out? I announced all.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** The approach we are seeing is that the Government is working only in one direction for PNM supporters. There must be a proper waste management plan and the university must be involved. The same students who will access tertiary loans would be studying environmental science at the University of the West Indies and would be involved in an integrated waste management plan in the future. It is a few years down the line. These same students would get into environmental science and management. University students would also be in the tourism sector. The Government must be responsible for the country's image. University students would hold managerial jobs in various hotels. What is the future? If the crime situation in Tobago is out of control and no tourist is coming to Tobago, the economy would collapse. How much will you give to Tobago in terms of allocations when there is a thriving tourism industry that is on the verge of collapse?

**Mr. Imbert:** Unlimited. Whatever they want they will get.

**2.00 p.m.:**

**Dr. A. Nanan:** But that is the bad philosophy behind the planning. Diversification is the way to go. Do not rely on your oil and natural gas resources; use them wisely. Many countries that do not have the oil and gas resources—and the university students could help in the research into new energy resources.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that these same university students who access these loans could go to Brazil and work there in the ethanol plants because Brazil is moving towards no oil in Brazil. I am sure you are aware of that. They would be self-sufficient for everything. [*Crosstalk*] Of course, they are going to use ethanol for everything, Mr. Speaker; they are not going to rely on oil. So you



could have a situation where, if all the countries in the world move away like that, what would we do with our natural gas resources? One has to be futuristic when one is thinking. And these same university students who are accessing these loans would be the futuristic thinkers and planners in this country.

I also want to deal with the private tertiary institutions because these institutions are also going to benefit with respect to this particular loan and students are also going to access these. But these students are going to be at a disadvantage in the distance education programmes emanating from the various tertiary institutions. There is very limited accommodation. The Government needs to look at the tertiary sector while this amendment is being brought under the Students Revolving Loan Fund (Amdt.) Bill—the tertiary sector could be soon in shambles.

The Government needs to get its act together with respect to education. The university graduates are having serious problems at the University of the West Indies in terms of the crime situation around the campus. We are not hearing anything from the Government in terms of security arrangements for university students. We are not seeing any new initiatives by the Government for security around the campus and the environs. In fact, is it a plan by the Government not to address the security problems at the University of the West Indies so that the students would be turned away from that university and then they would go to the University of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Crosstalk*] Is it a plan? We have to ask the question. Is it a plot? Was that what the retreat was about, to plan for the future in terms of the lowering of standards? We have to ask the question because we are not seeing anything forthcoming from the Government in terms of positive initiatives for this country in every area.

Another general election is coming so we are analyzing the Government to see how they are performing, and on a scale of one to ten, they are below five and going down in terms of performance. And not only university students within this country; what about the students who intend to return? Is it going to be that our university students would be accessing this loan and as soon as they get their loan, because of the situation in this country with crime, kidnapping, rape, murder and mayhem, that they are only waiting for the chance to get the loan, graduate and leave the country? Is that a plan to get the students to move out of the country so that all the people who would be competitive would have left the country? Is that the plan?

**Mr. Ramnath:** They can import voters.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Exactly. Once all the brilliant individuals leave the country

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and they import the people whom they control—Is that the plan? But I want to give them the assurance that the United National Congress will continue to fight to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago remain a democracy, remain with its standards and when we are returned to Government, we would return the University of the West Indies to the pillar it once was in the Caribbean region. Thank you.

**The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment and Acting Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Penelope Beckles):** Mr. Speaker, I propose to respond to some of the comments made during the debate. Basically there were two Members on the Opposition Benches, hon. Ganga Singh and the Member for Tabaquite. I just propose to make a couple comments.

Mr. Speaker, this was a very simple Bill. This Bill is an Act to amend the Students' Revolving Loan Fund to provide for the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry with responsibility for tertiary education to replace the Chief Personnel Officer as chairman of the Board of Management of the Students' Revolving Loan Fund. In fact, it was a very simple amendment, but having regard to the fact that this amendment took us in many areas, I have no other choice but to respond.

If I could start with some of the comments made by the Member for Tabaquite who spoke about several matters, some for which I have responsibility and, therefore, I am taking the opportunity to respond even though it has absolutely nothing to do with the amendment that we are discussing. But I do not want it to be left on the record because he is suggesting that the Government has been discriminatory as it relates to dealing with the issues of landfills and we have restricted the closure of that to the Beetham dump. I want to say that is absolutely false. There are several dumps in the country. You have Forres Park, Beetham. There is Guanapo and several others, and in essence, the decision of Cabinet is to look where appropriate at closing all the dumps so that we will not be restricting ourselves to the Beetham dump.

The hon. Member also spoke about the fact that the Government has been failing in many areas and he suggested several areas, but for the purposes of this discussion, I am going to restrict myself to education and just to use a few examples to show how the Member is not only incorrect, but attempting to mislead this honourable House because I know that he knows what he is saying is not true.

We are aware, for example, that over the last few years as it relates to the enrolment at the University of the West Indies, that we have moved from just over

8,000 to 9,000, to 13,000 persons enrolling and, for example, as well, if we were to compare the programmes that hon. Ganga Singh spoke about for quite a while, which is the dollar-for-dollar programme, in 2001, there were 3,965 applicants in that programme and the amount of money spent at that time was \$23,301,225. If we compare the GATE programme that has now been implemented by this Government in 2004 there were 24,117 applications and the money spent was \$126,211,800.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Tabaquite also mentioned that there is a shortage of equipment at the University of the West Indies but in the presentation of the hon. Member for Diego Martin East, the former Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, and also confirmed by the present Minister, is that there is some surplus at the University of the West Indies in excess of some \$300 million. He also stated that the Government is not up-to-date in its payments. Just to say that is absolutely false, and that we are up-to-date in our payments so that the university has more than \$300 million which it can properly invest in the bank for the purposes of dealing with on fixed deposits simply collecting interests.

What I found extremely surprising is that the Member is suggesting that the Government is allowing the university to run down while it is investing money in the University of Trinidad and Tobago. I cannot understand that logic. As I said, we are up-to-date in our payments and I am sure that the Member knows that it is not just the responsibility of the Trinidad and Tobago Government but other governments for their contributions to the university of the West Indies. But the one that really shocked me the most was his suggestion that only the structure is such that for the University of Trinidad and Tobago, and the UWI, that somehow it is going to be the children of PNM supporters who would be going to these institutions. That, for me, is so shocking because the point is—I do not want to mention, but there are even persons on the other side who are, at this point in time, attending the University so I do not know if they have membership in both the UNC and the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that is so false is because we have created a situation now where, in fact, the educational opportunities are being offered to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago across the board and, therefore, that assertion is extremely false to the extent that it is not just government institutions but also private institutions as said by the hon. Member for Tabaquite, that are actually benefiting now from those programmes. If I could just quickly indicate that the free tuition that is now offered by the Government is at an undergraduate level in combination with the GATE programme, and they are also benefits for postgraduate

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level. All these categories of students will be eligible to access as well as the HELP programme and the loans are designed to cover part of all the following tertiary education.

Mr. Speaker, what the Government has designed as it relates to the tertiary education system is to allow the benefits to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that there is proper education.

Whilst we have been debating this very simple amendment, the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, and I do not want to go over what he said because he was very extensive in his discourse in reporting on what has happened as it relates to tertiary education over the last couple of years and the successes of the Government. I know that the hon. Member for Tabaquite also went into education in a general sense and also spoke about at the primary school level and other levels. I do not think today is a day to give those statistics because it has been given extensively by the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, in winding up I would like to say that the record of this Government as it relates to assisting and creating opportunities for every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago in relation to the education system is legendary. [*Desk thumping*] And when history is written particularly over the last five years, the PNM Government would go down in history as having offered every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago the opportunity for a brighter and better education, at all levels: [*Desk thumping*] primary, secondary and tertiary.

Just to clear the air on a couple matters in relation to what was raised by the hon. Member for Tabaquite. I want to say that—because it was raised both by the Member for Tabaquite and Mr. Ganga Singh—in relation to the issue of rationalizing the funding, the Government is rationalizing its funding mechanisms for students at tertiary level to ensure that tertiary education is affordable to all so that no citizen of Trinidad and Tobago is denied a tertiary education because of his or her inability to pay. To date, 32 private tertiary institutions have signed an agreement with Government which ensures that their students have access to the Government's Assistance for Tuition Expenses Programme which provides free tuition for students enrolled in undergraduate level programmes. Additionally, these students can also access the higher education loan programme which provides low interest loans for students to meet additional expenses such as accommodation, books and so forth. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will be finalizing the implementation of HELP shortly. Discussions with the commercial banks have been ongoing and the operational procedures for these loans will be submitted to Cabinet in a week or two.

A comprehensive package of assistance is now available to students at the public local and regional tertiary institutions as well as the 32 private tertiary institutions in Trinidad and Tobago that have signed an agreement with the Government.

Mr. Speaker, having returned from Tobago yesterday, because one of the things that is very fashionable particularly in relation to the Opposition, is to try to create divisions between Trinidad and Tobago and to suggest that this Government discriminates as it relates to Tobago, one would hear from time to time the Member for Tabaquite speaking about tourism, and it was also stated that while we were building this UTT in Trinidad, that there is no such equivalent in Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that a site at Battery Point— seven acres— has been assigned to the THA for the construction of the UTT campus and conference facility. [*Desk thumping*] The lease agreement for this site has been signed. The cadastral and topographical surveys have been completed and the process of relocating residents on the existing site will commence in 2006. The formal inauguration of this site took place on November 06, 2005. An in-depth workshop was held on March 24, 2006 to finalize the project brief. Consideration is currently being made for the use of an additional site at Rockly Point for the location of the conference centre. The completion date of this project is September 2008. So that is just to clear the air as it relates to the suggestion, perception and implication that we are not treating Tobago equally, and in addition to the campus there would also be a conference centre and that this decision was a decision taken by the Tobago House of Assembly.

As I said, it is a simple amendment but several issues were raised and I was given the opportunity to clarify those issues. The Member for Tabaquite was at length to speak about the difficulties that would be faced by students as they relate to transportation, water and several other matters. What is unfortunate is that the Member failed to remember that it was his government at that time that said that there would have been “water for all in 2000”, knowing full well that there were challenges that were faced even at that time to ensure that would happen. As this Government has approved several projects and has developed programmes for the water sector, I give the assurance that this is a matter that is being addressed.

I gave a statement yesterday officially on television to indicate that the Desalination Plant that was under repair is now functioning and they are now back to normal capacity producing 24 million gallons daily. [*Desk thumping*] I further indicated and apologized yesterday for the inconvenience caused to the citizens. And while that is not comfort, the fact is that it is necessary for us to say to the public that we understand the challenges that they face.

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I met with WASA yesterday and I met with them last week. They visited Desalcott and it is our responsibility to do all that we can to alleviate the shortage of water to the many citizens.

I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

*House in committee.*

*Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 2.*

*Question proposed, That clause 2 stand part of the Bill.*

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Chairman, we have a small amendment in clause 2(b). The effect of the amendment simply is adding at the end of (b)(i) and by deleting the word, “department” and replacing it by the word, “Ministry”. The purpose of that amendment is that since we are moving from Chief Personnel Officer to a permanent secretary, similarly we have to move from department to Ministry.

**Dr. Rafeeq:** Mr. Chairman, it is difficult for me to give the commitment of Members on this side because they really have not seen the amendment.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister is saying in clause 2(b) after the word, “and” add these words, by deleting the word, “department” and replacing it with the word, “Ministry”.

**2.30 p.m.**

**Dr. Rafeeq:** We will support it, but we want to register our disappointment at the incompetence of the Member. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Valley:** Do not start like that! I always have good relationships with Chief Whips. If you want me to support you as Chief Whip—

**Mr. Chairman:** Order, please!

**Dr. Rafeeq:** I do not need your support, you know.

**Mr. Panday:** Totally incompetent.

**Mr. Valley:** You need it. Believe me you need it.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

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

*House resumed.*

*Bill reported with amendment.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Before the Clerk reads the long title of the Bill, let me appeal to the Government that this situation never occur again. It is in fact against the procedure. On this occasion, you had the cooperation of the Acting Chief Whip. It is something that should have been moved while some Member of Government was speaking on the Bill.

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

#### NATIONAL LOTTERIES (AMDT.) BILL

*Order for second reading read.*

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

That the Bill to amend the National Lotteries Act, Chap. 21:04, be read a second time.

The purpose of this amendment is simply to provide the board with the legal authority to purchase, hold and to divest itself of property. One would have thought that the National Lotteries Board already had this power. As a matter of fact, the Authority thought it had this power more than 10 years ago when it bought its current property. However, in April 2004—

**Mr. Ramnath:** You said we would adjourn after the last Bill, why are you bringing this up?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Who said we would adjourn after that? You should check with your Chief Whip.

By letter dated April 29, 2004, the Acting Director of the National Lotteries Board wrote the Ministry informing of a decision of the board to purchase a building on Henry Street and seeking permission to complete the transaction. Mr. Speaker, when our lawyers looked at it, they opined that the board could not, under its Act, purchase property; that the Act limited the power of the board to certain things and that the revenue could be utilized only in certain ways.

It is stated in section 21 of Act 21:04 that:

- “(1) The revenue of the Board for any financial year shall be applied in defraying the following charges:
- (a) The payment of prize money;
  - (b) the remuneration, fees and allowances of the members or of any committee of the Board;
  - (c) the salaries, fees, remuneration and gratuities of employees, servants and agents of the board;
  - (d) the working operations.”

It also spells out that the balance of the revenue of the board shall be applied in accordance with section 23.

When one looks at section 23, it says that:

“At the end of each financial year there shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund, after allowing for all expenses and the amount reserved for prizes, the balance standing to the credit of the National Lotteries Account.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, it would seem that the previous purchase was based on the concept that the purchase of the property for the board was part of the working operations of the National Lotteries Board. Whether that is correct or not, I cannot say, I myself not being a lawyer. However, to make assurance doubly sure, the amendment is before the House today.

Members would see that the amendment is that section 3 of the Act be amended by inserting after section 20 the following section:

- “(1) Subject to the approval of the Minister, the Board may:
- (a) acquire, hold and enjoy any property, real or personal by purchase, device, bequeath, gift or in any other way; and
  - (b) lease, accept surrenders of leases, mortgage, grant or accept licences, rights of way or easements.
- (2) The Board shall, in accordance with this section and with the approval of the Minister, dispose of property which is no longer required for the purposes of the Board.”

The Act also is amended to put this all inclusive clause in section 9, which deals with the general duties and powers of the Board. Currently it states that:

“Notwithstanding any other written law respecting gambling, betting or lotteries, the Board may carry on the business of promoting, organizing and



conducting national lotteries and for such purpose the Board may have and exercise such functions, powers and duties as are conferred or imposed on it by this Act, and, in particular:

- (a) issue tickets for any such lottery;
- (b) fix the number and price of tickets to be issued for any such lottery;
- (c) appoint and remunerate agents for the sale of such tickets;
- (d) fix the number and value of the prizes to be apportioned;
- (e) determine the time when, the place where and the manner in which drawings shall take place for the allotment of prizes;
- (f) incur such other expenses as may be necessary for organising and conducting the lottery.”

The amendment that we are now seeking is to add after (f) the following words:

“and

- (g) do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of its objects.”

Mr. Speaker, you would know that, given the ejusdem generis rule, that is really limiting it to what it said before. I am saying that simply to ensure that persons do not take that as widening what the board can do—that with the operation of the ejusdem generis rule, it is limiting to the objects of the rule.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You are not a lawyer. Do not try to be— [*Inaudible*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. K. Valley:** I will be a good lawyer, though. Let me not get there this evening.

**Mr. Panday:** You can get where you want.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Oh goood! I am leaving you alone this afternoon. Not you and me at all.

There are two simple amendments that we are seeking. Clause 4 talks about another amendment deleting the word “charges” occurring in line 2 and substituting the word “expenditure”; deleting the word “operations” at the end of paragraph (d) and substituting the words “operations and”; again making arrangements for the acquisition and maintenance of real and personal property for the purpose for which the body corporate is constituted.

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The amendment is in effect to correct a lacuna—a nice lawyer’s word—in the legislation—a gap; a void—because it is fundamental that if there is a business that one must be able to own real property. As long as one is in business and one needs a location, one can do that either by renting or by owning. Therefore, the purpose of the legislation is simply to ensure that this business can own property. There is not much more to it, so I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, we all wish that this relatively short amendment before us were as simple as the Member made it out to be. This matter is a very complicated matter involving a troubled and controversial state entity involved in, at times, unscrupulous, high-handed and unethical conduct and the Government is asking the Opposition to provide support to increase the power of a state authority that has been found guilty of discrimination, unethical and unfair conduct.

I will get into the amendment in a minute, but I want to begin my contribution by looking at the NLCB in the context of the nature of governance emanating from the PNM administration. Whether it is NLCB, NEDCO, MuST, OJT, URP or CEPEP, there are certain underlying organizational principles and practices that the Government has almost mastered in its ability to discriminate against individuals and in its ability to conduct the business of the State in the most unethical manner. I want to look at it in this context; dealing with the issue of accountability, corporate responsibility and discrimination.

Let me also in my introduction put on record the dissatisfaction of the Opposition in the conduct of the business of this House and the level of sheer incompetence that we are exposed to time and again. Mr. Speaker, I am not optimistic as you may be that warning the Government would help; that seeking to point out their incompetence and asking on another occasion that that not obtain, would help.

We had a vivid example of that incompetence a moment ago. For the record, let me state that it was just yesterday that the Government communicated with the Opposition that this matter of the NLCB would be debated today. Mr. Speaker, as you know, it is the practice in the House, when we adjourn—

**Mr. Valley:** It is a courtesy.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** A courtesy that has been practised.

**Mr. B. Panday:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Valley:** It will stop immediately. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Mr. B. Panday:** Stop it. Arrogance! Stop it!

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—that on adjournment the Leader of Government Business would indicate to the House the matters that we will discuss on the next occasion. We plan our work and farm-out the Bills to the relevant persons so that we are prepared for the next day.

Mr. Speaker, it was just yesterday that we were told we would be debating this matter. The Opposition is, of course, very much prepared today to deal with the matter. Really, we do not come every Friday with the bulk of research on the five bills on the Order Paper. We come to debate what we have agreed before.

This is the level to which the Parliament has degenerated. Whether it is bringing an amendment you have not circulated before or we have not read before, or the wrong bill, the right day, this is what we are subjected to. That is what the country gets. That is the level of professionalism we have and then we call upon public servants and private citizens to work hard, be professional and give of their best when we cannot get an amendment right. A government of 28 Ministers did not know it was bringing an amendment today. This is the problem.

Having said that, let me move on to the amendment before us. Mr. Speaker, the Government is seeking to give further authority to the NLCB by amending the National Lotteries Act, Chap. 21:04, to provide them with additional power to acquire and hold property while permitting the disposal of property, which is no longer required.

In the presentation of the Minister, he sought to veer into his understanding of legal principles by indicating that the current Act did not give the state authority the power to acquire property and there was need for a further amendment. We beg to differ. We believe that the current Act, at section 9, already provides that the NLCB will conduct its business and take action as necessary in furtherance of its objectives. So this power may already reside with the NLCB. It states at 9(f), under duties and functions that the particular institution/organization can incur such other expenses as may be necessary for organizing and conducting the lottery and their work in general.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are yet to be told what the urgency is. Why is it necessary for the NLCB to get this power in the law? It is our information that the NLCB had already entered into legal agreements with private business to acquire

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property. They have done this already without the passage of this measure. Is the Government saying that this measure was unlawful and that the NLCB acted unlawfully? If they did, who is to blame? Did the Government take action against the chairman or the board for acting unlawfully? Did they take any action for the unlawful conduct of the NLCB? The NLCB has entered into legal agreements already without the passage of this measure. The question is why.

I will tell you why. They have emerged as a mega slush fund to pursue all sorts of expenditure consistent with government propaganda, special interests and their own discriminatory practices. And I say that without doubt. I will come later with more detail on this matter. The NLCB has operated like this. This is not the NLCB; it is the LSCB. This is the Lee Sing Control Board. It is a one-man show.

They can take out an advertisement tomorrow about what I am saying, but this is a board that practises a level of discrimination in this society on which the court has ruled. The board receives judgments. The High Court has ruled on their unlawful and unfair employment practices as they relate to promotion and training. The court, in a ruling, in a matter involving Devant Maharaj, has said that this board has acted unfairly and unlawfully. In a decent, civilized country, Mr. Speaker, in a developed country, someone from that board would have been fired—managers, board members and so on—but this is Trinidad and Tobago under the PNM. I believe someone was promoted. This is what obtains where the court has ruled against a particular entity of the State; not the private sector.

It is more damaging when a state institution practises discrimination than even a private institution. We can always say that the private enterprises do all sorts of things to escape liability and violate employment policies and discriminate. That is why we have laws to deal with private enterprises much more than public enterprises. You expect that Government, Cabinet and Ministers would monitor the conduct of the authorities under their purview to prevent such occurrences. When you hear NLCB, for many people now, the first thing that comes to mind is Devant Maharaj and discrimination. Today, we are asking that this board be given great power to acquire property.

There are several points of conflict of interest involving the gentleman at NLCB and a private radio station where the evidence suggests that this private radio station receives an enormous amount of money for the advertisement of NLCB business.

I was bowled over a few minutes ago when a Member on the other side said that when history is written, this Government and this period, from 2001 to now,

would go down in history as the period of great development and economic growth and that the Government would be applauded by the historians and so on. I do not know who is writing that history. But the Minister herself is an interesting Minister.

I would like also to remind this Minister that in November 2001, she was quoted in the *Trinidad Guardian* as saying:

Beckles blames UNC for spate of murders

Member of Parliament for Arima, Penelope Beckles, criticized the UNC for the spate of murders which has been rocking the country recently.

She was speaking at a public meeting in Arima.

Beckles said: The number of murders to date is 121 and she blames the UNC.

Mr. Speaker, the murder rate today, April, is 125 or something like that. This is really the integrity of Members, I guess, when they speak, that they forget that a few years ago they made statements like that as well. We will wait for the history to be written concerning the Government's performance.

Another area that the NLCB has been questioned and criticized on concerns the distribution of funds. The NLCB received funds through their gambling operations and they take care of their expenses and they are supposed to remit to the Consolidated Fund their excess profits. They have been involved in giving donations to several groups, but when you look at this and ask questions as to the policy position with giving donations, there is none. I believe that a progressive government should consider, as a matter of policy, introducing legislation on social corporate responsibility. There is something called social corporate responsibility where corporate entities and the public and in some countries the private sector publish a report every year which states their social corporate responsibility and to whom they have given money for the entire year and how that fits their policy outline.

So a state entity in some states of Australia, for example, cannot say they have a commitment to culture but at the end of the year report that all the money went to sports or to some other activity. So their report is based on their policy position of corporate social responsibility. And because it is taxpayers' money that would have gone into the Consolidated Fund, they publish the list of every group and individual that receives donations under corporate social policy reporting.

This I am submitting is one option that we must consider in this country very soon. It is not just the NLCB. Many public enterprises give donations regularly to

institutions and individuals throughout the country. There is either no knowledge of it by the general public or it is done in a way that promotes bias and discrimination in the disbursement of funds. I challenge anyone to come with the date and suggest to me that the NLCB has given \$X for the last year. When you look at \$X, 25 per cent went to one, 25 per cent to another and you can see some measure of equity and non-discrimination.

**3.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I raised this matter early in my term as the Member of Parliament for Oropouche. The NLCB told me that I do not ask for anything. Of course, I said, that is not a problem at all. So I started to ask. I want to tell you that the NLCB first responded in a positive manner. They gave donations for one or two celebrations—of course, not everything you asked for you would get—and suddenly it stopped within a year or a year and a half. Every time I asked in writing for donations they would tell me that the budget was already exhausted, and that programmes for national holidays like Divali or Indian Arrival Day and so forth were not within the policy framework of the NLCB. That is what I was told and they did not give me anything.

My point is not that they did not give anything to the people of Oropouche—that is not the point at this moment—but I want to know whom the NLCB gave funds to. It could well be that they are giving in a fair manner with equality and so forth, but we do not know. We suspect not, but we do not know. We would like the NLCB to publish a report of their donations over the last couple of years, and say how it works within a policy framework. Is it that everyone who reaches the front door on a Monday morning would get donations? Is it like that? Is it that when a party group is having a function they would get a donation? Is it like that? You do not even have to write a new policy, you could copy it from some of the multinational enterprises and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, there are policies that say: we would give 25 per cent to national cultural activities; we would give 25 per cent for youth and sporting activities; we would give X amount of money for the environment and so forth, but at the NLCB there is none, and there is none for a reason. Mr. Speaker, the reason is that they could get away by taking taxpayers' money and flinging it left, right and centre. They could get away with that because it is NLCB. In fact, that gentleman might be second only to Bennett King in terms of a particular character. Bennett King is the controversial West Indian coach who is not leaving.

Mr. Speaker, according to an article in the *Newsday*, one reporter noted that the NLCB spent \$2.3 million on Carnival events in 2004; paid to the National Soca

Monarch, \$225,000; paid to several steelbands including Fonclaire, \$200,000; NLCB Jouvert Bomb Competition, \$100,000; Custom Boys Fete, \$100,000; TUCO, the one that has election problems, \$200,000; and the International Soca Monarch Competition \$200,000. They are clearly in the business of promoting culture.

When one looks on the surface, the NLCB is a billion dollar industry. Let us say that these groups deserve the funds, but you really need to put that in the context of the multiracial and multicultural character of this country. How much funds do they give to other activities that are religious, social and cultural? In a decent civilized society somebody would have been fired for this type of expenditure.

This is a country where the United States Embassy has to give equipment and donations to the Magistrates' Court; this is a country where the British police have to help us with policing; and the one that really made me flip is that we now need the Colombians to help us to deal with drug trafficking and kidnapping. Now, when you need the Colombians to help you deal with crime then you have reached. This is what is happening in this country. We need so much foreign help to deal with our problems and we are taking our money and just disbursing it. It just goes.

In a country where people do not have water to drink, do you know that the NLCB spends almost \$100 million on advertisements for the year? That is the figure we have. If that is not so then somebody could correct me. We were told that they would spend almost \$100 million on promotions and so forth, and this is a country where people have to tote two buckets of water to go home and bathe. This is the point.

I want to make another suggestion in the context of the NLCB. The NLCB has a responsibility to return profits to the central government. Mr. Speaker, do you know that some of the NLCB funds go into the Sport and Culture Fund? So moneys from the NLCB actually go toward sports and culture. That is filtered through the relevant ministries. I want to propose that part of the money made by the NLCB go to the Ministry of Finance to be issued to citizens as a water subsidy. We must now call for the introduction of a water subsidy so that affected households that are without water for weeks could get a subsidy of \$400 per month to buy water.

We have poor underprivileged persons in this society who have to come up with \$100 to \$200 per week to buy a tank of water. That is almost \$400 per month and more. The price of oil is now \$72 a barrel, but we cannot drink the oil. We are getting over \$1 billion in turnover from the NLCB, and that money should be

returned directly to consumers as a water subsidy to buy water because the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) cannot supply water.

The Minister said that there are many plans in the pipeline. They have everything in the pipeline except water. While we are waiting for all those plans to be materialized there are helpless and powerless citizens who must buy water from trucks and contractors who are extorting. The profits from the NLCB that are being given to the central government should be diverted toward utilities that the Government cannot provide.

In passing, I want the Minister to talk to the authorities at WASA and ask them to cease collecting outstanding moneys for water bills. Why should people pay water bills in advance? In April you are paying for your May bill and you cannot get water. In the first place, you may want to cease collecting money and introduce a water subsidy. That is what you have to use the wealth of the nation for. Do you know where the wealth of the nation is going?

Mr. Speaker, in reply to questions raised, the NLCB provided a listing. This was reported in the newspapers and, of course, this is on public record. The NLCB provided a listing of legal fees for the years 2002 to 2005. Now, when I looked at the figures for legal fees: is the NLCB representing every condemned killer on death row at the Privy Council? As far as I know, there are a few judicial matters before the courts. I would imagine that if you win then a cost would be allocated.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the year 2002, the NLCB spent half a million dollars in legal fees; 80 per cent of which went to the firm Alexander-Jeremie and Company. That was in 2002. They were now getting in the groove. They were waxing in 2002. In 2003 Alexander Jeremie and Company received 78 per cent of \$370,000. I must say that 2004 was a better year for the company, not the NLCB. They received 95 per cent of all the legal fees.

**Mr. Rahael:** What is the dollar value?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** It is more than SuperPharm. The one that really struck me was that from February to October—maybe in anticipation of demitting office—the legal fees of the NLCB totalled \$1.468 million. That was for the period February to October, and our friends from Alexander-Jeremie and Company got—I am not joking, I hope the figures are wrong—100 per cent of this money for instructing fees. Now, instructing fees mean that you stay in the back. You have briefs and instructing fees. The firm Alexander-Jeremie and Company got 100 per cent of the instructing fees which totalled \$681,520. [*Interruption*] A few million dollars may be small money for the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. The turnover at SuperPharm might be 10 times this amount.



Mr. Speaker, this is a conflict of interest, if ever there was one, where a sitting Attorney General, whose office may be called upon to approve the spending of a state authority, receives 100 per cent of the instructing fees. Do you know what is happening here? The NLCB is taking a decision to pay the Attorney General to instruct them on legal matters. That is what is happening here. This is fascinating. This Attorney General is better than Bennett King.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** What is your point of order?

**Mr. Valley:** Standing Order 36(5), the Member is imputing improper motives. The Attorney General is no longer with the firm Alexander-Jeremie and Company. He is the Attorney General. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, let us dismiss him for now. I do not know who Jeremie is. I did not say who Jeremie was.

**Mr. Valley:** You said he is the Attorney General.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, let me go back to the brief here. Alexander-Jeremie and Company received 100 per cent of the instructing fees from the NLCB. The Attorney General is a Jeremie. The inference is that is the Jeremie in question. The Attorney General must clarify this matter as to whether or not a firm to which he may well return after demitting office is benefiting in this obscene way from taxpayers' money. [*Desk thumping*] That is the point.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Ask Ramesh!

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Every week they would talk about corruption, charging people, Desalcott and that jail is not nice and so forth. If it were not for the Desalination Plant then we would not have water forever in this country. This is the problem. I call upon the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago to clarify this matter urgently in the public interest, and to indicate his relationship with the company Alexander-Jeremie and Company. That is if he has the temerity. One week ago, he came here and said that he could not talk to John Donaldson because he was afraid. I imagine that he would be afraid to talk on this matter too.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General is being accused of serious misconduct in public office to which he must respond. If they think this is fine, then so be it. You know, they would not even throw in another law firm to make the thing look a little different. They are not even giving a 10 per cent to somebody else. When one looks at the listing it is only Jeremie. [*Interruption*] They also give briefs to Pollonais Le Blanc and De la Bastide and Jacelon. Mr. Speaker, they could have

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given Boynes and Company something. Let me move on because they could have given Hobsons something too. Boynes and Company did not get anything. That is probably why the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs missed the entire cricket match over the weekend.

Mr. Speaker, forgive me for taking this opportunity to congratulate the Trinidad and Tobago National Team on their historic and unprecedented double winning of the Carib Beer Challenge Trophy. [*Desk thumping*] We would like to congratulate Daren Ganga and the rest of the Trinidad and Tobago team. Mr. Speaker, over the five days of cricket, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs could not find one hour to go to Guaracara Park. I do not know whether there was a crab race in Toco or something, but the Minister could not go and support the team and present the prize. There was no Minister. That is their support when it comes to sport, but they would run to the VIP room in the airport to hug up and kiss.

Mr. Speaker, I raised this important matter of the conflict of interest involving the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago—

**Mr. Speaker:** As far as I am aware, and I think many attorneys who are Members are also aware that the firm is Alexander-Jeremie and Company. The Attorney General would have removed himself from that practice. So be very careful when you are referring to the Attorney General, because you would then be in total violation of Standing Order 36(5).

**Mr. Ramnath:** But it is okay to say Mr. Panday do this and Mr. Panday do that. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, let me put it in a way that you would certainly support. I am calling on the Attorney General to clarify matters surrounding the legal fees paid to Alexander-Jeremie and Company and his involvement in that firm before he became Attorney General. Let us call on him to clarify that matter.

The other point that needs clarification is the footloose, omnipotent chairman of this NLCB who has an interest in a private radio station; who works as a consultant for Channel 4; who works with the National Carnival Commission; who works with the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs; and who is also involved with the NLCB. This talented “Mr. Ripley” is all over. It appears that what they are doing is—there may be good explanations that the talented “Mr. Ripley” could provide—passing money from one hand to the next, from one institution that they are involved in to another institution that is private.

At this time, in the public interest, I think it is important to have a transparent and public enquiry into the conduct and affairs of the NLCB to prevent the occurrence of allegations of corruption and misbehaviour in public office. Presently, there are matters involving the NLCB which are before several authorities in this country. It may well be that we need to have some clarification on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about corporate social responsibility already, but one of the problems here is that the Caribbean has been formed on the basis of discrimination and inequality. Every group that came to the Caribbean came to work under slave-like conditions. The Caribbean is really a product of inequality. Nobody came here first because they wanted the sun and the beach. They all came to work under conditions of slavery. So discrimination and inequality defined the Caribbean history. Given that history, and a population like Trinidad and Tobago where there are several ethnic and cultural groups making up the society, it is a pity that PNM governments, both past and present, did not see it fit to introduce widespread non-discrimination legislation to protect citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I just want to make reference to the United Kingdom. Whatever we may think, we are all in agreement that the United Kingdom is a developed society. Mr. Speaker, as early as 1975, the United Kingdom introduced legislation for a Race Relations Act. In 1976, the United Kingdom introduced the Sex Discrimination Act to outlaw discrimination on the basis of sex. They have recently introduced legislation to deal with inequality on the basis of age, harassment and victimization. Mr. Speaker, I stand corrected, but the minority population of the United Kingdom could be about 14 per cent. They took all these measures to protect 14 per cent of its population from discrimination, harassment and victimization. That is phenomenal!

A former school colleague of mine from San Fernando is now an associate attached to the Birmingham City Council. Do you know what his job is? He is a race relations advisor. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Valley:** I want to ask a question.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Sit and ask the question. *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, the Birmingham City Council has now introduced race relation advisors to advise on policy and practice dealing with race relations. Righteous and self-righteous leaders should take note that in developed countries they have introduced widespread legislation. There is an international controversy involving the debate over the Gospel of Judas. When I heard righteous leaders, I thought that was something linked to the Gospel of Judas that they are now debating internationally.

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I am saying that a society like Britain that is a developed country has laws to protect institutions, non-discrimination codes and so forth and that is there for 14 per cent of the population. In our society with a population mix of 38 per cent this and 40 per cent that and so forth, we never saw it fit to do that. There could be no developed country status unless equality legislation is introduced in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I want to tell the righteous, the self-righteous and the unrighteous that developed country status would come one minute after equality legislation has been introduced. One minute after you do that you could say that you have developed country status, because citizens would be able to protect themselves from state institutions; public office holders like those at NLCB, the Airports Authority and the prisons and so forth.

Within recent times, the United Kingdom, in pursuit of its obligations under the European law, has introduced legislation dealing with discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. I do not think that we have reached there yet. We are still at the first base—ethnicity, gender and so forth. This society needs that. When you talk about equality legislation, people think that it is for one group, but equality is for everyone. Unless you introduce equality legislation and treat people equally—running a government on the basis of inequality is trying to run on one leg. You are taking half of your resources to develop a country and that is why everything is in the pipeline except water. That is why you cannot get money to pay the police telephone bills; that is why we need Colombians to help us with drug trafficking and kidnapping. [*Interruption*] Well, from a goal of water for all we went to water for none. This is what we have here.

I am coming close to the edge and I will instruct my constituents in Oropouche to gather their dirty linens and take them to the relevant Minister or the Minister's boss and dump them on the front steps and let them experience some river water up there. This Government lacks compassion in dealing with the poor, helpless and powerless people. They do not care that women have babies and they cannot bathe their children. They do not care.

Mr. Speaker, the point I was making is that notwithstanding the windfall from both oil and gambling, the problem we have here is really the waste of money, discrimination, inequality and conflict of interest that they are now going to promote here with this Bill. I want to know which property the NLCB needs, where and for what? What about the plans to build this huge government complex in Port of Spain? Do you have a floor there for the NLCB?

The Prime Minister said that we would be a developed country soon and we would have tall buildings with a big car park. Do you have a floor there for the

NLCB? Do you need to give them the right to acquire property? Property is not just a door and a house. That is not property. There are other forms of property. They do not have a responsibility to acquire property worth billions of dollars and to dispose of it. So whereas before one may have had a sniff of corruption activities taking place under the Government's purview, today they could buy land from the 'LSCB' and they could sell land. They could do that because they are acting in pursuance of an Act of Parliament that gave them the legal authority to acquire property and dispose of it.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really thought the Member for Diego Martin Central would have used the opportunity to extend my time, but he is most unkind.

Another matter involving the NLCB—apart from giving out money, throwing away money and their discriminatory practices and so forth—is that early into the term of office of this Government, the NLCB was involved in some type of relationship with an investigating firm they hired to investigate the practices of the NLCB prior to 2001. I think it was Intelysis.

Mr. Speaker, there was a most unusual activity taking place where someone by the name of Boucher was calling up Opposition Members of Parliament and asking them for an interview. He was investigating something to do with donations from the NLCB and so forth. Somebody called me purporting to be Mr. Boucher. I thought it was Mark Boucher, the South African wicketkeeper. When he called me he said that he wanted to talk to me concerning an investigation into the NLCB. I told him that I would be happy to talk with him anytime. He told me that the NLCB is doing an investigation and he would like to interview me. I told him to give me his number, and as soon as I have enough time I would call him. That was in 2002. I forgot since then to return that call. I treated him with the contempt that he deserves or maybe less, because the NLCB has no authority to investigate anybody for anything. That is the job of the police and other agencies of the State. That is for Alexander-Jeremie and Company. That is not their job. They were on a witch-hunt to find former UNC ministers and to make accusations about them and to possibly lay charges. That is what they were about.

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[DR. MOONILAL]

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I want to find out how much money did the taxpayers pay to Intelysis to conduct that investigation. What were the results of that investigation? What came out of it? How much money was spent? This is unbelievable; this is incredible.

When one looks at the finances of this country one would see things like \$100 million and \$200 million being given out in donations. An investigating team received \$6 million to investigate and nothing came out of it. I want to tell them that all that they are doing—spending money haphazardly, spending money without authority and acting outside of the law—the future UNC government may have to put a mobile post of the Fraud Squad in front of Balisier House when they start to investigate this Government. That is what we may have to do to deal with them.

We are calling upon this Government to clarify this matter with respect to the money paid to Intelysis. What were they called in to do? Who gave the NLCB the authority to investigate anything? The NLCB is really a rogue statutory authority. Imagine in an internal employment matter—in companies you have human resource director and manager and so forth—they went outside and called a consultant of a firm of another partner to investigate a matter internally. Again, they spent a huge sum of money. This is how the money is going, and then we are wondering why when we open our taps we cannot get water. Why? We are wondering why the police do not have sufficient police officers on the road. Maybe some of the money from NLCB should go directly to hire more police officers and to buy more equipment.

A couple days ago bandits entered the home of Dr. Stephen Ramroop, a prominent doctor in San Fernando, who lives in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, what was fascinating there—I am very happy that the doctor raised an alarm and the bandits fled—the next day the newspaper carried a picture of the bolt cutter. The bolt cutter looked like five feet long and 25 pounds in weight. Now, people are walking around with this in the night! You are taking a stroll in the night with a bolt cutter! Where are the police?

Do we have police cars, the manpower and equipment? The police would tell you no. How could a man walk around with a bolt cutter, the size of your table and the police did not see it? Maybe instead of the NLCB giving \$200,000 here and \$400,000 there, they should provide more officers and equipment for the service. They could also do the same for water. There is a small amount of money from the NLCB that goes to sports and culture through the relevant Government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, under this administration, the NLCB like others—we are not here today to talk about the other institutions that they have abused—were used as a tool for the promotion of their party's interest and their reelection bid whenever that might be. The NLCB is being used as an institution to promote particular businesses with specific purposes in mind.

I would like the NLCB or the relevant Minister to prove otherwise, and to bring the data to suggest that what we are saying is not so, and that there is a level playing field and media houses—apart from a particular one on Grey Street—would benefit equally; moneys that are being given to different institutions or different religious or cultural persuasions and so forth would be done in as equal a manner as possible. I would like them to bring that data, and then and only then would some of us consider supporting a measure like this. Until then there is no way we could support this.

I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Chandresh Sharma** (*Fyzabad*): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Today the Queen of England is celebrating her 80th birthday. The point of reference is that we were once under British rule. The question is: are we better off today than when we were under British rule? The short and correct answer is certainly a big no. In the year 2006, with money more than one could imagine, look at what we have in this country! There is no water, murders, high unemployment and high food prices.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the United Nations Human Development Index, in terms of good governance, we have moved from 49th to 57th; we have moved from 38th to 60th in the Growth and Competitive Index, and last but not least we have moved from 31st to 59th in the Corruption Index. This is a good way to start this debate.

Two weeks ago when we met, the Leader of Government Business indicated what we would be doing at the next sitting. The House was adjourned to April 21, 2006 and he indicated what we would be doing. To confirm our arrangements, our acting Chief Whip communicated with the Leader of Government Business on Wednesday evening. Up to that point in time, we were still following what the Leader of Government Business told us two weeks ago. Only yesterday we were informed, by the way, that would no longer obtain. The question is: why the change?

This is similar to Nedco. Mr. Speaker, you would recall that Nedco is funded by taxpayers. During the last two elections the PNM used Nedco to fund a number

of persons who worked for the PNM. When we began asking questions as to where this money was going, the PNM came in the middle of the night and changed the law preventing Nedco from answering to this Parliament or any citizen of this country.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Shame on you all.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** It appears that they have employed the same approach on this occasion. Why would they come during the last minute and indicate differently? Why is this rush? This was well identified from what my colleague from Oropouche said thus far.

Let us look at the Bill. Clause 3 says:

“The Act is amended by inserting after section 20, the following section:

20A. (1) Subject to the approval of the Minister, the Board may—

- (a) acquire, hold and enjoy any property, real or personal by purchase, devise, bequest, gift or in any other way; and
- (b) lease, accept surrenders of leases, mortgage, grant or accept licences, rights of way or easements.

(2) The Board shall, in accordance with this section and with the approval of the Minister, dispose of property which is no longer required for the purposes of the Board.”

When one looks at the origin of the NLCB, it has been with us for a long time. We know what it was intended to do. Why suddenly this interest in treating with properties? Well, this is a straight case of contributing to what obtains now with voter padding. I am going to demonstrate it.

The NLCB has demonstrated clearly to all in this country—it has presented itself before the committee which is mandated to look into its operations—how it spends its money. In many instances, the money was poorly spent. We have seen \$12 million going toward advertisements; \$8 million under the watch of the chairman of the board—on numerous occasions, my colleague, the Member for Oropouche, made mention of this. I want to quickly demonstrate where some of this money is going. It does not demonstrate the potpourri of Trinidad and Tobago. It certainly does not. It cannot be by accident that the NLCB funds everything that does not reflect the rainbow country of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Government is quick to say that we like to raise issues here to show discrimination and racism. If that is what obtains under the PNM, then so be it.



Our responsibility is to deal with it; our responsibility is to draw it to the national community; and our responsibility is to draw it to the Government's attention with the hope that some change would take place.

Mr. Speaker, from one question that was asked, let us look at what they have funded. They have funded steelbands and uniforms; carnival shows, the Annual World Laugh Festival, package for calypsos; calypso tents; events for carnival, classic soca for carnival; the Soca Monarch, steelbands, pan fete, Children Carnival, prizes for J'ouvert and 100 jerseys for carnival celebrations. Is this Trinidad and Tobago? Is there any other body in this country that seeks donations? None! Carnival was for only two days and close to half a billion dollars was spent. What about the other groups in this country? What about the church groups which go to camp and encourage our children to go the right way? What about the Baptist committee and the Phagwa committee? *[Interruption]* If you are funding groups in Trinidad and Tobago, they must truly reflect all of the citizens.

We are seeing now where the board would acquire, hold and enjoy any property. What is the intention of the Government to use the NLCB for? It is clear that the Government has been very favourable to those who run the board. We have seen the issue of a radio licence within record time; we have seen all the gifts that have been given. I have only called from one sheet.

On the second sheet, the first one is: annual carnival function, fundraising carnival fete, sports, youth and family day door prizes; Point Fortin Borough Corporation; training programmes in upholstery—that is very good—for one citizen. How did this citizen access this money? The NLCB is being used by the PNM to support party group activities; to support those who are in support of the Government.

In fact, the Member for Oropouche made the point that an agency engaged by the NLCB went around trying to investigate where some of the donations went. Look at the places where they went! They went to Oropouche. I also understand that they went to Siparia as well, looking at groups that are not in support of the PNM. Why is that so? Why did the Minister not indicate that the investigation by the investigating body was for all the groups and not for those which did not support the PNM? From my research and on what was presented to this Parliament and elsewhere, more than 75 per cent of all the moneys donated by the NLCB went largely to PNM constituencies. The Minister cannot deny that.

Mr. Speaker, the largest amount of money went to groups that did not reflect the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a point that has to be made. I started

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off by asking the question, are we better off today than when we were under British rule? One of the reasons that we are seeing these high incidences of crimes and all the other social ills in our society is as a result of the level of discrimination meted out to persons in Trinidad and Tobago. People do not feel comfortable here anymore. People feel very unsafe.

Mr. Speaker, why are we using the State's funds to promote that kind of culture? Why are we using the State's funds to promote that kind of activity? Why is the Member saying to this House today that groups in his constituency that have applied for donations were denied funds? The Member should be saying that these groups in his constituency have applied for funds and they have obtained the funds. Why the Member for Fyzabad cannot say so and many other Members on this side? The Prime Minister and the Government must look at all the funding that is being obtained in this country; and look at the National Commission for Self Help.

We have raised this matter on several occasions here and we have presented the information at the request of the Prime Minister by asking questions, and you would see that the majority of funding goes to PNM groups. In Laventille 56 community groups received money. The Government should look at where the CEPEP work is taking place; look at where Nedco funds are going; and look at the NLCB and where the funds are going.

Today the Government is asking for approval for the board to acquire properties. Are they going to acquire properties to put PNM people to vote in marginal constituencies? It would appear so, and knowing how the PNM operates they would do that. So they could purchase property.

We see under the National Housing Authority that not a single low-cost house was built to this day. In fact, there are no low-cost houses under the NHA programme; all are high-cost houses. Take any housing project and look at it. Not a single low-cost house was built and the shelf life of those houses is less than 10 years. A number of persons cannot afford the mortgages on those houses.

What is the NLCB going to do with properties? The Government has a department that treats with properties. This is for political gain. Look at the timing of this. Local government election is due any time and general election is also due any time and this is what they would be doing.

There are a number of persons applying to develop lands for agricultural use and other uses. In a number of these areas they are not getting approvals, but where PNM controls the community and where they are looking for support in

those areas they are getting it. A number of persons have come to us saying that they have applied and they have seen in certain areas where no approval was given. In other areas, any number of approvals could be obtained.

How are they going to “bequest, gift or in any other way; and lease, accept surrenders of leases”? What is the purpose of this? What does the NLCB hope to obtain from this? How is this going to benefit the national community? The quorum for a meeting at the NLCB is, I think, three members. So three members could sit and decide that they are going to rent 100 homes in the constituency of San Fernando West and pay \$10,000 a month, and give it back for \$1,000 and do not collect any money. So, you have 100 families and the only purpose of those families is to vote for the PNM. That is the dangerous thing that the NLCB is being encouraged to do.

Now, when you look at the history of Trinidad and Tobago, every trick in the book that is known to mankind has been engaged by the PNM to steal the election. We saw what obtained in the last election. The fear is that these funds would be used in a similar way. They talked about gifts and we saw in Ortoire/Mayaro where people were being given cellphones, shades and sneakers.

**Mr. Manning:** Digicel is doing that.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** The Prime Minister is saying that Digicel is their agent and they are doing it for them now. [*Laughter*] The point is that the Government comes today to bring a Bill that is not going to add any value to the lives of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; absolutely no value. This is not going to add medication to the many health centres that are without medication; and this is not going to increase the water distribution. The point was made that no funds went out to any group in this country to do a self-help water project. It is not that these groups did not apply. This is very interesting. Not a single group has obtained a single dollar from the NLCB to do a self-help project. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** That is for the Self Help Commission.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** That is exactly the point that I am making. The Prime Minister is correct that the National Self Help Commission should be doing that but they are not doing it. There are a number of applications by groups that are three and four years old waiting to be treated with. So if you are giving money for all these things, then give money for things that would add value to the community. We are not suggesting for one minute that these carnival groups should not receive any money. We are saying that there must be a mix. This is taxpayers' money.

The NLCB creates approximately five or seven millionaires per year based on their winnings. How many persons have become poorer because of these lotteries? Today, people are playing the lotteries to buy medication which they should be getting at the health centres; and people are playing the lotteries hoping to win money to pay for water. Is this what this country has come to? The Prime Minister said in his last budget statement—*[Interruption]*—we move from water for all to water for none—that he is not going to encourage gambling and this was well received. When you tell the NLCB to do all these things, all you are saying is to gamble more and bring in more money. Where are the funds going to come from to do these things? The national community was very happy when the Prime Minister indicated that we are not going to encourage gambling in this country.

Recently, we saw the NLCB promoting the Sesame Street Show. That is a good thing to expose the children to but, again, you are telling the children that for this to happen you have to promote the national lotteries. So you are encouraging the gambling at that level. In fact, the Minister of Education was very concerned about the number of school children going into these play stations that are operated by the NLCB. The Minister is on record saying that we should look at how these play stations are being housed.

Mr. Speaker, the first point that has to be made is that the NLCB, at this point in time, is not adding value to the national community. They are getting about a billion dollars in revenue. When you look at the composition and the manner in which donations are being given out, there seems to be no procedure and nobody seems to know anything.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few suggestions. The Minister should cause the NLCB to publish in all the daily newspapers and all the radio stations—not to encourage it on only one radio station, but to make sure there is a fair distribution—how donations are being given so that all citizens, NGOs and CBOs and other groups in this country would know what are the criteria, and they should be treated equally or with some measure of equality. For instance, do not give 50 groups in Minister Rahael's constituency and only five groups in Fyzabad. I am not saying that obtains now; I do not know.

**Mr. Ramnath:** I do not get anything in Couva.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** It is good for a PNM Member to make a recommendation and for it to be treated with, but it is only fair to treat all Members of Parliament equally. The Member for Port of Spain North/ St. Ann's West could write to the

NLCB and make recommendation for a particular group to be considered, and the chances are that group would be treated in a favourable manner. The Member for Oropouche indicated that does not obtain for Members opposite. You see, all of us in this House are equal. We are Members of Parliament who are elected to serve the same purpose and to add value to peoples' lives. The PNM Members should not be treated differently.

Mr. Speaker, the same thing must apply when engaging persons to work at the NLCB. Mr. Speaker, does it worry you when you look at some state agencies and it does not reflect all of our people in its engagement of employees? Why is that so? It should be put in the newspapers how employees are to be employed and how promotions are made. Let there be fairness; let there be some resemblance of fairness taking place and there should be an attempt to treat with this matter.

The Government requires a simple majority so this Bill would be passed with or without our support. In the future, the Government should indicate that it is bringing a Bill to this Parliament and what it hopes to gain from it. Persons from the national community who wish to forward their ideas or suggestions on both sides—the Government and the Opposition—should do so.

When this Bill is passed, they are going to acquire—we do not know for what purpose—hold and enjoy property. Mr. Speaker, do you know what this means? It means that they could rent a property in every constituency in this country, and have a fete every week and hope to convert people to vote for the PNM. This also means that they could bring people from any community and treat with them in a particular way, and the reward or the payback for them treating with them is by giving them cellphones and promotional materials. Mr. Speaker, do you have an NLCB T-shirt? I know the answer is no.

We saw thousands of T-shirts, but we do not see any in our constituencies. I do not see anyone in my constituency with an NLCB T-shirt. Are these T-shirts being given out to PNM members only, to give to their supporters and friends?

With respect to the promotional materials for schools, I went through this list and I did not see a single school in the constituency of Fyzabad. Before I am accused of saying that others do not get, I would go to the third page. International conference, very good; Laventille Steelband Festival; Indian Arrival Day; first prize beauty pageant; and nine dozens T-shirts for participants in one lap walk around the Queen's Park Savannah. I would love to see the day when the NLCB would buy T-shirts for a Phagwa competition or for a Ramleela competition or for a Baptist Day celebration. We need to go in that direction.

**4.00 p.m.**

Very interesting, I saw Crimestoppers of Trinidad and Tobago brochures “Fight Against Cancer”, which I am not sure why Crimestoppers is engaged in one activity, not that they cannot be engaged in others. I come back to “lease, accept surrenders of leases”. Why do they want to purchase property and lease it? I saw, very interestingly, the name of a real estate agent being mentioned in this debate in the other place. The last name of the real estate agent is Gopaul. I also remember that a real estate agent by the name of Gopaul was kidnapped and murdered; his body was found some place; I am hoping it is not the same person. But if it is the same person, what is the link? Was it because some deal went astray? Because the Member for Oropouche clearly indicated that already private persons have obtained properties waiting for the National Lotteries Control Board to access it.

So it means that the National Lotteries Control Board has indicated to a selected few to start obtaining properties and we would come and purchase it from you, lease it from you at very high cost, and you want to make sure that that does not happen. Because the Government and agents of the Government have a history, and we saw in the recent refurbishing of bungalows in Palo Seco where large sums of money was spent, and many have indicated that in the quantum spent, you did not see value for money.

National Lotteries Control Board must indicate to the national community—it says grant or accept license, and of course the Minister did not indicate what that will entail; whether it has to do with radio stations or television stations. We also saw that the National Lotteries will be purchasing properties. From whom? Are they going to engage the services of real estate agents, and who is going to value those properties? Is the Government valuator going to do it? Right now, if the Government wants to buy a property, the Government will send in its valuator and oftentimes that valuator comes back with a value much less than what the market has. And oftentimes the vender is forced to accept what the Government is offering because they can always obtain it under compulsory acquisition. The question is, how are they going to acquire these properties? Are they going to inform the national community by print and other advertisements? Because what you are going to have happen is, you are going to get a selected few—you see this Government has a history of making sure the spoils of government reach a selected few. That is the history we see now. It is the same persons manifesting themselves in different agencies over and over. You are seeing the same supplier of goods and services over and over.

Mr. Speaker, further to that, we saw recently that the National Lotteries Control Board engaged the services of a private firm to investigate workers. This was never heard of before. Why is this happening? Is this what we are giving way to? Why is this happening? How can the National Lotteries Control Board investigate workers working, and what is the purpose? Well, from what has come to our attention, it is to enquire which of these workers are supporters of the UNC? What a shame! Look at what our country has come to.

Today your son and daughter whom you school cannot get a job where the politics is involved. If it is in WASA, you have to be PNM; if it is in T&TEC, you have to be PNM, and the list goes on. But when you have no choice but to employ them because they have the skills that you may require, you then go to investigate them at cost—in this instance we were told close to \$400,000. Why would a government want to do that? Why does a government condone that? Assuming that the Government says listen, we do not know National Lotteries Control Board has done this. But when it comes to your attention, have you gone to the national community and said, listen, the National Lotteries Control Board has made an error, they should not have done that, we apologize to the national community, we apologize to all those employees who were investigated? And then you deny a number of those employees their rightful promotions or their acting appointments as the case might be.

So we on both sides of this House must not be seen giving support to measures that discriminate against our people, and our people mean all people of Trinidad and Tobago. We must make sure that boards appointed by the Government at taxpayers money must not discriminate and must not use State funds to do same, and if we have to put a stop to it, if we have to start with National Lotteries Control Board, so be it. Because the time is coming and coming very quickly, that people are getting extremely fed up and frustrated, and you see it reflected in the type of crimes we are seeing in this country.

The third point I want to make is the question of sponsorship. We of the UNC—I speak for the Members for St. Joseph as well and Barataria/San Juan—encourage sponsorship at all levels, for all groups in this country, and we want to make sure that the sponsorship also reflects groups from all the constituencies in Trinidad and Tobago. We are tired of seeing that the groups promoted, sponsored by state bodies, including National Lotteries Control Board and a number of other state bodies, oftentimes reflect NGOs, CBOs and groups from PNM-held constituencies. Let the record show differently if what I am saying is incorrect, then let somebody say it is not so, and demonstrate it because I have

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produced the information this far. We are seeing the quantum of sponsorship as well; we are seeing some groups being able to obtain from National Lotteries Control Board and other state bodies—similar to National Lotteries Control Board—large sums of money too.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I have sat here and listened to you repeating yourself constantly. Please, could you move on a bit?

**Mr. C. Sharma:** You mean I should not repeat the number of donations?

**Mr. Speaker:** You have said it in your entire contribution, what you are tending to do is to be repeating yourself. So could you move on a bit, please? Do not repeat yourself.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Speaker, I know you follow very well, but in fact, I have not repeated a single of the donations. I have gone on from page three and now going to page four, unless you do not want me to read out the information.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was making the point of the quantum contributions by National Lotteries Control Board and other organizations. I was saying that you find some groups, for instance, one group celebrating a particular function for the national community obtains \$5,000, and another group doing similar for the same national community obtains \$200,000; that is 2,000 per cent more. Even if it is at the cost of repeating, the point has to be made that what we are being asked to do today is to give an open cheque to the National Lotteries Control Board to continue this level of discrimination. And I want to suggest that I would be failing in my duty as a Member of Parliament to come here and suggest it differently. If the information comes to me I must bring it to the attention of this House, and if that is a crime, well, it would not be the first time.

The National Lotteries Control Board is generating approximately \$1 billion per year. I made the point earlier that the National Lotteries Control Board seems to make five to seven millionaires per year. But a number of people have become addicted to playing the lotteries and these people cannot afford it, and I want to suggest—the fourth suggestion—that the National Lotteries Control Board cause to be made available to persons some level of counselling; very important. The Prime Minister said he was going to reduce the gambling, but from all the evidence this far, that is not taking place.

Prime Minister, it would interest you to see the number of people who go around these stations when the marks are played and they stay the entire day there; from 8 o'clock in the morning to the last draw—I think it is 6 o'clock—playing that



\$5.00 mark or \$2.00 mark, just hoping to win at the end of the day. But what is the cost of that? The families are left alone; kids go astray; the high levels of teenage pregnancy; the high levels of alcoholism are related. When the Prime Minister said that he was going to reduce gambling, I am sure that is the information that might have been at his disposal. I am suggesting that we need to demonstrate a real effort to treat with it across the country in many, many constituencies. In fact, many people would tell you that children missing school during active school hours are sometimes found in these play stations.

**Mr. Ramnath:** "Wait nah, National Lotteries have play stations, too?"

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Yes, where they go and play these games.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Member for Oropouche raised the question about the actual conduct of the National Lotteries Control Board, and by conduct, what do I mean? We have not seen this far in many, many instances that the conduct of the National Lotteries Control Board is improving the lives of people. Or what is it doing to show that, listen, we are getting X amount of money and we are giving back something. Gambling is a dangerous activity in this country. It has led to many fights; it has led to many murders and as a result, the counselling sessions I spoke about have to become widespread, and must be across the board. What I mean by that is that the persons engaged, the advertising agencies engaged in the promotions or communicating the information, must reflect the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. What obtains now, we do not see that at all. It must reflect it, because the intention of the counselling sessions is to reach out to every person who is affected by it. You want to reduce it, and what do you get from reducing it? You would see less murders, less illegal activities; less alcoholism; less demands on the health sector; less demands on the police service. So it has a large contribution to make if the National Lotteries Control Board is encouraged to do what is correct.

We saw a member of the board who also has a private practice—and nothing is wrong with having a private practice, but there might be a conflict of interest, and we are seeing this oftentimes in government now; it seems to be the way this Government intends to operate. But what happens is that this particular Member—from the information we have—spends a couple of minutes and obtains \$5,000 per sitting. A Member of Parliament who works 30 plus days per month, on both sides of the House, some 15 to 20 hours gets less than \$100.

Mr. Speaker, I was looking for my notes when I raised the question of a Mr. Gopaul and I thought from your expression you appeared to be concerned. We saw a particular building was purchased in 1993, and of course it was inflated by

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the National Lotteries Control Board—the building was bought by the Ministry of Finance. What you are seeing in terms of real estate is that the Government is setting the precedent; the Government is telling National Lotteries Control Board, do it how we do it. Buy a building for a few hundred thousand dollars, add some paint to it, inflate it and sell it for a few million dollars. So the National Lotteries Control Board will say, listen, you are doing this at the Ministry of Finance or at the Ministry of Health or elsewhere, we are following you. So you have a lot of money and no value for it at the end of the day, and we are very concerned about that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to an article that appeared in the *Express*, I think it was written by Kim Budram. It says:

"The game stops here.

The National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) has been directed by Government not to pursue plans to introduce new Lottery Terminal Centres in Port of Spain and San Fernando."

I want to suggest to the hon. Minister that he cause the board to look at all lottery stations and make sure that they are not near to schools, wherever those schools are, any part of the country, not just in San Fernando and Port of Spain.

"The directive came from a Cabinet recommendation and after concerns were raised by Education Minister...that gambling is endangering the nation's school children."

We on this side support that call, we must do everything to improve the stock of our kids, to make sure that they are not surrounded by these kinds of activities.

"This was disclosed by Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Conrad Enill, on Tuesday night...at the Trinidad Hilton."

Unfortunately both Ministers are not here. It was in the Budget Speech of the hon. Prime Minister on page 84, when he said:

"One final word on taxation, Mr. Speaker, and it has to do with gambling. As you know, gambling is against the laws of Trinidad and Tobago and this Government is determined to uphold the law. There has unfortunately been a proliferation of gambling activity under the guise of private members clubs. Over the years we have sought to use financial mechanisms to contain the number of such clubs without much success.

The new approach we intend to take is to bring all private members clubs under a strict licensing arrangement to be administered by the Ministry of Finance.”

Again, anything that would reduce what the social ills are that we see in this country will obtain tremendous support from all citizens, including us on this side.

Mr. Speaker a large amount of the revenue from the National Lotteries Control Board goes to the Government. I have made the point and I want to expand on the point. All Members of Parliament on both sides of the House, from time to time, would have requests from NGOs in their communities, from CBOs, PTAs, et cetera, for assistance in doing what in our own measure—meaning the measure of Members of Parliament from both sides—to be useful, that would add value. What is the system that obtains from the National Lotteries Control Board that would be considered from Members of Parliament, elected officials across the board and nominated officials as well?

If it is our responsibility as Members of Parliament to find ways to add value, to make sure the quality of life improves in all communities; I had raised with the hon. Prime Minister on the last occasion that the Prime Minister, as Minister of Finance, should seriously consider the question of a constituency fund, because as things get rough in the country, the demands on the offices of Members of Parliament keep increasing.

If I can share my own experience in the constituency of Fyzabad, when you add all the NGOs, CBOs, schools, PTAs and the sports groups, there are more than 100 such in every constituency. What happens right now, every single time any one of those 100 groups come to you for any kind of funds, it has to come from your pocket, the constituency does not have a fund. Sometimes you do fund-raising events and that would raise a small amount of money. The question is, where can a Member of Parliament direct those requests for it to be treated in a measurable way? So when an NGO comes to me and says listen, we want to run a seminar on reducing crime or we want to deal with drug abuse or teenage pregnancy, and this is going to cost us \$10,000, we have \$5,000 and we need to raise another \$5,000, and the Member of Parliament wants to help and say, I can give maybe \$1,000 or \$500 as the case might be. Where can the Member of Parliament direct that communication? I want to suggest—and I know there are officials from the National Lotteries Control Board and I know Ministers have the ability to direct the board or suggest how the board should treat—that the Members of Parliament on both sides be permitted to cause that communication to reach and for it to be treated with and some report be sent back.

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So for instance if the Member for Fyzabad or Arouca South sends to the National Lotteries Control Board a recommendation to assist a group, the National Lotteries Control Board communicate with the group and the Member for Fyzabad or Arouca South, and say listen, we have received your communication, we are prepared at this time, because of our budget, et cetera, to give \$1,000; then it would demonstrate a care and a concern. It would also demonstrate fairness and equality across the board. Certainly, if it is the Member for Arouca South, 100 such requests go and she gets 10 per cent, that is 10 per cent, and if 50 go from the Member for Fyzabad and he gets 10 per cent, he gets less, but the fact of the matter is, both are treated with, and this would apply to all such bodies.

Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure that we demonstrate to our citizens that we are not making this habit of gambling an institution, and as a result, we have to look at ways to reduce it. You might not be able to remove it totally, but we have to find ways to reduce it. For instance, we must be very, very concerned when people go to place their bets that it is not the same people going over and over.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Mr. Speaker, it is so nice not to hear any “noes” from the other side. You know, it is important for this particular thing, because there are so many good things happening in this country and there are so many evil things happening in this country, that there comes a time when we have to, in a collective way, look at what is surrounding us, look at what is happening, and I think this particular situation with gambling in the country is of concern to everyone, and I want to thank Members on both sides for extending the time.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the board obtaining approval for properties, we would like the Minister in replying to indicate what these properties are going to be used for. We were not told that. The Minister said that this was a simple Bill and spoke for less than five minutes. We have to be satisfied if we are going to give support, what is this support all about. For instance, we saw the Member for Oropouche indicating that the suppliers of goods and services to the National Lotteries Control Board seem to be a selected few.

So in its new role to acquire properties, is it going to be across the board? So if I know of a constituent who wants to sell a property, can I approach the National Lotteries Control Board? Or if there is someone who wants to lease a property, can I approach the National Lotteries Control Board? This is very important simply because you want to make sure that the National Lotteries Control Board is treating with each and all. I think the Member for Oropouche indicated that a particular law firm seems to have gotten all the legal work. One can argue that it might have been a bit of work, in terms of the large amount of money the Government has to spend on legal fees.

The Prime Minister said in the last budget that 10 per cent of all goods and services to be obtained by the Government and government agencies would go to small business people. To this date, no such thing is happening. In fact, on one previous occasion we inquired from the hon. Prime Minister and he said the legislation was being drawn up, and perhaps that is the legislation that needs to come here. It needs to come here, so that we can start encouraging people to formalize their operations. There are a number of small business people who do not know how to do these things, but once we know it is coming— Again if the Government and the Prime Minister has indicated that it is taking place, we can encourage those small business people to meet the legal requirements, Board of Inland Revenue registration, et cetera and start preparing themselves to participate in that 10 per cent.

Again, the National Lotteries Control Board would have to indicate, would have to reflect Government's policy and the National Lotteries Control Board must tell the national community how are they treating with the Government's instructions—if I can use that word—to make 10 per cent available to small business people in the supply of goods and services, and right now we are not seeing that.

Mr. Speaker, recently the National Lotteries Control Board introduced a system—a very good system by the way—where you can pay your light bill, telephone bill, et cetera, at these machines. The difficulty though, is that only persons over the age of 18 can go and play a mark, but anybody can go and pay the bill, and they run the risk. That is happening and I suspect that is why the hon. Minister of Education had that concern, because children were going under the pretext to pay the telephone bill and "chooking ah two dollars". Again, you may want to consider making that, that the bills are to be paid by persons over the age of 18.

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The other thing too, as I raised that, recently someone's electricity was disconnected, even though when the T&TEC crew came the housewife was able to show the T&TEC crew the receipt from having paid at the Lotto machine, but the T&TEC crew said, "we cannot recognize that bill". Something has to happen from the Lotto bill to T&TEC. I want to make the point that the National Lotteries Control Board communicate with the T&TEC authorities and the Minister give the instruction that any T&TEC crew going to disconnect—and it was not mine by the way—and they demonstrate payment made, to treat with it; give them 24 or 48 hours, do not disconnect it. Because when they disconnect it, they now have to pay \$160 reconnection fee. Of course, the inconvenience of not having electricity for the period.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, recently we have seen a number of persons seeking assistance to obtain financial aid for kidney transplant or heart operations as the case might be, and in some instances it has come to our attention that such persons are required to obtain permission from the police and others. In a few instances such persons wrote to the National Lotteries Control Board or attempted to obtain from National Lotteries Control Board, because I think there is some permission that they can give and they have not been treated with; I am not sure why. If it is you wanted to do a raffle in Trinidad and Tobago, once the raffle is over 25 cents per chance you have to obtain the permission from National Lotteries Control Board. The National Lotteries Control Board must indicate that, because a number of people do not know. So when they go around with these raffle sheets they are then told that, listen, your raffle is not legal, you ought to obtain this permission. So the National Lotteries Control Board needs to indicate that to the national community.

In addition, if it is that persons or groups raising funds to offset medical expenses or to raise money for families whose homes were destroyed by fire, et cetera, needs that permission, National Lotteries Control Board must also communicate that. So again, we would reduce the embarrassment and the difficulties people are seeing.

When we look at the increase of expenditure at the National Lotteries Control Board we do not know what the increases are about. Some have suggested that the increases are way too high. The question that then follows is, with this new approval being sought today to acquire, hold and enjoy property, would this increase the cost to the taxpayers at the National Lotteries Control Board? Are they going to move from \$X million to so much more and where would be the

justification? You see the question is, one, who would be administering this? Are there going to be new vacancies being created? Are those vacancies going to be published?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for tea and would be resumed at 5.00 p.m.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the tea break the Leader of Government Business advised me that he was very pleased with the recommendations I put forward and since he would be considering them I beg to take my leave at this point. [*Laughter*]

Thank you.

**Dr. Adesh Nanan (Tabaquite):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make a contribution to the debate on an Act to amend the National Lotteries Act, Chap. 21:04.

Mr. Speaker, when we deal with a lottery system it is interesting to understand the origin of lottery and why it is relevant. I am just going to take a few minutes to actually—

**Hon. Member:** What is that, the origin of what again?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Lottery; [*Interruption*] or the history of lottery. [*Interruption*] You would recall in olden times, [*Interruption*] and there were actually in some of the reports before Christ, it is mentioned in the book of Numbers—that is what the gaming industry is saying—that Moses used the lottery to give out land.

**Mr. Manning:** He drew lots; that is not lottery.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** The gaming industry is using that to say that is a part— [*Interruption*] That is what is being said. I did not say I said that.

**Hon. Member:** What is the significance of that? [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** That is the initial start of the lottery; drawing lots as the Prime Minister said, they were giving out land, [*Interruption*] and at that particular time; if you look at the chronological events you would see that lottery came out of a situation where there was a lot of economic deprivation.

Governments wanted to find their way to boost the revenue, so the lottery system started in that kind of fashion. In fact the Chinese started a lottery system to assist with the building of the Great Wall of China. Also, you have other parts

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in history where buildings were constructed and a lot of the schools—in fact, 500 schools in some countries—churches and hospitals were built using a lottery system. And if you look at the Australian system, which is important, you would see that Australia introduced a lottery. Initially a small lottery was being operated privately, and gradually—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** You are not in the classroom. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** The amendment deals with lottery, so I am just giving a little history. In the Australian system—

**Hon. Member:** We do not need a lecture. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:**—they started with this small lottery and then they gradually moved to a larger organization. But what is important in Australia is that a sporting and cultural group ran this lottery. In fact, worldwide, if you look at the situation you would see that these private lotteries became so large and became corrupt that you had a ban taking place on lotteries throughout the world because of this situation where you had corruption stepping in.

That is why when I come back to the Trinidad setting with the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) we see from the various contributions on the Opposition side in terms of that element of corruption creeping into the NLCB.

I want to reflect quickly, because I had an opportunity to meet the Chairman of NLCB—a very affable individual—when I was flying to a conference in Bermuda. I was fortunate to be able to be travelling with the Chairman of NLCB; he seems to be quite intelligent. [*Interruption*] When I read some of the actions of the chairman, for example, there is a report—I do not know if you all could deny it—that the chairman's vehicle was involved in an accident with a board member and the chairman used the NLCB's money for a private accident.

Now I do not know in terms of his intelligence and his personality; there is still a conflict of interest. That should not be, that if you are involved in an accident with your vehicle, as a board member that the NLCB should pay for any repairs to the vehicle. I may be wrong. So that is how I am opening up to show that although you have that individual, who, as the Prime Minister said, is intelligent and a very likable individual and has some bright ideas, you still have certain areas, gray areas that we need to address.

There was a report in the newspaper concerning a board member or the firing of a board member. When you deal with statutory authorities you have to set guidelines. The Minister of Finance set certain guidelines for the statutory authorities.



The Prime Minister came in this House and said that he is paying the operations manager of WASA a high salary because the company deserves that. What are we seeing? We are seeing a person being paid an enormous salary, and no kind of benefits to the country as a whole. We have heard reports of board members increasing their emoluments. I do not know if it was with the permission of the Minister or not, but those are the areas that we have to question. Those are the areas that we are questioning. We are also questioning the distribution, because in Australia it was the sport and cultural groups that were benefiting from the revenue from lottery.

In Trinidad the distribution is supposed to be across the board and we have heard testimony that there is a certain discrepancy in terms of allocations. The NLCB—I would recall or I want to relate an incident to you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite I approached the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Brian Kuei Tung, because a constituent came to me for one of the lotto machines and I asked the Minister of Finance to see if he could assist and the Minister of Finance wrote back and said, “no”.

I am just justifying that it is not because you are a Member of Parliament and you make representation, that you are going to get a lotto machine; that is how it was with the United National Congress Government. But how it is apparently operating with the PNM, is that PNM supporters are being given lotto machines to run and it should not be like that; there should be a system of distribution that is equal. There should be rules and regulations how lotto machines should be identified or who should get lotto machines.

Mention was made here of the Minister of Education against gambling, but there is a report—and I am sure that you would recall—that when the Sesame Street came down the NLCB played a part in terms of sponsorship. So what signal are you sending to these young children? NLCB was sponsoring, and of course advertising for Sesame Street, so there is definitely a conflict of interest. One minute you are saying we are against gambling and then you have NLCB supporting the venture. We have to get our act together. In my own constituency I know there have been tremendous requests sent to the NLCB for functions, but again the people have been unlucky. They have not received any money from the NLCB.

Mr. Speaker, about their marketing policy; there is also a report of an allocation of \$12 million for marketing and \$4 million for advertising and \$8 million—I do not know if it is the chairman’s slush fund—that is being given out. So what are the rules and regulations? What are the financial rules and regulations governing the NLCB? Is the chairman the chairman of a rogue statutory authority?

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We have to ask those questions. Those questions are relevant in this debate because we have seen demonstrated by the chairman the kind of behaviour that is reflected in terms of a rogue chairman. And I guess the Minister who is piloting this particular amendment should take note.

In every sector when we are dealing with statutory authorities the chairmen, under the PNM, have a certain amount of leeway. We have seen it in Petrotrin; we have seen it in the Solid Waste Management Company Limited; now we are seeing it in the NLCB. And if you look at the other statutory authorities, you can see it all there and it is quite clear when the Joint Select Committee of Parliament meets to deal with statutory authorities that is what is happening. Because the questions that are being asked and the answers given show quite clearly that there is definitely a problem with chairmen, board members and statutory authorities, and it is the State's revenue that is being accounted for.

In terms of accounting; what is the financial accounting by the NLCB? We have heard and it has been reported that there may be a conflict of interest between the accounting firm that has audited NLCB accounts and the person who actually sits on these meetings. Those things are very simple to solve, Member for Diego Martin Central; we should not have to come here and expose that. That should have been dealt with at a different level. Apparently it is not happening, so that is why we have to come and ask these questions; a definite conflict of interest. Is it because you are in Government and you have ultimate power under the Constitution and you think that you would be there forever that you are not addressing these matters? [*Interruption*] But the public is looking on and as these things accumulate from state agency to state agency a picture is being painted and the entire Government is being tainted.

National Lotteries Control Board, the advertisements—and there is also a report again about advertising. A donation must be given, and if donation is given to a particular group; that group must advertise on I95.5, and of course there is duplicity when the chairman is the chairman of that particular radio station. Those things must be factored into. There must be that difference between a chairman of the NLCB and a radio station. Yes, you may have some advertising there, but you cannot give the bulk of your advertising to that radio station. That is definitely a conflict of interest. So the Minister of Finance and also the Member for Diego Martin Central must rein in the chairman and set some guidelines.

So you have that incident; you have the accounting factor; you also have, not only in accounting; we have all these reports now of security breaches. Is the chairman an arm of the Ministry of National Security or is the chairman also a

part of the Attorney General's particular Anti Corruption Squad or does he want to have his own investigative team like the Attorney General? Because there is another report stating that the chairman has hired a security firm to investigate the workers. Now, Mr. Speaker, that shows no trust; there is no trust in that organization. In fact, the kind of productivity levels from the NLCB, the morale would be extremely low, when you have a chairman hiring a security firm to investigate over 99 workers. That is like the Minister of Health hiring a security firm to investigate all his doctors.

**Mr. Sharma:** He would not do that.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** And I do not think he would do that, but you never could tell; maybe he is.

**Mr. Hinds:** You need an investigation.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** The Member for Laventille East/Morvant, I do not want to get into that debate with him because I saw him on television and that is a different—

**Hon. Member:** Speak on the Bill.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Yes, I am speaking on the Bill, but I am dealing with security matters. *[Interruption]*

So a security firm has been hired by the chairman; you also have a situation where besides financial mismanagement by the chairman; a security firm being introduced in the system that has never been heard of before. *[Interruption]* So we call for proper transparency and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, from 1998 to 2001 under the UNC term of Government it is reported that the NLCB's chairman had authorized the company Jeremie-Alexander and Company—

**Mr. Valley:** Everybody talked about that.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** No, it is not tedious repetition; it is a different angle, because nobody spoke about the report—

**Mr. Sharma:** He was not paying attention.

**Dr. A. Nanan:**—that was produced by Alexander-Jeremie and Company because the NLCB asked Jeremie-Alexander and Company to do a report on 1998 to 2001 under the UNC. Nobody spoke about that, and to date no charges have been laid with respect to the UNC in this particular time.

**Hon. Member:** How many charges you want against the UNC? How many you want?

**Mr. Sharma:** “Give we all, give we all, we go take it; we want it.” [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Member for Port of Spain North/St. Anns West the same police post that they were requesting might camp at your door. [*Interruption*] There are certain posts, Member for Diego Martin Central [*Interruption*] there is the Chief Accountant and the Chief Financial Comptroller; that was not mentioned here in this debate, but those two positions have not been filled or they have tried to fill them but they cannot be filled. And why is that? [*Interruption*] So we are calling for accountability and transparency. Apparently, many people have been tried in the position but because of the situation there they have run out of that particular NLCB.

Some of the donations I want to spend about a minute on. The Trinidad and Tobago Cancer Society, a quarterly newsletter, they have provided \$10,000. And while I am on this topic Queen’s Park Cricket Club Annual Masters Tournament, \$5,000. The NLCB, I do not know what is their selection policy in terms of the donations, but I want to make a recommendation for sporting organizations, we have Stephen Ames who is an international golfer making Trinidad, famous. [*Interruption*] Because he said his home was in San Fernando, Trinidad in case you did not know. [*Interruption*]

But for your information Member for Port of Spain North/St. Anns West when he won the tournament or when he was going to win the tournament, they said they thought a person from a small island nation was going to win and they thought it would have been Vijay Singh from Fiji, but they said another person from a small island nation won, that cannot be Canada.

**Mr. Rahael:** They did not say Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** They did! Mr. Speaker, the point is Stephen Ames won his golf tournament.

**Hon. Member:** “How you reach dey”!

**Dr. A. Nanan:** You were not paying attention and nobody said that was irrelevant. So the point I am making, Stephen Ames won his golf tournament, got his prize money and he comes back to do charity work in Trinidad at the Petrotrin Golf Course. The relevance here is when I read that donation, “The annual Masters Tournament of the Queen’s Park Cricket Club, \$5,000”; what is the policy of the NLCB with respect to sport?

Stephen Ames came back and gave his charity; he gave his own money. The NLCB should operate like how Australia used to operate. Australia started with its lottery and the sports and cultural groups benefited. So we can use that opportunity. Why does the NLCB not give scholarships to sportsmen? That is an opportunity!

**Hon. Member:** Because the Government is giving it.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** The NLCB could consider that, giving opportunities for sportsmen from the various communities, because it is our sporting heroes that are putting us on the map, certainly not the PNM Government. It is our sporting heroes who have very limited resources who are making successes internationally and these international successes are putting our country on the map.

**Mr. Narine:** If the UNC was in Government it would be the UNC who win the Carib Cup? [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, the sporting arena needs to be looked at in terms of the distribution of resources. We have heard of cultural events but sport— [*Interruption*] I am putting a suggestion forward that our sporting [*Interruption*] fraternity; the youths of our nation; the future sportsmen of Trinidad and Tobago, these particular individuals should be given some kind of sponsorship or scholarship by the NLCB. That could be an area; it is one way to be considered.

The other areas that need to be highlighted with respect to donations, but you have to also recall that whenever you have a lot of money you have a lot of people coming for assistance. I know that there must be a screening policy with respect to whom they are going to give. But there must be a policy; there just cannot be carte blanche, across the board; whoever I feel to give I give because you would support me; you would support the PNM party and that is why you are going to get a donation. Then you come on the other hand and say, okay, you take an allocation, a small amount, so you want to make it appear that you are still helping one individual that is why you are giving—what is the percentage—2,000 per cent to the next group. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, sports covered all of that. [*Interruption*] I have nothing to say to the Member for Arouca North because I do not want to be distracted [*Interruption*] but not really. In terms of the policy for donations, that needs to be—a lot of the beneficiaries are the cultural groups for the NLCB.

**Mr. Narine:** Are you going to the Great Race in Tobago?

**Dr. Nanan:** There is no problem with the cultural events; there can be other areas, and I want to put in, in terms of the classical guitarists of the country, because these are very expensive instruments; a guitar is a very expensive instrument. *[Interruption]* And you would instill in the youths that kind of culture of—let them interpret music. You would recall, Mr. Speaker, that the Beethoven Symphony is used for the newborn to instill that kind of—especially that particular age, it has been found that the Beethoven Symphony and music in that particular direction with those particular tones enhance the brain capacity of the individual.

**Hon. Member:** I did not know that music enhances the capacity of—

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Of course, you did not know that; you did not have Beethoven music when you were small.

**Mrs. Job-Davis:** You knew that? *[Crosstalk]*

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I did not have Beethoven music, but I made sure that my children were able to utilize Beethoven. *[Crosstalk]*

There are all those areas that the NLCB could consider; the intervention into music, and in fact there are a number of programmes, small programmes in various communities that deal with music, and music has a soothing effect and a calming effect on the society. *[Interruption]* And then I speak as a guitarist, myself, so I am familiar with it. *[Desk thumping]* That particular system; I have also seen that they are actually giving to the various crisis centres in the country; like the Marabella Family Crisis Centre.

Mr. Speaker, in my particular constituency there are several homes that make requests from time to time to the NLCB, and genuine requests; this is not a political request coming from the Member of Parliament. There are many homes in my constituency that make requests for assistance and they get rejected by the NLCB. So one has to ask the question: What are their criteria for donations?

**Hon. Member:** Apply to the lottery board.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** They have applied; they continue to apply. Operation SMILE in my constituency, is a home for needy children and socioeconomically deprived children and they are never the beneficiaries from the NLCB. We also see that they are giving a lot of donations to conferences. We are not against conferences; the Tobago Heritage Festival Committee also received donations *[Interruption]* and prizes.

**Hon. Member:** What about the prison?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I am just calling at random, I am not looking—

**Hon. Member:** It is there, it is there.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** The Arima Football League received donations [*Interruption*] \$5,000; I am not making an issue, but even the \$5,000 did not come to the Tabaquite constituency, that is the point I am making.

**Mrs. Job-Davis:** Have you written and asked?

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Yes, we have asked, we never got a reply from the NLCB. I even mentioned that to the chairman when we were travelling together. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** The Member should be addressing me, not you all, and please, you all are not supposed to be addressing him, but you are coming—go ahead. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** As I was saying, Mr. Speaker—and I concur with the Member for Arima, but the difference is the allocation is small—the groups that applied from my constituency, they are not recipients of even \$5,000; so we have to question the policy for distribution. And as I go along, and I dealt with the particular situation with the homes in my constituency and there are also women's groups and cultural groups in the constituency that make representation to the NLCB and no allocation again. Even the National Commission for UNESCO gets over \$15,000. [*Crosstalk*]

**5.30 p.m.**

I agree that the distribution is not skewed, but the problem is that although it is not skewed, it appears to be skewed.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** The Member for Fyzabad said it was skewed.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** When I look through here, well I am not getting—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Because he was very selective. He said it was skewed. You are trying to contradict him, but you are correct.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I am not contradicting him, I am just looking at the— [*Interruption and Crosstalk*]—Okay, the Mas Camp Pub, Mighty Sparrow in concert. I love the Mighty Sparrow.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** [*Inaudible*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** I have no problem with the Mighty Sparrow, the \$3,000 that he got. This is the one that I was making reference to in terms of music, Belle Garden Anglican School musical instruments, \$12,000. I have no problem with

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that. In fact—okay, when I made the intervention in terms of music, this can be spread throughout the country. This can be an initiative. This can be introduced into the schools in Trinidad, not only steel band, because there are a lot of instruments that the children need to play.

**Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Anglican schools.

**Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*]

**Dr. A. Nanan:** No, no, might be but, in my view, these are musical instruments. [*Interruption*] So, I just want to end my contribution here on the musical aspect of the distribution so that they can actually consider, those are some of the suggestions to consider music—

**Dr. Rafeeq:** If you would permit me, I would allow you to play the guitar.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Well, I do not know if they would tolerate an electric guitar. [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** You are supposed to be talking to Mr. Speaker, but you are talking to me.

**Dr. A. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, so I end my contribution on that particular intervention, which is to introduce music throughout the schools.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker.** Before I call on the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central to wind up the debate on this Bill, I have given permission to the hon. Prime Minister to make a statement. [*Desk thumping*]

**JAMAICAN PRIME MINISTER, PORTIA SIMPSON-MILLER**  
(VISIT OF)

**The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with the greatest pleasure that I advise this honourable House and the national community, that the very distinguished Prime Minister of Jamaica, the most hon. Portia Simpson-Miller, would be paying an official visit to Trinidad and Tobago next week; arriving here on Monday afternoon and departing on Wednesday. The time frame is short and the visit has been agreed on at very short notice. That fact notwithstanding, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the opportunity to receive her; we would do so in the best way we know how to on her arrival at the airport on



Monday evening. We have a tentative programme that is tight, but comprehensive for her all day stay here on Tuesday and she departs on Wednesday. We look forward to receiving her, Mr. Speaker, as the first country she would visit as she leaves her shores in Jamaica.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**NATIONAL LOTTERIES (AMDT.) BILL, 2005**

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In preparing for this debate in the House today, I had cause to look at what transpired in the Senate. This is the debate in the Senate and after going through this, I said no, the House would not be subjected to this; that this is a simple matter. All we are asking for is authority to allow the National Lotteries Control Board to be able to buy land, to buy property. That is all. They already went ahead; they brought property some 10 years ago because they thought they had that authority.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate, we have been treated to cries of discrimination; that there is a slush fund, that some lawyers are getting more than others and so on, all matters that I feel best dealt with via the Joint Select Committee that has been established by the Parliament to look at these matters. The National Lotteries Control Board is subjected to the Statutory Joint Select Committee established by the Parliament; I think it is chaired by Professor Deosaran. I see these committees are having fun. I see they even want to investigate things that the Government just planned. So I am sure that—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** You should recognize the acting. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. K. Valley:** Congratulations, there is hope yet. [*Laughter and Interruption*]

**Hon Members:** Tell him do not come yet.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Members of the Opposition are Members of this committee and I am sure they can ask that priority be given to an examination of the National Lotteries Control Board. I wanted to say that, because I do not know whether they feel that what they were doing, we would do the same thing. I have some information here with respect to donations, just got some and when I look at it, it appears to be evenly distributed. On the first page, in 1995, I see Radio 90.5—they are telling me about discrimination. What is this? Sapphire Package to Bollywood Music Awards, \$75,000. I wish somebody would give an organization in my constituency that type of money. You see, that is the first page and there are others on the first page. Penal Rock Road Hindu Organization, that is not in Diego Martin Central.

**Hon. Members:** They did not see that.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, that is on the first page, that is in October to December 2005. [*Crosstalk*] El Dorado Sheikh Mandir.

**Mr. Manning:** Hindu Mandir.

**Hon. K. Valley:** You know.

**Mr. Manning:** That is Panday headquarters, El Dorado, Sheikh Mandir.

**Hon. K. Valley:** You asked for it. Third page, Sheikh Mandir; 103 FM; Brick Field Village Council—you talking about village council. Listen, when NLCB start getting requests from Diego Martin Central, they would want to know what hit them because I did not know NLCB used to do this. I did not know this.

**Hon. Member:** You all did not get a cent.

**Hon. K. Valley:** [*Crosstalk*] Oudan Sudan cultural group; Barrackpore APS district group.

**Mr. Imbert:** Discrimination has to stop.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Kailash Pati Ashram; St. Helena Development Corporation. Mr. Speaker, I really do not want to go on with this. There was—I am looking for a document here. The Member was quoting from a particular document and I had to send for a copy and somehow like it has disappeared from here. It has just disappeared. The same document that he was quoting from, when you look at it you would see that he was very selective in his quotes and that is what we have. When we went to the population in 2002, there were six core principles, but the first one was equity. We said, while we were dealing with 2020 Vision [*Desk thumping*] that we were appointing the committees and so on, we know that there were certain things that we had to do. And there was equity first, health, education, personal security and social services.

Mr. Speaker, equity was number one and that is PNM's policy, it does not matter where you live. [*Desk thumping*] We believe that Trinidad and Tobago is for all of us and everyone ought to have equal opportunity; and that is what it is; bottom line.

Mr. Speaker, just a few quick things because I really do not want to go into all of these things—

**Mr. Manning:** He need not detain us, they are talking nonsense and we have proved that already.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Media houses. The information I have is that NLCB uses all media houses including 103FM; 102FM; I95, that is what it is. This issue with respect to having some security firm look at employees. The employees they are looking at are new hires. Ask any company—SASC is responsible for sending people to the statutory authorities, but NLCB had a situation where somebody who was sent by the Service Commission turned out to be a crook. So that the company wisely has now instituted a policy that with new hires they would do a background check, which is just wisdom.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Simple.

**Hon. K. Valley:** They are not going looking at employees to find out whether they are UNC or DPTT.

**Mr. Manning:** Whatever that is.

**Hon. K. Valley:** I mean you all are cracking up. I heard some things this evening, I want to know where you are getting them from? My good friend from Fyzabad says, that listen, these people now if you give them this authority they would be buying houses all over Trinidad and Tobago to put people for voter padding. I mean, the boy has a very fertile imagination; all the people want to do is to complete a purchase that they have started on Henry Street—one purchase, the head office.

**Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. K. Valley:** Because they cannot do it without it. They did it the last time because they thought they had authority. The lawyers know the treasury solicitor says no, you do not have that authority under the law and the PNM Government says you must operate within the law, therefore we have to change the legislation and give them the power; that is simple. We spent the whole evening on that matter.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is UNC that made that mistake.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, this thing also—my friend, the Member for Fyzabad, tells me that they can pay their light bill at Lotto booths. That is not true. NLCB has an arrangement with TSTT and with Digicel, those payments can be made.

**Hon. Member:** No light bill.

**Hon. K. Valley:** So that no light bill.

**Mr. Sharma:** Only TSTT.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Oh, you changed your mind? He changed his mind. So what it was, it was not that, they came to cut the electricity, they came to cut the phone then. They came to cut his phone; or you understand.

**Hon. Member:** You must pay your phone bill.

**Hon. K. Valley:** The other one is a small one. I think this one is for my good friend, the Member for Tabaquite. The NLCB is not responsible for giving approvals for raffles; that is still under the Commissioner of Police. The NLCB only has jurisdiction over contest. With respect to the instant money games, as is known, all the surpluses under the instant money games go to the Sport and Culture Fund according to Act No. 32 of 1998, I think it is, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Member:** Is it still active?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Yes, it is very.

**Mr. Manning:** Any difference, very active.

**Hon. K. Valley:** But notwithstanding that, the NLCB sponsors TT football to the tune of \$5 million and that commitment for the next five years, so that NLCB still contributes to football and so on. Either the Member for Tabaquite or the Member for Fyzabad raised the issue.

**Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. K. Valley:** [*Crosstalk and Interruption*] I could only respond to issues. Somebody made the point concerning the Fair Share Programme and I simply wanted to make the point that that is included in our White Paper on Public Sector Procurement. Let me just read quickly what it says.

**Mr. Sharma:** We have a copy.

**Hon. K. Valley:** You have a copy, so you do not want me to read it?

**Mr. Sharma:** It was passed around.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Great, okay. No problem. But it is here and I can let you know that before Parliament, the guidelines being outlined for the Fair Share Programme which is going to be implemented early—Love it.

Mr. Speaker, really I do not think there is anything else to comment on. As I have said, if Members feel that there are other issues; if they feel that they are not getting sufficient donations and so on in their constituencies, they should talk nicely to the NLCB. I would start doing that because I have to try to get some donations in my constituency. I am happy to know that they do that.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

*House in committee.*

*Clauses 1 to 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

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

*House resumed.*

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

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, April 28, 2006 at 1.30 p.m. That day s Private Members' Day and perhaps the custom developed in this House, the acting Chief Whip may want to inform us of what matters he plans to debate on that day.

**Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (Caroni Central):** Mr. Speaker, we do have the Vernon Paul issue. We would be continuing debate on that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I put the question on the Motion for the Adjournment, there is a matter to be raised by the hon. Member for Chaguanas and I now call on him.

#### **Chaguanas Health Facility (Construction of)**

**Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (Chaguanas):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me the permission to raise this matter on the adjournment of the House. The topic is: "Government's failure to start construction of the Chaguanas Health Facility." When the Prime Minister in his 2005 Budget presentation indicated that Chaguanas Health Facility, amongst others, would be built during that fiscal year, I was really thrilled to have heard that news. One of the many areas in which I have an interest is the provision of a hospital for central Trinidad. The central hub we know as Chaguanas, caters for a wide cross-section of people who would require health care.

These people live in at least six parliamentary constituencies and recent CSO figures would have indicated a rapid growth in the population of these areas. When one must be hospitalized, one finds oneself in Port of Spain or San

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Fernando. This means that even their visitors would have to struggle in the crazy traffic jams, in potholes riddled-roads to visit their loved ones 40 to 50 miles away. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, you understand why I was thrilled on hearing the news. I would then continuously ask the Minister of Health, what is the position; when will this facility begin, his answers were always promising. But really, I felt nothing was being done to make me believe that something tangible was happening.

I then filed a question in this honourable House which was answered on February 11, 2005. The question posed then was, and I let me remind this House:

- “(a) Would the Minister notify this House when the construction of the Chaguanas Health Facility would commence and the expected completion date; and
- (b) Would the Minister state what services would be provided?”

Hon. John Rahael, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, answered: “Mr. Speaker, in response to question No. 11:

- “(a) Construction of the Chaguanas Health Facility is expected to commence on August 15, 2005 and it is expected to be completed on August 15, 2006.”

Mr. Speaker, that was said in this honourable House.

- “(b) The Chaguanas District Health Facility would provide a 24-hour service, offering both accident and emergency and the following general practice services: pharmacy, radiology, including X-ray and ultrasound; dental clinics for children, specialist clinics for chronic diseases or lifestyle diseases and anti-natal and neo-natal clinics, family planning clinic, child health clinic and health promotion fitness programme.”

Mr. Speaker, when this answer was given to me, I felt, well, yes, at last a good promise by the Government was being put into place. But we have waited. Since then, this House, in my opinion is being brought into disrepute, a place of naked promises and deception. Needless to say nothing has started, nothing to open, despite promised expectation and completed date is just a few months away. Has the money been frittered away in corruption? When evil stalks the land, and we see ministers appearing before courts and then we seem surprised that the crime in our country include the children in our society being attacked, being raped and abused—and getting to this, I feel very guilty at times—I ask the question: is it that the leaders in this honourable House, our sins are being paid for by the

nation? Sodom and Gomorrah; in Sri Lanka, in our Ramayan, where the evil Rawan ruled, because of the deeds of these leaders the entire countries were destroyed.

**Mr. Manning:** Please, be kind enough to give way. Are you saying that the evil deeds of leaders are visited on the people of the country that they lead?

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** History would show that.

**Mr. Manning:** Are you therefore saying that the corollary is true?

**Hon. Members:** That is right.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Well I am not saying what is true and what is not true. What I am trying to say Mr. Speaker, and this is not one to laugh at hon. Prime Minister, when we look at what is taking place and the promises made in this House and we are told that you are going to build a hospital and also in that very budget statement or the one before 2004 and this is what I am coming to, the neglect of our children. The Prime Minister said and I verily believed, that is why sometimes I believe that the budget statement is just a fairy tale story. The Prime Minister is going to ensure the establishment of the Children's Authority which would champion the rights of the children; the completion of the national plan of action on children which would develop concrete strategies for the development of children; the establishment of a child indicator's monitoring system as a basis for evaluating progress.

When we saw the Sean Lukes of today and people being murdered and so on, I wonder if this hallowed chamber is not becoming a place of mockery, where all we do is in the name of politics. We sell our souls; we do everything just to win an election and I feel that as part of this honourable House, I would like to see maybe the rise in some ethics and some morality so that our people would not suffer the fate of those in Sodom and Gomorrah and Sri Lanka.

Mr. Speaker, as we go on, the social sector in our country, again I am very disappointed, money is being thrown at the problems and the problems remain. The problems are not being solved, but instead we see more and more problems daily. So I would take this opportunity during this short time I am speaking to get the Prime Minister to understand that you must do much more to improve the social fabric of our society, because if this continues I would be the one to go outside and say that the sins of this Parliament have befallen our nation.

So Minister of Health, please deliver what was promised to us. Remember, I am aware that the site was found, plans were drawn, prepared and put in place since 2001; and 2001 reminds me of Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj; the year of

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Ramesh when that hospital would have been opened, but in 2001 all hell broke loose, the country's growth and development were put on hold. So I want you to please continue and give us that. I would now ask that you build that hospital for us and let the population not be punished by the sins of our leaders. Build our hospital now.

Thank you very much.

**The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Chaguanas spent about three minutes on the question and went all over the place. Nevertheless, it was the PNM Government that started the negotiation for the public health sector reform and negotiated the IDB Loan in order for that to go forward. Since 1997, when the UNC got into office and started to drawdown on that funding, it was a five-year loan and they were supposed to have completed it by the year 2002.

Mr. Speaker, for the seven years that they were in office or whatever period they were in office, they completed 30 per cent of the work that was required to have been done but within that time, the entire project should have been completed. When we went into office, there was little or nothing that we met. We met no plans; there was no definite decision with respect to the site; there was talk about occupying the same site on the Chaguanas Main Road, but after various stakeholders' discussions, we eventually decided on another site.

### **6.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, when the John Hopkins personnel came to Trinidad they met with us and in discussion with them we talked about a new hospital in Port of Spain. We identified a site for it and we talked about the various types of services that could be provided. In that discussion, the hon. Prime Minister said that we also had to build a hospital in Central Trinidad, between Chaguanas and Couva. So the remit to the John Hopkins University and hospital is to look both at Port of Spain and Central Trinidad in order to establish two new hospitals. This administration is the one talking about putting up a new hospital in the Central area.

In addition to that, we had to look at the plans for the Chaguanas district health facility. There were a number of hiccups; I do not plan to go through all of them now, but I have the tender documents with me. I would really like the Member for Chaguanas to have a view of them, because we want to make sure that we put up the best district facility in Chaguanas in collaboration.



The documents were delivered in April of this year by the architects Norman and Darburn, the architects that were actually contracted by the former administration. These are the tender documents dated April 2006, so this is now completed. We just want to sign off on this so we could go out to tender. Based on the tenders we have received, we would be able to determine the completion date. Certainly I welcome your input on this final document and you are most welcome to see it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.02 p.m.*