

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, June 30, 2006*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I will suspend the sitting of the House until 2.00 p.m. We do not seem to have a quorum.

1.37 p.m: *Sitting suspended.*

1.53 p.m: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: Yes, we do have a quorum now.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from Mr. Gerald Yetming, Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, asking leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual audited financial statements of the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 2005. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

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

2. Report of the First Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Workshop on the Parliamentary Committee System—Tobago, March 19—24, 2006. [*Speaker (Hon. Barendra Sinanan)*]

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**Special Select Committee Report
(Presentation)**

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table, the First Interim Report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Copyright (Amdt.) Bill, 2006.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Cumuto Main Road
(Rehabilitation of Landslips)**

15. Mr. Harry Partap (*Nariva*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister state when the Ministry would begin the rehabilitation of landslips along and the paving of, the Cumuto Main Road from Little Coora Junction to Four Roads, Tamana in the Constituency of Nariva?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you Mr. Speaker. This section of Cumuto Road, that lies between Little Coora Road and Four Roads, Tamana falls in a band of poor soil that runs across the country from Macaulay near the Solomon Hochoy Highway to Manzanilla. In such soils, the prevalence of numerous landslips and rapidly deteriorating road surfaces is not uncommon. In this section of the road, the particular section in question, the Ministry has identified 18 landslips that are to be repaired. The strategy adopted by the Ministry for this section of the road is to focus immediately on drainage works to prevent landslips, then the stabilization and repair of landslips starting with the most severe and deep patching of the worst areas to maintain a reasonable riding surface.

The Ministry plans to undertake drainage improvement works, landslip repair and deep patching of the roadway prior to paving. It is proposed to have this section of roadway rehabilitated in fiscal 2006/2007. The following works are underway at this time:

(i) Strengthening and patching works:

Extensive patching is underway on Cumuto Road between Little Coora Road and Four Roads. To date significant deep patching has been undertaken with 150 tonnes of hot mix and 400 tonnes of cold mix on the road surface.

(ii) Drainage works:

A total of 11 kilometres of drains were cleaned and cleared. At the 16.7 km mark, one cylindrical drain was reconstructed.

(iii) Landslip repairs:

Repairs have commenced on six of the landslips between Little Coora Road and Four Roads, Tamana. At the 17.2 km mark the contract which was awarded to Ragoonanan's Transport was not completed and a new contractor would be engaged shortly.

At the 17 km mark, work was carried out by the Ministry and it is projected that work would be completed on all landslip sites by the end of August 2006.

I would give you some more information on the landslips. At the 12.4 km mark the contractor is Lutchmansingh Company Limited. This is 10 per cent completed at this time; at the 12.5 km mark, the contractor is Avanash Rambaran and the work on that landslip is 25 per cent completed. At the 13 km mark the contractor is Willford Development Enterprise. The landslip work is 15 per cent completed. At the 15.6 km mark, all on the Cumuto Road, the contractor is Goldwyn Transport and 15 per cent of that landslip is completed. At the 17 km mark, this is being done in-house by the Ministry and 80 per cent of the landslip work is completed. At the 17.2 km, as I have indicated, a new contractor has to be sourced. They had completed 15 per cent of the work when they left the project.

Mr. S. Panday: Could the Minister state the width of the band of unstable soil which commences from the Solomon Hochoy Highway and also what are the boundaries of that band?

Hon. C. Imbert: I wish I could assist the Member at my fingertips but I would most certainly get the information and pass it on to the Member. I am not sure of the width of the band in question.

Mr. S. Panday: Could the hon. Minister state whether that is the only band of unstable soil in Central and South Trinidad and if the answer is no, what are the other bands?

Hon. C. Imbert: I cannot categorically state that it is the only band. I suspect that there are several other bands of unstable soil in other parts of Trinidad and I would provide the information requested.

Plum Mitan Road (Rehabilitation of Massive Landslip)

16. Mr. Harry Partap asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister indicate:

- (a) what are the Ministry's plans for the rehabilitation of the massive landslip at the 7.5 km mark on the Plum Mitan Road which has severely restricted traffic?
- (b) when will such rehabilitation works commence?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): The answer to part (a) is as follows: It is proposed that the Plum Mitan Road be realigned from the 7—8 km mark in order to avoid five landslips at this location. This exercise is expected to commence and be completed in fiscal 2006/ 2007.

A number of drainage projects are being undertaken at this time and details of the work already completed or in progress are as follows:

Location	Contractor	Job Description	Percentage Completed
Plum Mitan Road 5.50 – 5.94 km	Chimara Contractors Limited	Construction of reinforced culvert	100
Plum Mitan Road 5.50 – 5.94 km	Chimara Contractors Limited	Construction of box drain	100
Plum Mitan Road 10.0 – 10.4 km	F.M. Transport & Construction Limited	Construction of box drain	100
Plum Mitan Road 10.5 – 11.0 km	Wedge Trinidad Limited	Reconstruction of cylindrical culvert	100
Plum Mitan Road 14 km	Thomas Horrell	Reconstruction of culvert	Recently commenced

Drainage works are ongoing and should be complete by the end of fiscal September 2006.

**Bonair Road, Cumuto
(Rehabilitative Work)**

17. Mr. Harry Partap asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

With regard to rehabilitative work on the Bonair Road in Cumuto, Sangre Grande, which started over three years ago and has since ceased, could the Minister advise when will these works be completed?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): I thank the Member for Princes Town for not asking a supplemental question.

Bonair Road is situated in an area of poor soils, similar to Cumuto Road, which leads to numerous landslips and poor road surface conditions. The Ministry has been focusing on repairs of landslips on this road and recently awarded a number of contracts to repair landslips affecting the roadway as follows:

Location	Contractor	Job Description	Percentage Completed
Bonair Road 0.0 – 0.1 km	J.C. Contractors Limited	Piling works and reinforced concrete wall	2
Bonair Road 0.2 – 0.3 km	Cyrstal Fountain Limited	Piling works and reinforced concreted wall	10
Bonair Road 0.325 – 0.350 km	Sat Sais Company Limited	Piling works and reinforced concrete wall	2
Bonair Road 0.4 km	ASTA Engineering Limited	Piling works and reinforced concrete wall	
Bonair Road 0.7 – 0.8 km	To be awarded shortly	Piling works and reinforced concrete wall	0
Bonair Road 0.8 – 0.9 km	To be awarded shortly	Piling works	0
Bonair Road 0.9 – 1 km	Avi's Contractors Limited	Piling works and reinforced concrete wall	2

Repairs to landslips at the 4 km mark on Bonair Road are on hold, pending resolution of claims by a property owner in the area. Strengthening and paving of the roadway are ongoing and are expected to be completed in fiscal 2006/2007.

Mr. Partap: Could you tell us what steps are being taken to compensate the property owners whose lands are being damaged by the landslips?

Hon. C. Imbert: There is one property owner that I am aware of, around the 0.4 km mark and there is a dispute over the quantum of compensation. The property

owner at that location is not allowing the continuation of construction. The Solicitor General has been asked to determine the level of compensation. I am hopeful that would be resolved quickly.

**Cunapo Main Road
(Rehabilitation and Paving Details)**

18. Mr. Harry Partap asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister provide the completion date for the rehabilitation and paving of the Cunapo Main Road from Sangre Grande to Biche?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): “Ah working yuh know!” Rehabilitative work on the Cunapo Southern Road, from Sangre Grande to Biche, which includes repairs to landslips, strengthening, paving and drainage work, is ongoing and expected to be completed in 2006. Details of the work are as follows:

(i) Strengthening and paving:—

A contract for strengthening and paving on 11 km of the worst section of the road between 0—9 km mark was awarded to Dipcon Engineering and works commenced in March 2006. To date, 60 per cent of the contract has been completed on the poorest section of the road between the 0—11 km mark and it is expected, barring unforeseen circumstances, that the remaining lengths between the 11 km and 19 km on the Cunapo Southern Road will be completed by September 2006.

(ii) The landslip repair works that are in progress are as follows:

- Between the 8.7—8.9 km mark on the Cunapo Southern Road, the contractor is Raghoonanan Transport and that contract was awarded this month.
- At the 9.8 km mark on the Cunapo Road, the contractor is Nevis Contractors and the work is 25 per cent completed.
- At the 10.1 km mark on the same road, the contractor is GDK General Contractors; that contract has recently begun.
- At the 10.15 km mark, the contractor is Kadar Gajadar and work has also recently begun and it is expected, barring unforeseen circumstances, that all landslips will be repaired by September 2006.

Mr. Partap: Could the Minister tell us if the Ministry has plans to put new bridges at B113 and B213?

Hon. C. Imbert: This is on the Cunapo Southern Road? The contract that has been awarded at this time; the rehabilitation of the roadway and repair of landslips—Having travelled that area myself recently, I did observe that there are a number of bridges that need to be either widened, strengthened or replaced and the Ministry is in the process of developing an action plan to upgrade all the bridges in the area in question.

**Unemployment Relief Programme (URP)
Training Section Sub-office
(Details of)**

19. Mr. Harry Partap asked the hon. Minister of Local Government:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) the rental cost of the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) Training Section sub-office located at the Faiz Khan Building, Canque Junction Biche;
- (b) the cost of the two formal opening ceremonies of the said sub-office in March 2006; and
- (c) the reason for the relocation of the sub-office?

The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Speaker, the rental cost of the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) Training Section sub-office located at the Faiz Khan Building, Canque Junction, Biche was \$4,500 per month. The building was occupied for three months with effect from March 2006—May 2006. Consequently, the sum of \$13,500 was spent for rental of the building. In addition, the sum of \$900 was paid for the services of T&TEC, to improve electrical supply. Thus, the total cost for use of the building for the period was \$14,400.

The Canque Biche sub-office was formally opened on Thursday, March 23, 2006. There was only one formal opening which cost \$7,960.63. *[Interruption]* I think you cannot count. That is to treat with all the people Harry did not treat with. The reason for the relocation of the Canque Biche sub-office from Faiz Khan Building, Canque Junction, Canque Village, Biche, was that the subsisting lease arrangement ended.

**Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission
(Details of the Board of Directors)**

- 20. Mr. Harry Partap** asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:
Could the Minister advise:
- (a) whether a board of directors has been appointed for the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission;
 - (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister provide the names of the Chairman and members of the board of directors; and
 - (c) If the answer to (a) is in the negative, could the Minister advise:
 - (i) why was the board of directors not appointed;
 - (ii) when will the board of directors be appointed; and
 - (iii) whether a workers' representative will be appointed to the board?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In relation to question No. 20, on June 08, 2006 Cabinet approved the appointment of the undermentioned persons as members of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission: Mr. Davanand Ramlal, Chairman; Mr. Hackeem Amad, Deputy Chairman; Mr. Linsey Abdullah—I am calling the other commissioners—Ms. Joslyn Joe-Balfour; Mr. Daniel Dookie; Dr. Chandraban Sharma; Ms. Gloria Hanson; Mr. Marcus Nelson and a representative of the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union (OWTU), which is the union representing the workers.

As a result of that, in relation to (iii) the answer would be the OWTU.

Mr. Ramnath: Davanand Ramlal swung from the UNC to the PNM.

Hon. P. Beckles: I am so glad you gave me that information.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

Discharge of Accused by the State

Mr. Subhas Panday (Princes Town): Thank you, 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 setting free or discharge of accused Sheldon "Skelly" Lovell, Sean "Gumbo" Vincent, Brent

Definite Urgent Matter

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"Small Brent" Dangle, Richard "Chinee" Kirton and Jason Joseph on Monday, June 26, 2006 at the Fourth Criminal Court, Port of Spain without their having to face a trial for the very serious offence of kidnapping Dennis Jodhan Persad because the State's main witness, Joel "Footy" Phillips, an alleged accomplice to the crime, disappeared from the Witness Protection Programme or protective custody.

The matter is definite since it relates to a specific case which was before the High Court of Trinidad and Tobago.

The matter is urgent because of its very recent occurrence and the Government's inability and incompetence in dealing with the escalating crime situation in this country.

The matter is of public importance because such a situation undermines public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, regrettably this Motion does not qualify under this Standing Order.

Mr. Ramnath: Under which Standing Order does it qualify?

Mr. Valley: Ramnath, you know that too. He knows he could have applied since Monday or Tuesday.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 [*The Minister of Local Government*]; read the first time.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (ABSENCE OF RULES)

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 26, 2006]:

Be it Resolved that this honourable House call upon the Government to:

- (i) strengthen its environmental regulations immediately with respect to the water pollution, air pollution and hazardous waste;
- (ii) clearly define what types and levels of emissions can be expected from the said smelters, the potential health risks to workers and residents and how the pollutants from the said smelters will be disposed of;
- (iii) state clearly the economic benefits to be derived from the construction and operation of the said smelters. [*Dr. A. Nanan*]

Hon. P. Beckles: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am really continuing my contribution to this debate on a motion filed by the Member for Tabaquite. I took the time, first of all, to remind this House and to demonstrate the Government's commitment to ensuring the environmental integrity of Trinidad and Tobago, and in so doing dispel the impression created that the Government has a total disregard for the environment.

In my response thus far I have spoken generally about the Government's commitment to the environment. I would go through, very briefly, some of the things I mentioned. I spoke about the establishment of the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), the revision of the National Environmental Policy, the initiative to improve the waste collection system, the decision to close and rehabilitate the Beetham Dump and where appropriate other landfills, the redrafting of the Beverage Container Bill, the declaration of environmentally sensitive species and areas, the declaration of two additional RAMSAR sites: Caroni Swamp and the Buccoo Reef/Bon Accord Lagoon, the development of a national action plan to combat land degradation, the implementation of a community-based national reforestation and watershed rehabilitation programme, the development of a national water resources management policy, the redrafting of the water pollution and air pollution rules, the establishment of ambient air quality monitoring stations and the discontinuation of the use of leaded gasoline.

I would go directly to some of the concerns raised by the Member for Tabaquite, in relation to levels of emissions expected from smelters. I hope that these initiatives for ensuring the integrity and sustainability of the environment that I have outlined a short while ago, first of all, demonstrate the Government's commitment with regard to the protection of health and the environment.

I would now turn my remarks to the existing framework that governs the imposition of standards for air emissions, effluent discharge and hazardous waste disposal, in the absence of finalized rules. One of the major concerns mentioned by the Member for Tabaquite was the issue of not having finalized rules. The Government unequivocally recognizes that it has a responsibility and duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and our environment, in the pursuit of our economic and social well-being.

What this commitment means, among other things, is that as we attract new types of industries to invest in the economic development and prosperity of our nation, whatever industrial processes are proposed by that industry must be properly evaluated to determine the potential environmental impact on public health and the environment. It is the Government's responsibility and commitment—through

the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), and other relevant authorities such as the Forestry Division, the Town and Country Planning Division and others—to ensure that any negative environmental or public health impacts in the short and long term are minimal, if not zero. Therefore, ensuring a strict regime of environmental standards to protect the citizenry, flora and fauna and the businesses that operate within our shores from exposure to environmental health and financial risks—that is of great importance to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. We, therefore, encourage investment in the health of the nation as part of the corporate investment and as good corporate citizenship.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to learn from our history and our experience in achieving rapid industrial growth and change in Trinidad and Tobago, especially with regard to large industrial projects, and it is understandable that any major change in the landscape, the socio-economic composition of an area or the environment will bring great concern, as it did. One needs only to remember, for those of us who are old enough to remember, the challenges that were raised during the development of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. Indeed, we should be very worried if such concerns were not expressed. However, it is also important to recognize both the potential benefits and cost of such change.

This Government, like governments elsewhere; especially those in the developing world, is confronted with the need to make decisions in the face of growing uncertainty about the long-term effects of biochemical processes associated with various types of manufacturing and industrial production, while simultaneously attempting to achieve economic growth and development.

There can be no doubt that the establishment of an aluminium smelter can be an economic benefit to Trinidad and Tobago, but with all industrial processes, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is cognizant of the potential environmental impacts generally associated with aluminium production. The people of Trinidad and Tobago can be assured that there is a process enshrined in the laws of Trinidad and Tobago for vetting the merits and demerits of locating smelters in Trinidad and Tobago. The granting of approval for the construction and operation of aluminium smelters here will depend upon the outcome of a thorough examination of the environmental public health and social impacts of such projects. Much has been said about the current absence of approved water pollution, air pollution and hazardous waste disposal rules and the claims being made, that in the absence of these rules, the EMA is prevented from imposing standards for the discharge of dangerous substances into the environment.

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It is a fact that we still do not have legal rules for water pollution, air pollution and hazardous waste disposal in place at present. However, as I noted earlier, these rules are all at various stages in the process of being drafted and finalized. It is not for a lack of attention or dereliction of duty that these rules have not yet been finalized; it is simply that there is a process for doing so and the Government must ensure that appropriate rules are created to provide protection from the potential risks associated with the new types of economic activities being introduced in Trinidad and Tobago, smelters included.

In the case of the water pollution rules, they are on the legislative agenda and before the Legislative Review Committee. The Draft Air Pollution Rules have been revised by the EMA to reflect the new types of industrial development occurring in the country. Public consultations have been held and the draft rules are now being revised to reflect the public input that was received during the consultation.

The technical brief that would inform the drafting of the Waste Disposal Rules is also currently being researched and drafted. While it must be acknowledged that there is an urgent need to complete these rules, it is important to ensure that they are appropriate for Trinidad and Tobago and based upon the current state of our environment.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important to note, however, that the absence of final legal rules does not prevent the EMA from applying strict standards to protect Trinidad and Tobago against environmental public health risks, nor is the EMA prevented from applying rules of its certificate of environmental clearance process. The EMA has in fact been in the practice of imposing air, water, hazardous wastes and other environmental quality and health standards for several years and it is a matter of public record in the national register that all Certificates of Environmental Clearance (CEC) refer specifically to meeting various international standards in these areas.

I must therefore especially refute the claim of the Member for Tabaquite that the absence of rules prevents the EMA from imposing standards for the discharge of dangerous substances into the environment. He has incorrectly drawn the inference that because our own rules have not yet been finalized, no standards at all are or can be applied to protect public health and the environment from the discharge of dangerous substances in Trinidad and Tobago.

The EMA has in fact been imposing international standards that are acceptable and applicable to the national situation such as the provision of the US Environmental

Protection Agencies Clean Air Act and the World Health Organization, through its CECs process for many years now. To suggest otherwise would be to mislead the Parliament.

It is also instructive to note that many multinational firms work to meet these standards voluntarily since environmental performance is increasingly closely linked to firms' financial performance.

That aside, I wish to say a bit more about the CEC rules and process. The establishment of an aluminium smelter is consistent with Activity 21 of the CEC designated Activities Order 2001, the establishment of a facility for the production or reforming of metals and related products.

The 2001 Certificate in Environmental Clearance Rules was made under section 35(1) of the EM Act of 2000, which came into force on July 07, 2001. The CEC Rules, the CEC Designated Activities Orders and the CEC Fees and Charges Regulations established an important framework for protection against environmental degradation. The objective of the CEC process is integrated into the environmental management at a national level. Towards this end, projects in designated activity areas are assessed in terms of their potential negative impact on human health and on the environment. The CEC stipulates, inter alia, that any person planning to undertake a project in any of the 44 designated activity areas must first obtain a CEC from the EMA.

In granting that CEC, the EMA must comprehensively examine impacts of all phases of the construction and operation of the proposed aluminium smelter on human health and environment. There is a process enshrined in the law, by which certain applicants for the CEC are required to do an environmental impact assessment (EIA). Such a process would apply to the construction and operation of an aluminium smelter.

In its examination, the EMA would ensure that existing national and international standards and guidelines relevant to air emission, effluent discharge and waste disposal and treatment are adhered to, including but not limited to the US Environment Protection Agencies Standards, World Bank and World Health Organization Standards and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards.

Whilst I know that this is very detailed and may not be so exciting that people would want to listen to it, it is important for us to, at least, let the population know the procedure in relation to the application for a smelter is not only a complex one, but one that involves consultation with the public, and also what is required in terms of the CECs and EIA takes into consideration getting involved in very

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technical work that gives a greater understanding as to what will be the impact on the environment, if at all, an approval is to be granted.

Having said that—and having already listed exactly what this Government has been involved in, in relation to the environment—I am not going to go much further. The important point I want to make is that the Member for Tabaquite focused a lot on indicating that if you have no standards—you have no air pollution and water pollution rules, no hazardous waste, the Government has not put in place certain regulatory framework that would protect the public, if at all a CEC has been granted. I have sought to indicate that the absence of those rules does not mean that the EMA cannot put in place what are acceptable international standards that exist all over the world.

What I find very strange and what the Member for Tabaquite did not mention is that whilst this process is taking place in 2006—I have indicated that we have reached very far in ensuring that our rules, standards and regulations are in place—at the time when the Member was a Minister of Government under the UNC at that time—Cabinet agreed, on December 04, 1997, to authorize the then Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to sign a Heads of Agreement for an aluminium smelter project between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and Norsk Hydro. That was nine years ago.

Hon. Members: Repeat that.

Hon. P. Beckles: Whilst my friend raised the issue of our not having standards—*[Interruption]* I am going to repeat it again—we have advanced considerably. This Government actually set up the EMA and gave them the wherewithal to be able to establish rules and regulations for this particular situation that we have now found ourselves in; where people have applied for smelter and there are other industrial activities. The Government can demonstrate its commitment to the environment. We have revisited and revised a national environmental policy, which is fundamental, to ensure that we have put in place policies so that any company or organization coming into the country is aware that we have a document. I laid that document in this Parliament, which speaks exactly to what is the Government's position on these matters. Cabinet gave the Minister of Energy the okay to set up this smelter in 1997. At that time there were no rules and regulations.

The project proposal comprised two trains, with a capital investment amount of US \$1.6 billion for the first train and US \$1 billion for the second train. The two-train smelter had a rated capacity of 474,000 tonnes per annum. This capacity

is much larger than Alutrint's which is 125,000 tonnes and Alcoa's, 341,000 tonnes put together.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: How much they had?

Hon. P. Beckles: They had 474,000 tonnes—[*Interruption*] I am sure Mr. Ramnath will speak and give us further information—[*Interruption*] Mr. Ramnath said he is going to explain where it fell through. The point I am making is that nine years ago—I know that at some point in time my colleague, Dr. Adesh Nanan, was also the Minister of the Environment. I do not know if he was the Minister of the Environment at that time.

I know that there are many other of my colleagues who would be speaking. At that time, the agreement was that under the then UNC government, to the phase one smelter would have had a full 10-year tax holiday. The phase two smelter would have had a 10-year tax holiday with a profit-sharing provision after year five—[*Interruption*]. You would get all of that shortly, I am sure that Mr. Ramnath has all of that, just peep into his paper.

Cabinet agreed that the Government would provide a guarantee of T&TEC's payment obligation under any power purchase agreement between T&TEC and the power plant. Nine years ago, whether or not it fell through, the government at that time agreed to the establishment of an aluminium smelter, which substantively, when you combine Alutrint and ALCOA, would have far exceeded, in terms of the tonnes per annum. No standards existed. I am sure that even as I explain, as you do not have your official standards and that the various Air Pollution Rules and Water Pollution Rules are yet to be made legal, does not in any way stop, if at all. We need to be clear that at this point in time, as we do this debate, no CEC has yet been granted.

I have spent quite a long time explaining my position. I hope that the situation is much clearer and certainly, the rules are in different stages before the Legislative Review Committee and should be before this Parliament very shortly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all I want to congratulate my friend, the Member for Tabaquite, on his vision and foresight in bringing this most important Motion before the House. As you would recognize, there is considerable interest in this Motion as demonstrated by the Members opposite, as compared to other Motions that have come here before.

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I want to be as gracious as I can to my friend from Arima. What is clear is that she has tried her very best to defend the indefensible and has sought to assure us that there are things which are going to happen to cure the ills that this Motion has raised. *[Mr. Valley sighs aloud]*

I think the football is finished. There is an illness caused by aluminium smelters called dementia, is that the correct pronunciation? It looks as though my friend from Diego Martin Central has worked in an aluminium smelter.

I really want to make it very clear that the issues raised in this Motion have to do with the strengthening of environmental legislation, the types and levels of emissions that can be expected, potential risks to workers and residents, how we are going to get rid of the pollutants or to prevent the pollutants from affecting the health and welfare of citizens and most importantly to state the economic benefits to be derived from the construction and operation of the smelter.

This is a Motion which is well thought out. It deals with issues which affect all citizens of the country: the business community, the residents of Point Fortin, the people who are going to work in these plants and, indeed, all those who are concerned about Trinidad and Tobago.

When the Heads of Agreement was signed between the government of the UNC and Norsk Hydro there were no modern environmental regulations enforced, but we have had from time to time, dating back to colonial period, different aspects of environmental rules. That was a Heads of Agreement; a statement of principle, between two organizations: a government and a business from Norway, looking at the possibility of setting up such an arrangement.

It is clear that the Government has entered into a business arrangement with the proposed developers and it is now up to the proposed developers to get the required clearances to proceed. The clearing of land for the smelter was approved by the EMA and such a project requires the EMA's approval. Once you begin to clear lands you require approval. Planning is not a function of the EMA, it is a function of the Town and Country Planning Division. This is in an advanced stage and it is now up to the EMA to grant the CEC and to determine the terms of reference and require an EIA to be done.

The issue is whether we have rules which will govern the performance of these companies and not only aluminium smelters but, indeed, all other companies that pollute the environment. We live with pollution, we regulate pollution and we

say we are prepared to accept a certain level of pollution. We do not talk environmental preservation nowadays, we talk sustainable development and we talk about environmental protection.

The EMA, although it has certain powers under the CEC Rules, does not have arbitrary powers. The purpose of Parliament's approving standards and making those standards into law, is to prevent Dr. Macintosh and Dr. Agard and their organization known as the EMA, from acting in an arbitrary and lawless fashion. When the Minister says that the EMA can, based on the provisions of the CEC Rules, establish standards, she is totally misled, otherwise there will be no reason for Parliament, in setting standards and passing law.

It was not the intention of Parliament, when we passed the EMA Act of 2000, to give the EMA carte blanche to approve standards and to insist that companies meet those standards. The EMA is expected to utilize the standards that Parliament has approved in determining what kind of standards the companies that emit pollutants will follow.

2.45 p.m.

I served on the standards committee at one time, when we developed the water pollution rules; it was a TTBS effort. We are told five years later by the hon. Minister, when she spoke on the last occasion, that there was need to revise these rules and I can tell you what they are. We are talking here about environmentally sensitive areas, noise pollution, environmentally sensitive species, water pollution, certificates of environmental clearance, air pollution, waste management and hazardous substances. Noise pollution is in effect, that has not changed. Environmentally sensitive areas rules and environmentally sensitive species rules are in effect.

The Water Pollution Rules are in draft form; those rules were laid in Parliament in 2001 and only a negative resolution of Parliament would not have made it law. There was no such negative resolution because the time had elapsed because of the closure of Parliament for one reason or the other. Five years later, the hon. Minister is saying that the Water Pollution Rules have been drafted and we expect to see them shortly. In the meantime, industrial expansion has been moving apace, and the population has not been protected even in the presence of the Environmental Management Authority.

So is the Minister saying that the EMA cannot, in the absence of the Water Pollution Rules, enforce on companies that are currently polluting the environment, standards which would prevent them from doing so? And the answer is, they cannot; they are not violating any rules, because there are no rules; the standards

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are not there. So I want to make it clear that it is urgent—as the Member for Tabaquite has insisted—that these rules come before the House and they are made public so that prospective investors would know exactly the standards that they are supposed to follow.

The Air Pollution Rules have been in draft as well. Five years has elapsed and we have not seen any new rules coming here. So Trinidad and Tobago can have all kinds of industries polluting the environment and all we are hearing is that legislation will come.

Waste management; there are no rules developed for waste management. At least I have not seen the draft if there is any, or if consideration is being given to that. Hazardous management, an issue that is connected to the aluminium smelter and other industrial activities, there are no rules that have been developed to date, or if they have been developed, the public has not been made aware of those two important pieces of pending legislation. But these two sets of rules are extremely important for us to proceed with our rate of industrial development. I am not aware that the changes in the draft of the Environmental Policy of Trinidad and Tobago, which was laid here, have been so far-reaching that they require major amendments to the draft rules, which were laid here in 2001.

The Minister in replying to the Member for Tabaquite indicated that the reason for the delay was that there were major changes to the National Environmental Policy and therefore the rules had to reflect the changes which were included in the National Environmental Policy. Well, let the Minister give us an indication of how early those rules are going to be laid here so that the country would be aware of the standards that we have set.

The standards as we all know, are not something that we sit in Trinidad and Tobago and develop, because we feel like developing standards. We look at scientific information; we consult major industrial countries; we look at legislation across the board; we look at particular circumstances with respect to aluminium smelting, steel, petroleum refining, quarrying, and so forth, and we say these are acceptable standards based on the impact on human health and the environment. There are a whole number of criteria which are being used when these rules are being developed, and we have no shortage of competent people in Trinidad who, if they are given the right support and direction from the Government, will produce a piece of work that is second to none. But for the longest while we are dragging our feet with respect to these things, and people are concerned whether the Government is really serious about having modern legislation to govern the environment.

What this Government is good at, is to have people monitor the number of decibels over and above what is within the rules during Carnival time; when that is of least concern to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. They harass the people playing their boom boxes, as they call them, and their bands and fetes; and a certain minority will object to having a fete in a certain place, as if they do not know Carnival is an institution in Trinidad and Tobago; and the EMA will move in as self-righteous, indignant regulators in order to punish people who are having a good time; not the criminals, but decent people.

So Noise Pollution Rules are implemented to the extent that people are fined; their fetes are shut down; their equipment is removed and so forth; whereas the most important set of rules with respect to polluting our waterways; polluting our air; polluting our future generations are left unattended. I think that the Minister should understand—I know she has just been put into that portfolio, a short period, and she deals with a lot of recalcitrant people at the EMA. I served as vice-chairman of that organization at one time, when we had an EMA—

Hon. Member: When we had a real government.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Yes—and I know how difficult it is to get these things through, but we have to make a very special—and we are trying to help the Government. I do not know why you are taking the position that the Member for Tabaquite is opposed to anybody in this matter; we are trying to help. We are trying to help. At one point, because of your soft manner of speaking it was difficult to discern whether you are confrontational or whether you—

Dr. Moonilal: She from Ste. Madeline.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be distracted by my friend from Oropouche. I just wanted to make the point that is urgent; and I want to make the point that waste management and hazardous substances rules are most urgent and should be on the front burner.

We have conducted numerous studies on hazardous waste. We have been through all kinds of conferences and meetings to discuss it. We have had consultants abroad, they have worked with the Government and various Ministries and so forth; but up to today, we have not seen any of these rules. A lot of mercury is dumped in the Gulf of Paria, for one reason or another; a lot of hazardous waste is dumped in the waterways in Trinidad. A lot of hazardous, gaseous emissions enter the airspace of Trinidad, and we are not protected. So what are we going to do with hazardous waste that is coming out of the aluminium smelter? That is a genuine concern.

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The people who are talking about aluminium smelting today are talking about being given an assurance that their health and welfare will be protected; or if you look at it another way, will not be affected; that is their concern. And if the concern is hydrogen fluoride which everybody knows is a hazardous substance in certain quantities; and everybody knows that cyanide is a deadly substance; and if pot lining is not adequately protected in transportation or in getting rid of, it could impact on the health and welfare of people, then what people are saying is, assure us that you have the various mechanisms and you have the laws that will protect us against companies that come here.

Two persons died a tragic death in Penal yesterday. I worked in Penal for many years and I know the family well; young people in particular. Mr. Speaker, we all know that accidents do not happen, they are caused. That is the fundamental rule of safety management; accidents do not happen, they are caused. The Ministry of Labour has worked hard in getting Mr. Partap's Bill several years after it was first introduced here, known as the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Bill, which was designed to protect workers in this country.

The underlying thesis of the Bill is to establish a management system for managing health and safety in the workplace. It is not about punishment, it might be about that, but the purpose of such legislation is for companies to set up safety management systems and to introduce what is now called continual improvement of such systems, so that we can well beforehand recognize if there is an accident waiting to happen.

In the same way, Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Management Act and the regulations and rules that flow from this Act are intended to establish a management system for managing the environment; whether it is the Nariva Swamp, whether it has to do with sensitive areas, the Buccoo Reef, RAMSAR sites, whether it is in industry. In the Parliament we should set up a safety management system because I do not know, as I indicated to you, what to do in the event of a fire, whether there is an alarm system, what are the exit routes where we should run, where we should gather and so forth. What I am saying is, and having been a guest here in 1990 you would understand my anxieties—we must set the example early here and I would volunteer my services free to you, so we can at least know how to react in the event of a major disaster, whether it is an earthquake, hurricane, fire, whatever.

The purpose of the law, if you look at it, was to really encourage companies and organizations to establish a management system. If we establish a management system for the environment for safety and any other areas, then it would be easy

for us to see where our gaps are and to try to fill those gaps as early as possible.[*Desk thumping*] Do not view this Motion here as an attempt to criticize you, Madam Minister; this is intended to draw to the attention of the country and the hon. Members here with respect, the problems which we face as a country. We face the problem of water pollution and no one is in a better position than the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment to understand that when you are dealing with polluted streams it makes it more difficult for the Water and Sewerage Authority to present potable water for the public.

So we have a duty to make sure that people do not continue to pollute. They do it with impunity in this country and I am not talking here about only industry, the air emissions or whatever leaves the various plants. You were not here, Mr. Speaker, for the last few years that there have been oil spills in the Gulf of Paria. That is not only because there has been a competent manager of the environment in one of the major oil industries, but it is because the companies are now implementing in a very serious way, management systems to prevent this from happening, so there would be early detection and warning. Also to take the necessary steps to ensure that workers follow the rules.

Let us look a little at the types of emissions that can be expected from aluminium smelting. I would have to either speak a lot faster or to continue on another occasion because one hour and 15 minutes is quite a short time for me on this matter today.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: When they are teaching us how to escape from here maybe you could give us—

Mr. K. Ramnath: I would not like to see you get into any trouble, especially since you look so beautiful these days.[*Laughter*]

Hon. Members: Who is that? Arouca South, Arouca South looking good these days.

Mr. K. Ramnath: The Member for Diego Martin Central would know that instead of bringing a Fair Trading Bill to the Parliament he should have brought some other legislation which would allow them to go to Germany and not keep my hon. friend here in Trinidad during such an exciting period.

Mrs. Job-Davis: What time is the next meeting to go to Canada?

Mr. K. Ramnath: Pardon? Going to Canada?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: How to escape to Canada?

Mr. K. Ramnath: Okay.

Miss Beckles: The ladies know your business, boy.

Hon. Member: "Yuh business on de road."

Mr. K. Ramnath: You know, Mr. Speaker, if the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation had a \$2.7 billion budget and I were a Minister in that area and I was not consulted, I would be very offended.*[Laughter]* I could understand the frustration of my friend for Tobago East. I went to Tobago a few weeks ago to talk to the Chief Secretary and I was sure she would have been there to greet me, except I did not know she was persona non grata at the THA.*[Laughter]*

Mrs. Job-Davis: That is why I want to go to Canada—

Mr. K. Ramnath: Hydrogen fluoride, Mr. Speaker; I want to make the point that a lot of these pollutants do not kill you unless they are in quantities above the permissible level, and enough research has gone into many of those effluents to determine what is considered to be safe level. They have done a lot of air dispersion models; we have looked at a lot of data from other countries and other operations and so on. But the literature suggests—and for the benefit of Members, the literature is quite comprehensive—Workers Compensation Board of Ontario has done a significant amount of work on health effects of aluminium in the workplace.

Miss Beckles: I would not mind a copy.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I would make a copy available to you. Research has shown the possibility of lung and bladder cancer, bone deformity, tooth decay, et cetera, as a result of—Interestingly, hydrogen fluoride is used in toothpaste and in fluoridation of water, but in excess quantities can have just the reverse effect.

Sulphur dioxide, I think everybody knows that sulphur dioxide results in acid rain; it can cause serious respiratory problems, corrosion, discomfort in the workplace, a lot of coughing; it has a very pungent odour. Oxide of nitrogen is resulting in nitric acid, which is a very strong acid, which results in acid rain and air pollution. Benzene is a highly toxic product. As you know, one of the reasons we are moving away from methanol as an additive to gasoline for increasing the octane number to ethanol is because of benzene, which results in the catalytic cracking of exhaust gases.

Chlorofluorocarbon gases, which is a by-product of aluminium smelting, does not have any direct impact on human health, but certainly contributes to global

warming; higher temperatures and so forth. Bi-polychlorinated bi-phenyls, a group of chlorinated organic compounds, which are also soil contaminants and the spent pot lining, which contains fluoride and cyanide, are of major concern. Talking to the Member for Point Fortin—I do not think he would mind—we were looking at what to do in the meantime, because it would be about seven years from now when operations begin that you would have to change out your pot liners.

The issue before the country today is whether we can dispose of these extremely dangerous substances contained in the pot liners locally, and if so, how? Or, how do we export these pot liners to countries that have developed the technology to get rid of them? What is very interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the NEC, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the Environmental Management Authority together have not come up with any definite plan as to how we would handle this issue.

One official from the NEC, which has a 60 per cent shareholding in Alutrint, indicated that we do not have to worry about that until about five years from now. Clearly, he is not one in the environmental business; he must be a project engineer who is anxious to get his project through. But to say that we should not be too concerned about that now, because the issue would not arise in five years time, is to demonstrate a lack of understanding; and since I am in a good mood today I do not like to use harsh terms. But if anything were to go wrong before the seven-year cycle, the question is, what mechanisms are in place for us to deal with this problem?

The issue of the Basel Convention arose that we can ship hazardous waste under the convention if the country to which we are shipping is in agreement to have it done. Well, if that is the arrangement, let us put that in place as part of the terms of reference for granting the CEC for such a project, rather than say we do not have to worry about that. That is extremely poor environmental management and I think it is urgent that that matter be addressed by the Environmental Management Authority.

We are calling on the Government to not only look at the potential impact, but to make sure that the laws are quickly put in place so that companies such as Alutrint and Alcoa will know that we are not just going to take from them what they say. I have a document here which outlines what they say would happen; the environmental effects of an aluminium smelter and the effects of fluoride in the community; what effects could the smelter have on community water supplies; about the air emissions and how the liners would be treated and so on; that is not

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enough for Trinidad and Tobago. That is a good commitment. That is what an environmentally responsible company is expected to do and that is to say how they are going to do it. If we do not have the rules in place they have no obligation to do those things because they would not be violating the rules. I would like to see which government; I would not like to see any government say, after somebody has invested US \$1.5 billion in a plant, that we are not going to allow you to operate the plant because you did not meet the standards that you say you were going to meet. So we want to make sure that these things are understood by both sides and that we can move ahead with the process of industrialization.

The other issue here is something which concerns people. It is no point the Government arguing back or arguing with the residents of Chatham and Point Fortin who are expressing a concern. There is no point leading a demonstration against the demonstrators. What I want to suggest to those who want to lead demonstrations against the demonstrators, is to have dialogue. And the best chairperson to sit with these people at the table would be the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment. A lot of issues are not settled because people do not know, because of the absence of information. What are some of these issues people are talking about? They are talking about air pollution; they are talking about water pollution; they are talking about experiences they have read about and told about in other countries; they have certain fears that developed countries are not encouraging construction of aluminium smelters any more; that might be true, that might not be true.

There are 20 smelters being operated by Alcoa in the world today; some are being upgraded. All people need to know is that the fears that they have about their health, welfare and community are not well founded and that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is going to protect them and protect their families and so forth.

That south western peninsula has been an extremely poor area. I saw a question filed here by the Member for St. Augustine—I do not want to pre-empt, but it is on the Order Paper. It has to do with the erosion which is taking place at Icacos. At Icacos—and I do not have to lecture the Member for Point Fortin although he does not get too many votes down there, but he understands—there was a cemetery that has disappeared; there was a lighthouse that has disappeared; there was a football field that has disappeared; no longer are we seeing Cedros people on the national football scene. In fact, hundreds of metres of land have disappeared.

We have also looked at studies in that area; there was a grant available for a study to look at erosion in the south west peninsula. If you go there today, you would see in spite of riprap walls and so on that have been erected, the force of nature is so severe that it continues to erode. There you have people who have been living on subsistence agriculture for all their lives; who have been working in the coconut industry that pays a pittance, not even the minimum wage; who have little opportunity. I do not think that any reasonable person will object to a plant being constructed where they can find employment during construction and during permanent ongoing operations if they feel secure that the health and welfare of their families will be protected.

That is why we need to expedite these regulations. So we need to talk to them and we need to allay their fears, as well as to say, look we are not only talking but we are backing up our talk with these regulations; these are the rules. Because I tell you, that if Alcoa goes before the Environmental Commission at some time to argue, I am not in the same status as the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment as a lawyer, but in spite of all that is being said about the powers under CEC group rules to grant the CEC based on what the EMA wants, when the EMA decides to take action against the company, it has to be action based on violation, not of the CEC rules, but the laws of Trinidad and Tobago; and this is the advice of a bush lawyer. I used to say cane fields but we do not even have cane fields left.

So, let us act and let us talk and if you are not happy with the speed with which the EMA is proceeding let us supplement the EMA with contract staff and get the experts from abroad, if it is necessary, to do some work in a very short period of time that would make citizens very happy.

3.15 p.m.

Now the Minister did not deal with the level of emissions because quite clearly she summarized that this is a matter that the EMA are looking at before they grant the CEC. My understanding is that they have sent a deficiency report back to Alcoa with respect to certain matters before they can grant them a CEC, but it is clear to me that that is not sufficient, and I think I have said enough on that matter.

What are the economic benefits? What is pushing all of this is an issue I want to raise here. Nobody knows what is the agreed gas price and I am sure that if I speak to Ministers outside of this Chamber they would also say they do not know. But feasibility studies have been conducted and investment decisions have been taken and what is being awaited is the Certificate of Environmental Clearance. It

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is difficult for me to understand how you would conduct feasibility studies unless you use a number of scenarios. By guessing what the Government is going to sell the gas for? And that is one possibility.

So NGC is saying, we are not involved; we are not involved this time around in determining the gas price. That is the position of the National Gas Company. I used to be on the board of the National Gas Company as well, so I know how they think there; they have some very good men there, but some slow thinkers. *[Interruption]* So NGC is saying, we would charge the Government a transportation cost to bring the gas from bpTT through the pipeline, but the gas belongs to the Government—this tranche of gas—and the Government would decide what price it wishes to sell to Alcoa and Alutrint.

I find that to be a very interesting matter. I find it to be extremely interesting, because all along NGC has acted as the agent for the Government and in every case that I know, NGC has entered into an agreement with respect to gas price. An agreement with petrochemical companies, steel companies and various other companies operating here; NGC has negotiated the gas price on behalf of the Government and NGC is saying today, we are not getting involved in that; that is the Government. May I ask the hon. Minister as a Member of the Government, whether you have, in fact, agreed as a Government on the gas price? I would be most willing to sit down and have you respond.

Miss Beckles: As you would have observed I have, more or less, restricted my contribution to the environmental aspect; someone else is going to speak on that and you would get the answers.

Mr. Sharma: You have the authority; we do not want to hear from anybody else. *[Inaudible]*

Mr. K. Ramnath: I trust that my friend from Point Fortin would be the spokesman on the issue of gas price.

Hon. Members: Aah, aah, ooh, ooh.

Mr. Sharma: Might be more Tobago.

Mr. K. Ramnath: What is the secrecy hovering around this particular issue? With respect to Alutrint—I was just looking for my notes on the amount of gas they would be using.

Mr. Speaker: Before you continue; hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Couva South has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Alutrint, Mr. Speaker, which would have a capacity of 125,000 tonnes per year will use an estimated 75 million cubic feet of gas per day. Alcoa with 341,000 tonnes per year will use an estimated 115 million cubic feet per day over a 20-year period. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries indicated that the royalty gas from bpTT has been allocated to the aluminium smelter, terms of which have not been finalized. The Permanent Secretary has indicated that.

You would recall, Mr. Speaker, when we closed the negotiations with Atlantic LNG for Train 4 and it was decided to ring-fence Train 4 from the rest of the other trains that the Prime Minister stood up in this House and indicated that as part of the arrangements between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and Atlantic LNG, bpTT has agreed on a special tranche of gas which would be given to the Government in lieu of royalty payments which could not come into effect now but sometime later on. I cannot remember the exact date when that agreement was signed many years ago when the Train 1 was negotiated under the Government of my colleagues here.

Because we could not increase the royalty from a ridiculous one and a half cents, I think, per million British thermal units, we agreed that we were going to accept a tranche of gas from bpTT in lieu of that. And that gas was going to the Minister of Public Utilities [*Interruption*] at that time and she is so gracious to agree with me. That gas was going to be used to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago do not have to pay extraordinary increases in electricity prices. Well, it would appear to me now that things have changed because not only has the RIC agreed to an increase in the price of electricity, the gas which was supposed to go towards keeping the price of electricity down would now go to aluminium smelter. The question I want to ask is, what is the secrecy surrounding the price of gas with respect to these two aluminium smelters.

Would it not have been okay for the Government to come here and say that we are giving away the gas because we expect certain economic benefits and returns in the long run rather than keep it a secret? And I do not think it is good for the people of Cedros either because as doubts mount in their minds about the real motives behind constructing these plants, you further increase those doubts and fears when you keep a lot of things in the dark; but it is also a duty of the Government to tell this Parliament.

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I want to remind Members of this House, most of whom were not here when I was here [*Interruption*] that the first Prime Minister made it a point of duty to bring a Motion for the House to agree on the construction of a steel mill known as Iscott and several other projects that the Government was involved in, so there was public debate. The Government ended up winning the debates because of their numbers, but at least Members of this Parliament had an opportunity to debate those issues.

We are now seeing this personal accumulation of power becoming so acute that people believe: I do not have to consult anybody; I may not even have to consult my Cabinet colleagues on these matters. I have given you a job; I have increased your pay; I have given you house rental; I have given you an increase in travelling, taxes and cellphones and so on; why are you all complaining? But I do not think my friends on the opposite side would fall for that, they certainly have more integrity than that.

So I would expect what they would do, they would say to the Prime Minister: Let us go before the Parliament on major issues, developmental issues, and the Member for Tobago East might get an opportunity to speak—having earned her MBA with distinction—

Hon. Members: Oh, yes.

Mr. K. Ramnath:—on such matters. But I am asking again, are we giving away the gas and if so why are we doing that and why are we afraid to tell the public that we have made a private arrangement?

This is the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This is not the prerogative of a Government and a few in the Government. So I am asking the question, Mr. Speaker, that this 190 million cubic feet of gas which would be allocated by the Government, not NGC, to the aluminium smelting plants; at what price are we going to give them? What is the escalation factor over the next 20 years and what are the benefits to be derived from this operation?

It might be said that during construction phase we would hire 1,500 workers. We hired more than that when we were doing Atlantic LNG. It became such an important issue there that we had Ministers of Government involved, trying to secure good standard of health and safety and high standard of wages and so on. You pay a very high price in Trinidad if you are in the PNM and you advocate on behalf of your own supporters, but I do not sympathize with them for being in the PNM anyway.

The point is, that you are assured of 1,500 construction jobs and we are told that there will be 880 jobs when the plants are running full steam ahead. That is Alutrint and Sural would now be taking ingots and billets and converting them to usable products. In the case of Alcoa, all their production would be exported—all 341,000 tonnes of ingot and billets would be exported. What is the value that we are adding in the case of Alcoa? If we are providing—

Mr. Valley: I have to get in the debate.

Mr. K. Ramnath: You have to get into the debate, yes—these benefits, then we ought to know from the Government—and it would be something that we would welcome if the Minister of Trade and Industry would say, that these are the benefits that we are going to derive. So all we are asking is, tell us! Tell us what we are getting in return; are we going subsequently to take billets from Alcoa and have them processed in downstream? What we do know is downstream capacity of Alutrint would be for the time being sufficient for its own production, but there might be the potential for expansion; I do not know, and whether or not we are going to export these things.

If we are using ingots to make billets to send to China, as has been rumoured, then what we are really doing is adding value in China. We want to add value here, but the value chain is too short. If you are simply making aluminium using natural gas— *[Interruption]* The Member for Diego Martin would speak some time later. The question is what would be that value chain and what benefits would come to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their cheap gas which they are offering. So we expect that the Minister would let us know what is happening with that.

I want to just look at the attitude— *[Interruption]* of Government to the issues of industrialization. I think it is very important for us to talk about that for a few minutes. I read in the newspaper recently, Mr. Prakash Saith, someone whom I know quite well, talking about Point Lisas II. So we are not going to be expanding the Point Lisas Industrial Estate; we are going to create the second Point Lisas Industrial Estate. The northern boundary of this Point Lisas II would be the Rivulet Link Road, the Point Lisas Link Road from the Solomon Hochoy Highway into Point Lisas; and the southern boundary would be the Cedar Hill Road from the Claxton Bay Flyover to the sea and all the lands in-between those two roads would now be given—former Caroni lands vested in the State. The State would now make those lands available to the National Energy Corporation and they would be given to the NEC for developing an industrial estate.

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But inside of that area, if you pass on the Point Lisas Link Road or you pass on the Cedar Hill Road you would not see people, but if you fly in a helicopter and you look down you would see scattered communities, that is how the sugar industry was developed. They were estates; there were barracks and so forth and people built homes over the last 100 years or so. I have not heard a word from the NEC or anybody as to how we are going to treat with citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I do not now whether we could have a little \$30 million put aside to help these people to relocate. We have a lot of money in Trinidad and Tobago today, but every time the NEC or one such agency gets involved in such a project they begin to “hound down” people with notices. Suddenly, a lot of people are squatters; suddenly you have to get out of our land, as though Saith mother leave that in a will for him. [*Laughter*] So they send their henchmen whom they hire, not even real police, people whom they hire; people who have no experience in security. Rao decides—Uthara Rao—he comes into Caroni to establish the second indentureship and nobody can touch Mr. Rao.

Mr. Sharma: Not even Ken.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Not even Minister Sahadeo can touch Mr. Rao. You do not fire Rao, you fire Sahadeo. [*Laughter*] And you do not pursue matters in the Industrial Court concerning misconduct; you pay the workers and the board says there is nothing wrong with that, and the Minister says there is nothing wrong with that. Charges of sexual harassment which went before the Ministry of Labour; I am sure when my friend from Point Fortin was a judge there he would never tolerate such a withdrawal. [*Laughter*] You have to forgive me if I sound emotional, because instead of saying we have a plan to relocate people, which might cost some money and we need these lands so that they would not be contaminated or polluted and so forth—I am talking about people who have legitimate title, but there might be a need to protect them from the effects of pollution, but there is no planning.

One of the famous statements of Prime Minister Williams to Eugenio Moore when he fired Moore, was that planning had lost its mystique. I thought that today we would have gained some serious insights into our failure to plan for the long-term and do something about that problem of lack of planning, so that Mr. Saith and his Board of NEC which is headed by the czar, himself, Dr. Kenneth Julien, who was commissioned by the RIC to do a study on electricity—it is amazing

how these fellows work. Head of the National Energy Corporation and head of UTT and every head of everything and then you know Kenneth J, Mr. Speaker, Kenneth S. Julien is commissioned—

Mr. Valley: I do not know how this man could ever repeat that.

Mr. K. Ramnath: You understand, yes. You sound as though you are in the second phase of slavery. [Laughter] [Interruption] With a brilliant mind like yours if you were given the opportunity you might have done better.

Mr. Sharma: Produce the same thing for less.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I appreciate the comments of the Member for Diego Martin Central. The point I am making, Mr. Speaker, there is no transparency in a lot of these issues, so that if they discover that Prof. Julien is a very bright man, and indeed he is very bright. If you discover that, you give him *carte blanche*; he walks into the University of Trinidad and Tobago, the Bachelor of Technology programme was accredited by the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, he scrapped that and say no more. He walks in—the people at the University of Trinidad and Tobago were doing their degree programmes, accredited by the University of Houston; top class, one of the best Universities in America, if not the best, in the first three for petroleum engineering. They were granting the degrees at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, he said, end of that. He went to the San Fernando Technical Institute and the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and scrapped the people examination and said, you are now going to be part of UTT. Ad hocism of the worst form; no planning; no transparency, students are totally confused; they do not know where to go.

All I am saying is, when you run something like the National Energy Corporation, with increased mandate; it is no longer subservient to the National Gas Company. It has now reassumed its original position of being the umbrella organization for energy planning in this country, and there is secrecy at every level. If it is not gas price, it is about what we are going to do with lands and it is about not consulting people who are going to be impacted by industrialization.

Industrialization is meant to bring happiness to the people of this country. It is meant to increase your gross domestic product; it is intended to create jobs and make us, truly a First World country, but people are concerned: How are you going to treat me when you tell me that I should move from an area; when you tell me I am not talking to you? The Prime Minister does not wish to talk to the people of Chatham. I do not know why he does not wish to talk to them.

Hon. Members: Because of Larry. To spite Larry.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I do not believe that the Member for Point Fortin is anything other than a very decent man. Why would he want to spite the Member for Point Fortin? *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I think I have made the point; the point is that in this process of industrialization people matter more and I get the impression that as far as the Government is concerned we are doing this for the people and in the long run people would benefit, so let us not be bothered about what happens in the meantime. And I think it is just the reverse of what should be taking place.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, before I wind up, that you must tell people whether you are really going to bring 1,000 Chinese into Trinidad *[Interruption]* to work because somebody said, we are going to use Chinese technology which is not true. The technology is going to be US technology, but there has been a lot of discussion, in fact, even people from the NEC have indicated that they would be bringing Chinese into Trinidad. Not that I have any problem with Chinese, but I am talking about people from China *[Interruption]* to work in these plants and I want to find out what work are these people coming to do and what special skills do they have that we do not have, or what special skills that they are going to bring to Trinidad and Tobago so that they can add value to the labor force.

May I advise the hon. Minister, that the earlier she would bring to this Parliament the rules governing hazardous waste, waste management, air pollution and water pollution is the more certain we would be as a people that our environment is not going to be polluted at our expense or our environment is not going to be damaged because we are seeking investment from abroad; that we are going to live in balance; that we are going to be true proponents of sustainable development. Let us make sure that we provide the EMA with the resources that are necessary, so that they can quickly get this legislation through.

Let us be open to the public and talk to the people of Chatham and the south west peninsula and try to allay their fears. Do not let us have a PR exercise; this thing called public consultation is a massive farce and I would tell you why. It is indeed a good step, but if you are talking to people about the erection of a steel complex or aluminium complex and they do not understand the environmental implications and so on; then they would not know the right questions to ask. And I want to ask as well, that a role of the EMA should be that of public education. I think it is a role.

Mrs. Job-Davis: It is in the legislation.

Mr. K. Ramnath: And it is in the National Environmental Policy, but are you satisfied that the EMA has been carrying out that role? Because it is not enough to put a green leaf in the newspaper and make some announcements on World Environment Day and get Petrotrin and a few companies to do certain things.

I know that you were impressed with the exhibition at the University of the West Indies and particularly, the Petrotrin's exhibition on biodiversity, but I want to say that the EMA has to do a lot more than that. In fact, the EMA should be, not there to listen to what the developers are saying or what the people are saying. The EMA should first of all inform the public of what companies intend to do; what are the likely implications of such projects and so forth, so that people would know well in advance what kind of questions to pose.

3.45 p.m.

How are these people going to hire experts? These are ordinary people who are concerned about their groundwater, their cattle, and their lands and so forth. If they do not have that public education available to them—and I believe the Minister must insist that this organization gets the facts to the people and if it is in conflict with the role of the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), find some department of Government that will educate the public so they will know the right kind of issues that ought to be raised..

So with these few comments, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Lawrence Achong (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been drawn into this debate mainly because much of what is being said or has been said concerns the constituency of Point Fortin, but I would like to start off by reading into the record of Parliament the words of the former Prime Minister Panday when he signed the Heads of Agreement with Norsk Hydro back in 1998 and I am doing this so that Members could see the UNC's thinking some eight years ago. And this is from the *Trinidad Guardian* of yesterday:

'It is with great pleasure that I address you on what for my government and the country is a most important and historic occasion. Today heralds a new dawn, the start of what might be considered a new industry with this signing of the project agreement for the establishment of an aluminium smelter in Trinidad and Tobago.'

... 'We have excelled in areas in which previous attempts to achieve what is now a reality have failed miserably. There are important socio-economic

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bases for the establishment of a world-scale aluminium smelter in Trinidad and Tobago...

This project will provide sustainable employment opportunities and further aid economic development in this country. Relative to other energy industries, an aluminium project would generate substantially highly skilled jobs and it promises to create significant downstream opportunities.”

Mr. Speaker, it would appear that eight or nine years ago, the then government was in full support of the construction of an aluminium smelter in Trinidad and Tobago. What has happened since then? I do not know, but I am disturbed by what has been happening because the constituency of Point Fortin has been neglected over the years by several governments; PNM, NAR, UNC and the constituency is now coming into its own. There is the Atlantic LNG plant and we are about to get a smelter. So the misinformation that is being foisted on the people of Point Fortin is deliberate and one can clearly see a political agenda.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Of course.

Mr. L. Achong: I was voted into office by 11,000 out of 16,000 voters.

Mr. S. Panday: Tell them. “Dey can’t touch yuh.”

Mr. L. Achong: And I have a responsibility to ensure that the people of Point Fortin—which includes Chatham and Cedros—get what they deserve. What really prompted me to speak today was a former Attorney General, Mr. Ramesh Maharaj, threatening to take injunctive action to stop the establishment of the smelter, marching to Port of Spain. He may have some difficulty in doing that, so I think he should confine himself to what is happening in the UNC and the side that he is supporting.

I am not speaking out of turn because I can remember clearly when I was in the Cabinet some years ago having to decide whether we would allow Mr. Maharaj—because he wanted to be a special prosecutor to prosecute Mr. Ganga Singh, Mr. Panday and Mr. Sadiq Baksh and the Cabinet had to deliberate on that. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Valley: You cannot leak Cabinet business.

Mr. L. Achong: Now, all is fair in love and war, he is back with them. I do not know if at some time in the future he will want to prosecute them again. They are flip-flopping so often, we do not know. So he comes into my constituency to create that kind of problem, unlike the Member for St. Augustine, who came to talk about party matters in a very dignified way.

Mrs. Job-Davis: And you allowed him.

Mr. L. Achong: Of course I allowed him. He was there looking for support and there is nothing wrong with that, but we are not going to allow Mr. Maharaj to come in there and behave like that. We are hearing so many things about the ill effects of this smelter and most of the information being provided here was gleaned from plants that were built in the 50s and 60s. I do not believe that the EMA or the present Government would allow any industry to come into Trinidad and Tobago that is going to have an adverse effect on the health and welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I was in Point Lisas in the early 80s for the start-up of the plant with the NEC incidentally, which was the umbrella company that was looking after the energy matters of Trinidad and Tobago and the same fears and concerns that are being voiced now were heard 22 years ago. Nothing has happened and the plants continue to operate, and to be successful, bringing money into the country which is all part of monetizing our gas reserves.

The problems that we had in Point Fortin with LNG had to do with salaries, nothing else and that was caused because when the project started, the then Minister of Labour and Cooperatives took it upon himself to instruct Bechtel—and I saw the letter—that they must not pay more than \$7.00 an hour for a labourer and it was there the problem started. Why he wanted the labourers from Point Fortin to get \$7.00, I do not know. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Who was the Minister?

Mr. L. Achong: Whoever the Minister was at the time.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Whom the cap fits.

[*Mr. Partap stands*]

Mr. L. Achong: No, no, no, you will have your time. So there was a problem with Atlantic LNG in terms of wages. The problem with the environment was caused because the UNC did not ensure that certain mechanisms were put in place to prevent the erosion of the beach, but that has been taken care of. So the people in Chatham and Cedros now have an opportunity to have sustainable employment, to enjoy a better standard of living.

Mrs. Job-Davis: That is what they trying to prevent.

Mr. L. Achong: To benefit from educational facilities which I am sure will be put there, but you have the main objector being a gentleman called Mr. Sebastian—it

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is in the newspapers—accusing me of all sorts of things and one has to look beyond what he is saying. The only employment in that part of the country is fishing and coconuts.

Mr. Valley: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. L. Achong: We will talk about the other thing a little later but the Sebastian family are the largest landowners in Cedros—

Mr. Singh: His father was a coconut husker.

Mr. L. Achong:—paying the workers of Cedros \$4.00 an hour, which is below the minimum wage. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: That is unfair; you are attacking someone who cannot defend himself here.

Mr. L. Achong: But he is attacking me in the papers.

Mr. Sharma: Is that why you are attacking him?

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr. L. Achong: When that smelter plant is constructed and we start to pay workers in the region of \$30 and \$40 an hour, who will man those coconut estates?

Mrs. Job-Davis: Nobody.

Mr. L. Achong: Nobody, and therein lies the reason. So there is self-interest. Secondly, the increased activity in that part of the peninsula will severely hamper the few people who are involved in the drugs, guns, and ammunition trades. [*Desk thumping*] It is going to affect their movements. They also have a vested interest in not seeing the smelter plant built.

We sent a team recently to Brazil.

Mr. Sharma: Who is we?

Mr. L. Achong: We. We sent a team to look at a similar plant in operation.

Mr. Sharma: Who paid for that?

Mr. L. Achong: That is not important. I did not go, but members of the community and the media went and from reports coming back, all the ills we are hearing about in connection with the smelter were non-existent, they were not seen and from discussions with the people nothing untoward was found. We have

had discussions at the political level—I certainly—through our Ambassador in Brazil with officials from the city of Sao Louis where the smelter is situated and there were no adverse reports about illnesses or anything else, no “douens”, no deformed children, no upsurge in cancer; just a normal place. And I rather suspect if we were building this smelter in Fyzabad, the hon. Member there would be the first one to support it, but it is in Chatham.

Mr. Speaker, the amount of bad press that this project has received from a few reporters, because normally the reporters in all the newspapers are fairly accurate and well balanced in their articles, but recently we found two exceptions. I refer to the *Trinidad Guardian* of the week before by a reporter called Atiler Springer. She never spoke to me but has all sorts of negative things to say about the Member for Point Fortin. I do not know the lady.

Another one called Shalizer Hassanali—

Mr.S. Panday: “Doh take on that nah man.”

Mr. L. Achong: —in the *Sunday Guardian* of June 25, it is said that the MP for the area is supposed to be threatening CEPEP and URP workers with loss of jobs if they do not take part in a rally. What rally? It really took me by surprise but further investigations, because one has to dig—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. L. Achong: Further investigations led us to believe that there was more in the mortar than the pestle, so we dug further and we got it from an unimpeachable source that the two reporters are on the payroll of the group that is anti-smelter.

Mr. Imbert: What a shame!

Mrs. Job-Davis: Oh boy! What a thing!

Mr. L. Achong: They are two journalistic frauds; Springer and Hassanali, nothing in the class of the other reporters. “Dey should fire dem, dey should fire both ah dem.” [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. L. Achong: And do you know what was most disturbing? They are taking the comments of a gentleman by the name of Fitzroy Beech, the second man under Mr. Sebastian who is a deportee from the United States of America in 1998 for criminal activities. He is a spokesman for the good people, the genuine, hardworking good people of Chatham and Cedros.

Mrs. Job-Davis: What irony!

Mr. L. Achong: But let me go back to the Member for Tabaquite who said police stations, churches and schools are going to be destroyed. Nothing could be further from the truth, there is no such thing in the area.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Let him bring the evidence.

Mr. L. Achong: He talked about Point Fortin not being able to handle burns and that there is no Burns Unit in Point Fortin. It shows a complete lack of knowledge of what a Burns Unit is. In the whole of the State of Florida, there is one Burns Unit, you do not need a Burns Unit in every hospital; it is there after the person has been stabilized and you are sure the person will live, and so, you send them to the Burns Unit for cosmetic surgery and so forth.

Mrs. Job-Davis: And there is one in San Fernando.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. L. Achong: You do not need one in Point Fortin; you need one in the whole of Trinidad, so a lot of misinformation came from that Member's speech. The majority of people from Point Fortin, 99 per cent are supporting the smelter. [*Desk thumping*] There will be sustainable jobs—

Mr. S. Panday: That means Larry is safe.

Mr. L. Achong:—and a better standard of living for their families, but Sebastian cannot understand that about family, he is 59 years old and has no children.

Mrs. Job-Davis: Oh Lord!

Mr. L. Achong: “He cyar understand that, so he doesn't care about other families.” He cares simply about the boys on his estate.

Hon. Member: Four dollars an hour!

Mrs. Job-Davis: What a shame!

Mr. L. Achong: Four dollars an hour, just caring about those boys on the estate.

Mrs. Job-Davis: “Yuh understand.”

Mr. L. Achong: I think the benefits of the smelter far outweigh any negatives. There are institutions that we have put up, the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) and I think we must have sufficient confidence in our institutions that they will discharge their duties fairly to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

We cannot have institutions and believe that they will fail us. We put them there and we expect them to do their jobs and make sure that whatever takes place in terms of those two smelters would not (result in) any negatives to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member for Couva South said that industrialization ought to make people happy and they ought to look forward to it, and that is exactly what is happening to the people of Point Fortin. [*Desk thumping*] We are now making up for years of neglect. I must state that over the last six years, Point Fortin has gotten more than it got since 1956. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. S. Panday: Because of Larry Achong.

Mr. L. Achong: Mainly because there is a Member of Parliament like me, with good support from the Ministers. [*Desk thumping*] And I would like that trend to continue.

Mrs. Job-Davis: And it will.

Mr. L. Achong: I hope what the Members opposite have learnt from this is that in carrying out your political business and so forth, you come into Point as you are entitled to, but do not come to cause confusion as Ramesh is trying to do because he will be dealt with in the way I just dealt with him.

Hon. Member: Ooh! [*Interruption*]

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

Mr. L. Achong: Well, you were not here, you do not know what your new leader was planning a few years ago.

Hon. Member: Tell him.

Mr. L. Achong: Mr. Speaker, I am more or less finished, but I want to reiterate that the people of Point Fortin are behind the smelter. Secondly, we resent people coming to create confusion, and thirdly, we are disappointed with the level of journalism from two reporters.

Mr. Sharma: Namely.

Mr. L. Achong: I said it already; Springer and Hassanali. In fact, I am not too sure if some of those things can be subject to a lawsuit.

Hon. Member: Who is your lawyer?

Mr. L. Achong: A good one.

Mr. Sharma: Hinds?

Mr. L. Achong: A good one.

With these few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.

[Mr. Sharma and Mr. Dookeran rose]

Mr. Speaker: I am sure you would like to give way to your political leader.

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh see discipline, yuh see discipline?”

[Mr. Sharma takes his seat.]

Mr. Winston Dookeran (*St. Augustine*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time would not allow a full contribution on this very important issue, but I would like to take the opportunity to say a few things which I believe are very relevant.

In the first place, as I listened to the Member for Point Fortin, I was very disturbed at a number of comments he has made by trying to reduce this debate to personality and improper motives. *[Desk thumping]* It is something that we should not support in this Parliament; especially since he has not provided any credible foundation to the charges that he has laid.

He has laid the charge that two reporters are on the payroll of community interest groups, and in so doing has questioned the integrity and the independence of our reporters. I believe that should not be done here with impunity unless there is substantiating evidence in this regard. I want to stand here in defence of the integrity and independence of the reporters of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Valley: He is trying to get friends.

Mr. W. Dookeran: He has also ascribed very improper motives to someone who has been representing what he conceives to be the people's interest in Point Fortin, someone whom I have known myself, Dr. Raphael Sebastian, someone who is not here to defend himself; *[Crosstalk]* someone to whom he ascribes private interest.

Mr. Speaker: Please hon. Members, the Member for St. Augustine is on his feet, let us listen to him.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To ascribe improper motives to legitimate community interests is the beginning of the erosion of a democratic spirit in this country. *[Desk thumping]* I stand here today because I know Dr.

Sebastian has been making representations with the only motive of trying to bear on public policy the community interest for the people in Point Fortin and Cedros. I think it is most unfair that the Member for Point Fortin would use this Parliament to denigrate someone who simply opposes his views.

Mr. Speaker, there are some very fundamental issues in this debate and I took the opportunity to visit Point Fortin and Cedros two weeks ago because I felt it was important to get a first-hand view as to what really were the concerns of the people and the issues at stake, not only on this issue, but on many others that were affecting that neglected part of our country. It is strange that the Member has admitted that the Government has neglected that part of the country for all its years in office and it is only by virtue of this particular investment that they are now seeing some light, and that is going to be questionable.

When I visited the area, I met some very touching human situations. I met a young lady by the name of Camini Mahadeo. For three years she has been suffering from the problems of gas emanating from the ground which has been coming out of the Atlantic LNG plant, she has three children and this has been known for some years now. Doctors have confirmed that what she is suffering from is related to gas that is coming out of the ground and no proper response has been made by the authorities on this matter. Her life and her children's lives, in my view, are at stake in this rich country of ours without having public authorities respond to that problem.

4.15 p.m.

I also met another mother who has 13 children. As I visited her home I saw tangible evidence of the problems of pollution that are part of that environment. There were all sorts of rashes on the young children who were there. There was discoloration of the hair of her children. The name is Asha Jonasingh. Then I met another citizen, Mr. Selwyn Sajadar who is facing skin and eye irritation, noise pollution, light pollution in his home, which were not there before the Atlantic LNG plant was put up. Then I met Mr. Curtis Collins who was located in a position where his house was about to fall apart because of the erosion.

I raise these issues if only to point out that there are serious issues in the Point Fortin/Cedros area, and if the Member for Point Fortin is not prepared to stand up for the people, I shall stand up for the people of Point Fortin and Cedros. There are only two issues that I could raise here today—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. W. Dookeran: One is the very critical issue of gas pricing—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I have appealed to Members before to let the hon. Member for St. Augustine make his contribution and to pay him some respect, please.

Mr. W. Dookeran: I want to say a few words on the issue of gas pricing. From a national perspective this is a most serious issue that we are facing in the aluminium smelter plants. In a situation where there are low reserves and great demand for those reserves, we have almost little comfort in the optimal use of these gas reserves. And this is a major national issue on which this Government has not given proper explanation. But gas pricing, at what price.

What I understand is that the analysis for gas pricing is not being done by the Government and its agents. They have delegated that very important issue to the multinationals themselves. They have asked the advice of the multinationals to do the necessary technical work in order to come up with a gas pricing policy. I could not believe, if it is true, that we are at this time delegating to the multinationals the responsibility to determine a national gas policy on the issue of the aluminium smelter.

Secondly, the Government is using its royalty gas for this particular project, instead of sharing it and giving it to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission. So when we talk, therefore, about the rise in price of electricity, it is linked to Government's policy on the issue of gas royalty usage. By so doing, they are denying that kind of low cost gas to T&TEC and allowing it to be transferred to the multinationals. These are important issues that ought to be settled and the country needs to know.

This brings me to the second issue and there is much more we can say about that, but time does not permit. It is the issue of community rights.

Mr. Valley: Continue. You have 75 minutes.

Mr. W. Dookeran: I would continue the next time. By then we would have even more to say. There are major environmental issues, some of which were raised by the Member for Couva South, but there is this whole issue of community rights. I think from the point of view of what is happening, that is a most important issue and it is absolutely necessary in Trinidad and Tobago and in today's world, to acknowledge community rights in major development projects. This was done by most countries, which have been forward-looking in terms of their development.

Recently, the High Court in Jamaica rejected the government's investment decision for the establishment of a hotel on the basis of lack of public consultation. Public consultation is not a prerogative of the Government; it is a right of the people of this nation. [*Desk thumping*]. The issue of public consultation must be honoured by this Government. Failure to do so has resulted in misinformation and also in other acts which are likely to emanate from this particular proposal.

Access to environmental information, access to justice in environmental matters, public participation, are fundamental principles of the convention today in the development of most countries. We are talking about achieving Vision 2020 and a most fundamental and basic requirement for that is public consultation with the people on development issues; we ignore it at our peril. We hear so much about Vision 2020 and we have the opportunity today to introduce a serious dialogue on public consultation, but we refuse to do so. There are Acts in other jurisdictions that make that necessary. The European Commission has a convention on that, in which it has outlined that community rights are important. And in that process—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I can read the body language of the Hansard reporter and she is having great difficulty hearing the hon. Member. I am appealing to you for the last time to please conduct yourselves properly. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, the truth offends both inside this Parliament and outside, hence I understand the reaction. [*Crosstalk*]

This issue of consultation must not only deal with legitimate environmental concerns—and the agenda for that has been well laid-out in many documents which I have and on the next occasion I would take note of it—but it must also deal with the way in which you do the development. The industry must become part and a partner of the community and must build and support the infrastructure that is required for people's development: health, education, leisure, safety, security, the building of hospitals, schools, fire fighting, sporting facilities, roads, should be linked to the development of an industrial plant of this magnitude.

Today, we cannot sit back and simply say that there are millions of dollars that would be invested in a part of our country and expect the nation to accept that without a larger development context that provides them with societal infrastructure for their own being. Those are the issues that the group has been calling for; those are the issues that Dr. Sebastien, who was a former lecturer at the University, has been arguing on behalf of the citizens' rights. So today in

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Parliament, I take this opportunity to demand that this Government institute a proper consultative mechanism immediately to deal with all the issues that have been raised by the civic organizations in Point Fortin, and not come here and trivialize these major public issues and talk about personalities and that there are people on the payroll of interest groups. That is not the way we should deal with legitimate concerns of the people of this country and a major issue.

When I went to Cedros and Point Fortin I visited both plants. I, myself, did not quite appreciate it until I saw the enormity of the development that is being envisaged, and in so doing, the problems that would emerge in that development. Any government in today's world would make sure that those civic rights which take care of the societal infrastructure would deal with the problems that I have talked about and would also be able to instil confidence.

There are many other issues with respect to both plants; one in Cedros, the other in La Brea. On the whole issue of technology, the plant at La Brea is being built by a Chinese firm which has had very little, or no track record of building plants to international standards, and they talk, as the Minister spoke, of having the rules in place, but they are still trying to put some of the rules in place in the Environmental Management Authority. But it is not an issue of the rules; it is the issue of the capacity of the Environmental Management Authority to enforce those rules. There are many cases in which violation has already been notified, both in Atlantic LNG and in terms of the National Gas Company, and I have the documentation on this where the Environmental Management Authority has been able to give notification of violation of environmental standards, but then cannot do anything about it, and the matter goes on.

So what the Minister has raised here today in her contribution is to say, let us rely on the rules, when we know in this country that these rules cannot be enforced because the capacity of the Environmental Management Authority to enforce them is not there and, therefore, it does not happen. So we simply give a kind of expression of comfort without any reality that particular controls could be put into place.

Those are the critical issues that are important. There are many other issues but I suspect we are about to close at this point, therefore, I would take the opportunity to continue this debate on the next occasion. I think it is a very serious issue; it should not be dealt with trivially and it should not be dealt with in the manner in which the Member for Point Fortin dealt with it in this Parliament

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today. Instead of defining the rights of his citizens to protect themselves, he took this opportunity to cast improper motives on the people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I take it that you would want to continue on the next occasion?

Mr. W. Dookeran: Yes.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, just before I move the adjournment of the House, I have two minor matters and I would ask your indulgence. The first is, I want to request that we return to an earlier matter, that is, the Introduction of Bills on the Supplemental Order Paper, because it is the intention of the Government to debate the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill, take it through all its stages next Wednesday.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be taken through all its stages at the next sitting of the House. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENT OF)

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Be it resolved that the following Members be appointed to serve with an equal number from the Senate on a joint select committee on broadcasting, to oversee the establishment of guidelines and other matters relating to live broadcast of proceedings.

The Members are: Mr. Barendra Sinanan, the Speaker of the House; Dr. Keith Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West; Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, the Member for Arouca South and Dr. Roodal Moonilal, the Member for Oropouche.

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. Rafeeq: Is that the only matter that we would be dealing with on Wednesday?

Mr. Valley: Yes.

Adjournment

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ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): In moving the adjournment of the House, I inform Members again that the Government plans to deal with the Municipal Corporations (Amdt.) Bill. That is the only matter that would be dealt with on Wednesday. Therefore, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, July 05, 2006 at 1.30 p.m.

Dr. Rafeeq: There are three matters on the adjournment. We would defer these but on Wednesday we would like to deal with all three of them.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.31 p.m.