

Leave of Absence

Friday, February 02, 2007

E OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 02, 2007

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Roger Boynes, Member of Parliament for Toco/Manzanilla, requesting leave of absence for a period of one month. I have also received communication from Mr. Kelvin Ramnath, Member of Parliament for Couva South asking for leave of absence for the period February 02 to February 11, 2007.

The leave which these Members seek is granted.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Early Childhood Care and Education Centres
(Chaguanas)**

7. **Mr. Manohar Ramsaran** (*Chaguanas*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Could the Minister indicate whether there are plans to construct Early Childhood Care and Education Centres in the constituency of Chaguanas?

The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Ann Marie Manning):
Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the Government does have plans to construct Early Childhood Care and Education Centres in the constituency of Chaguanas and at the present time, five centres are proposed. These are:

1. Munroe Road Government Early Childhood Care and Education Centre, which is a new centre to the annex to the Munroe Road Government Primary School.
2. Warren Road Early Childhood Care and Education Centre, which is a replacement centre for the Little Hearts Early Childhood Care and Education Centre.
3. Chaguanas Early Childhood Care and Education Centre, a new centre which will be in partnership with the Child Welfare League of Trinidad and Tobago located at Darling Street, Chaguanas.

Oral Answers to Questions
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4. Caroni Village Early Childhood Care and Education Centre, which is a replacement centre for the La Paille Early Childhood Care and Education and it is a community-based centre.
5. The Caroni Village Early Childhood Care and Education Centre, a replacement for the Caroni Village Early Childhood Care and Education Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ramsaran: May I ask the Minister when do we expect these to start?

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell this honourable House that we have asked your permission to make a statement next week and the details of the Early Childhood Care and Education programme will be given.

Conditional Cash Transfer Cards

37. Mr. Nizam Baksh (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Social Development to indicate:

- (a) the number of Conditional Cash Transfer Cards that have been delivered to date;
- (b) the number of Conditional Cash Transfer Cards undelivered to date;
- (c) the number of Conditional Cash Transfer Cards proposed for distribution in 2007; and
- (d) the cost of producing each card as well as the overall cost of implementing this programme to date?

The Minister of Social Development (Hon. Anthony Roberts): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In response to question No. 37(a), a total of 16,279 conditional cash transfer cards have been delivered to date.

In response to part (b), there are approximately 2,565 undelivered conditional cash transfer cards.

In response to part (c), the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme targets needy persons who will be required to satisfy a means test. It would therefore be unrealistic to specify the number of cards that would be distributed in any one year since the number of cards issued would depend on the extent to which applicants satisfy the means test.

With respect to part (d), the cost of producing each card is \$3.50, the overall cost of implementing the programme to date is \$41,061,142 and I wish to give a breakdown of that figure:

Refurbishment of existing infrastructure to accommodate the Conditional Cash Transfer Centres, \$380,625; furnishing and equipping centres, \$225,000; the operational aspect of it such as salaries to the staff, \$256,655; bank charges which are the cost of the cards and administrative, \$542,431; funding for the transfer to cards, \$39,656,431 giving a total of \$41,061,142.

Thank you.

Mr. Baksh: Could the Minister indicate why it was not possible to deliver the 2,565 cards?

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, several persons did not turn up, the cards are available and as people make themselves available once they can provide proper identification these cards are delivered.

Mr. Baksh: Would the Minister agree that some of the reasons for not being able to deliver were that people—I know for a fact—residing in Barrackpore were asked to collect cards in Diego Martin. Is this the reason people were unable to collect these cards?

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, if this is the situation that the Member is familiar with, it tells you the level of dishonesty which took place in the previous programme which we are now correcting. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Baksh: I do not want to dwell on that, but I have another question. Would the Minister indicate whether the positions were advertised to run the programmes at the district level, or how the persons appointed were selected?

Mr. Speaker: That is the subject of a new question. The Member for Fyzabad has a supplemental.

Mr. Sharma: Hon. Minister, are you aware that applicants for consideration for these cards have been turned away from being interviewed because many of them do not possess the new birth certificates which are not available for six months?

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, the staff of the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme has been informed that no one should be turned away because of the new birth certificate.

Mr. Sharma: Very good answer, Minister. There is an advisory being distributed from the offices that asks for that new birth certificate so you need to look into that.

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)

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**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

**Death Squad Within Service
(Government's Failure to Stop)**

Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): 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 of urgent public importance mainly; the failure of the Government to stop the emergence of a death squad within the police service or the State security apparatus.

The matter is definite since it relates to several specific eyewitness accounts of the killing of citizens of this country by police and/or state security forces.

The matter is urgent because this current alarming trend of the abandonment of the right to due process of the law has dire consequences for our society.

The matter is of public importance because it is a vicious attack on our fundamental rights and freedom guaranteed in the Constitution. It is a frontal assault on the rule of law.

Mrs. Job-Davis: What craziness is this?

Mr. Speaker: Order please, Member for Tobago East. I have ruled that this matter does not qualify under this Standing Order.

**BWIA
(Closure of)**

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [December 01, 2006]:

Be it resolved that the Government provide to the Parliament a detailed account, explanation and rationale for its decision to close down the operations of BWIA as at December 31, 2006. [*Mr. H. Partap*]

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Caroni East was on his legs; he has 10 minutes of original time remaining.

Mr. Ganga Singh: Mr. Speaker, on Friday December 01, 2006, I rose to make my contribution on this Motion moved by the hon. Member for Nariva.

Two months have since elapsed and the quality of life has further deteriorated in Trinidad and Tobago. Since then, Vindra Naipaul-Coolman was kidnapped—

Mr. Speaker: We are talking about BWIA, keep it there please.

Mr. G. Singh: I am talking about BWIA, but I am framing that in the context since we last spoke on this matter and, therefore, I am dealing with that in the context of the current Motion.

Mr. Speaker: I am ruling that any reference to Mrs. Naipaul-Coolman is not really relevant to what is before us. Please continue.

Mr. G. Singh: Very well, Mr. Speaker, but since then there have been a series of events in this country which have contributed to the deterioration in the quality of life in the people of this country, whether it is murder, the bludgeoning to death of persons, or whether it is kidnapping, the quality of life has deteriorated and this Motion, therefore, pales into significance in the context of what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Just listening to your last statement, perhaps you may consider withdrawing it and bring a motion which is more of significance to what is happening.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I will demonstrate to you the relevance, and there was an editorial which said this House ought not to function in a robotic and mechanical manner and it ought to take into consideration what is happening in the national community.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the content of this Motion which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Government has taken the unprecedented decision to close down the operations of BWIA and in the process retrenched, through VSEP, hundreds of BWIA workers as at December 31, 2006;”

Perhaps it is these retrenched workers who are on the breadline and have no option but to become victims like Denise and John Commissiong in their golden years of the rampant crime that is taking place, because clearly Denise and John Commissiong were retired workers.

“And whereas the Government in the mid-1990’s initiated a failed policy of the privatization and sell-out of BWIA to Edward Acker;”

The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central who is not with us this evening really “Ackerized” BWIA. The Motion continues:

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“And whereas air transport is crucial and vital to the economic and social interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension, the people of the region;”

I will indicate whereas this Motion speaks of the people of the region and we have named this airline Caribbean Airlines, there was no consultation by the Government with other Caribbean governments in the emergence of this new airline.

“And whereas it is the intention of the Government to seek private sector participation on a national and regional basis in the ownership of the new airline;

Be it resolved that the Government provide to the Parliament a detailed account, explanation and rationale for its decision to close down the operations of BWIA as at December 31, 2006.”

Mr. Speaker, Government came here and we responded to what the hon. Minister had to say, but he did not deal with certain compelling issues; for example, the issue of pension.

The pension benefits for the former workers of BWIA and Caribbean Airlines, the question of successorship, the rights of the minority shareholder, and this point about culture change that the new meandering of transformation in the aviation in the industry in Trinidad and Tobago that Peter Davies is talking about will demonstrate the callous disregard of the Government for people and the former employees of BWIA.

Mr. Speaker, when you read what the former employees of BWIA have to say and you recognize the position in which the Government placed them, you will recognize that this Government continues a policy of the contempt for the views of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Whether it is the rally against the smelter with no consideration for the views of the people, so the Prime Minister in his African safari goes to South Africa and tells the people there that we are going ahead with the smelter regardless. Contempt and callous disregard for the people of this country!

I will read a letter dated October 06, 2006 to Mr. Peter Davies, CEO of BWIA from the BWIA Retirees Association. It reads:

“Sir,

Due to the many calls and enquiries from members of the BWIA Retirees’ Association, the Executive Committee held a meeting on Tuesday September 06th at which a decision was taken to bring matters of concern to your attention.

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We wish to state that we share the general concern with the demise of BWIA, an airline to which we still feel attached having devoted many years of service.

We wish to make reference to letter dated February 23rd 2006 which was sent with concerns about travel benefits. It is unfortunate to note that we just received an acknowledgement...which advised that information would have been forthcoming, however this did not happen.

While we appreciate that at this time you will be quite involved with the current situation of the airline, we would appreciate if any concerns were given to the Retirees with regards the following:

- A Health Benefits
- B Various pension plans
- C Travel
- D Share entitlement.

While all focus is on current employees, retirees were given various contracts with termination of service either through retirement or VSEP.

We, however, feel that it is important to the membership, bearing in mind the numerous years of devoted service to the airline that a reply from your office will be welcomed.

We wish to further state that we will continue to carry on our organization under the banner of BWIA Retirees' Association.

Thanking you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully yours

Mrs. A. Seebaran

Vice President

cc Mr. Arthur LokJack"

Here the BWIA retirees are saying on bended knees, genuflecting before Mr. Peter Davies to tell them what their health benefits and those under the various pension plans and travelling and share entitlement are. And look at the contempt and disregard to the citizenry of this population.

Mr. Speaker, by letter dated October 27, 2006. I quote:

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Mrs. A. Seebaran
Vice President
BWIA Retirees Association
29 St. John's Road
ST AUGUSTINE

Dear Mrs. Seebaran,

I wish to acknowledge your letter dated October 06, 2006.

I apologize for the lengthy delay in responding to your concerns. However, this matter is being handled through the Legal Department who will contact you directly.

In this regard, your letter has been forwarded to Ms. Rachel Laquis, Vice President Legal and Corporate Services.

Best Wishes,

Yours sincerely,
for Peter Davies
Chief Executive Officer”

I continue.

“November 23, 2006

Mrs. A. Seebaran
BWIA Retirees Association
Tacarigua

Dear Mrs. Seebaran,

We confirm receipt of your letter, dated October 06th, 2006 and wish to advise that we have no authority over the new airline's policies and so regrettably, will not be able to respond to your requests.

Thank you for your patience.

Yours sincerely”

No response on health benefits, no response on various pension plans, no response on travel, no response on share entitlement.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 1,700 persons have been affected by this, yet in its haste to get rid of the majority of workers, the Government and the Board of

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BWIA which is now the Board of Caribbean Airlines appear to be playing ping pong with the workers benefits who are either retired or being “VSEPTed” from BWIA. The board is saying it is the Government's responsibility and has nothing to do with it and the Government is silent. The Board is of the view as having no obligation to former BWIA workers to either inform or consult with them on this issue, and regards it as a Government responsibility and the Cabinet is silent on the matter.

Where does ministerial responsibility for BWIA, now Caribbean Airlines, lie? Is it with the Ministry of Finance and, therefore, Ministers Enill, Sahadeo, Valley or Prime Minister, Patrick Manning? Or is it with Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, the Minister of Public Administration and Information and Energy and Energy Industries? Which Minister is overseeing the portfolio for the benefit of the people who gave their best years to BWIA?

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way. I am listening to you, so would you try to clearly identify to what benefits you are referring? I am taking some notes.

Mr. G. Singh: I am referring to the retirees, but it will also concern those who have been “VSEPTed” and not reemployed by Caribbean Airlines where health, pension plan, travel, and share entitlement are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, which Minister is overseeing the process and who is responsible for looking after the benefits of the national interest in this matter? Is it being left up to the board? It is clear that this Government is continuing its anti-worker approach treating the former employees of BWIA in a callous and inhumane fashion robbing them of their dignity after serving faithfully.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Chief Whip and Members for extending my time.

My question is, why the silence by the Government? Why is there a lack of communication? Is it because things have been done so hastily that it was not prepared for the movement from BWIA to Caribbean Airlines? Why is there this gap? Why have you not taken advice from Inshan Ishmael and shut up and shut down on this matter?

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Mr. Speaker, clearly the employees of BWIA have served the airline faithfully, cumulatively for 66 years, now they are treated like cargo trash. No regard! No information! Their services are no longer needed so therefore they are discarded. The former and retired employees' concerns are being treated and used like a discarded prophylactic.

Mr. Speaker, I have a letter here from Captain Simon Kelshall and when you read the extent of the service he has given to the aviation industry and he has to plead to have knowledge of what his current status is. It is unacceptable and this is the Government at work; callous, inhumane and contemptuous but taking the advice of the foreigners.

The next issue I want to raise and which my colleague, the Member for Nariva dealt to some extent with is the issue of successorship, but before I move on to that issue, I want to deal with the retirement benefits. This Government, by virtue of a Cabinet Note of April 16, 2003, indicated that the current employees at BWIA at that time were entitled to certain benefits, which are much less than what one gets in other airlines.

Furthermore, when you look at the terms of settlement of the trust deed agreed to on the 27th day of January, 1995 detailing the entitlement for pension, it had a 10-year time line from 1995—2005. Not a word on that, but this Government in its haste to engage Mr. Davies *et al* and the group of consultants is treating the local staff who gave decades of service like cargo trash.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Peter Davies plan is for 600 employees at Caribbean Airlines. Currently there are approximately 1000 persons employed. They are on a series of monthly contracts; some six months; some three months and some for a lesser period. All the employees they plan to make permanent they have provided them with a six-month contract. That six-month contract is part of a device engineered by consultants Shafeek Sultan-Khan and Addison Khan—the former President of the Industrial Court—to defeat the claim of the union for successorship.

I want to deal with the public policy issue as to when a 100 per cent-owned state enterprise can participate in engineering a device to prevent the workers and employees of this country from their constitutional right of freedom of association. I have to deal with that public policy issue. You see, in the case of an Industrial Court matter, Application No. 5 of 1998 between NUGFW and Caribbean Bottlers Limited, the then President of the Court, Addison Khan, made a ruling—and you know, it raises a very interesting issue and I will come to that, because it appears

to me now that you have a revolving door in the Industrial Court; that you can give a judgment and by virtue of the contents and the merits of your judgment, you can reap the benefits of that in the private sector by becoming a consultant. I want to deal with that also, because it has happened in the Integrity Commission also, where the former chairman of the Integrity Commission, Gordon Deane, is now chairman of Atlantic LNG and he had to adjudicate in matters in which certain parties to ALNG were brought before the Integrity Commission: Repsol, BP, and so on—interesting in this evolution of the society, and we talk about integrity in public life.

I cast no aspersions, but what I am saying is that the revolving door gives rise to certain perceptions. But I return to the judgment of Addison Khan and I quote at page 5:

“In my view, the industrial relations principle of successorship is intended to protect workers against the loss of benefits based on length of service. If these benefits have been paid and their services lawfully terminated, as occurred in this case, no need arises to give any such protection. Having been paid their severance benefits by the former employers, the workers who accepted employment with the Company entered into new employment arrangements with the Company. In my judgment, it would be contrary to both good conscience and the principles of good industrial relations practice for these workers to receive severance benefits and carry over with them the same status and privileges which they enjoyed with the former employers. The Company, as the new employer, was free to offer employment to the workers on mutually acceptable terms and this is what in fact occurred. Upon the termination of the workers’ employment by the former employers, the collective agreements were no longer applicable to them and could not be carried over to the Company, since there was no nexus between the Company and the collective agreements.

In the event, I am unable in good conscience and on the principles of good industrial relations practice to grant the order sought by the union.”

This is the judgment of Addison Khan, then President of the Industrial Court. He now acts in a capacity as a consultant with knowledge—and nothing is wrong with that because he has to earn a living, his contract not having been renewed by the Government, for whatever reason.

I raise the point that you have this device of a six-month contract for the permanent employees. The pilots of the A-340—that aircraft’s leases are coming to an end in March—were given a two-or-three-month contract. So when the lease comes to an end, that aircraft will no longer be used on BWIA routes.

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So you have a fashioning of a device by consultant Shafeek Sultan-Khan and Addison Khan in order to fit within the ambit of the judgment of Addison Khan in NUGFW and Caribbean Bottlers Limited, the locus classicus in the whole question of successorship. But the relevant public policy issue for us is whether a state company, 100 per cent owned by the shareholder, the Government on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, ought to engage deliberately in a device—a fig leaf—to delay, or alternatively, ensure that worker representation is frustrated. That is the issue, as to whether or not the Government ought to engage in this kind of deliberate engineering. It is not good public policy; it is certainly not in the public interest and it is a direct and frontal assault on the Constitution, using a roundabout route.

So this Government is selectively engaged in union-busting and demonstrating certain anti-worker sentiments. But the umbrella union organizations are silent. Where is the voice of FITUN, of Natuc? Have their silence been bought? The public interest requires that the Government should follow not only the letter of the law but also the spirit of the law and ensure that the constitutional right of freedom of association is not frustrated. To do otherwise and to engage in maneuvers to effectively disenfranchise employees is conman political governance and it has consequences for the society.

Given the manner in which the Recognition and Certification Board operates—I had to deal with them in a different capacity some years ago—perhaps that is the most dysfunctional Government agency in this country and it traverses administrations; whether it is PNM, NAR, UNC or whatever. It is the most dysfunctional organization and you can be assured that the members of that board will understand the value system and they will frustrate the daylights out of the union as they attempt to get recognition to represent the new Caribbean Airlines. The Government, by its actions, has effectively given directions to the Recognition and Certification Board to frustrate the unions and the umbrella organizations are silent.

So whilst you have this level of frustration that is taking place and frustrating the successorship, how much is Mr. Peter Davies being paid? What are his terms and conditions? How much are the consultants, CATALIZE being paid? How many expatriates—foreigners—have we brought down to run BWIA and how much are we paying them? Peter Davies and CATALIZE are like “Lone Ranger and Tonto”; they are like “Batman and Robin”; they go together in any arena that Peter Davies engages in; whether it was S.N. Brussels; whether it was DHL, and now BWIA. They are two peas in a pod, and that kind of incestuous relationship is not healthy.

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I want to know what are the performance indicators that the Government, paying these golden sums to Peter Davies and CATALIZE as consultants and CEO of BWIA—the golden sums, what are they?

I know that whilst we are fighting for the pension for the workers, Peter Davies and the consultants at BWIA are travelling first-class for free.

Mr. Speaker: It is now Caribbean Airlines.

Mr. G. Singh: Caribbean Airlines. I will tell you my experience with Caribbean Airlines. I travelled twice since it became Caribbean Airlines and when the napkin comes, it is BWIA; the glass is BWIA; the butter dish, BWIA; the bread dish, BWIA. Everything is BWIA, so you have to forgive me if I continue saying BWIA, because it is a scam that they are currently running.

What are the terms and conditions of Peter Davies? They are travelling to Antigua free, first-class.

Mr. Ramsaran: Who is that?

Mr. G. Singh: CATALIZE and Peter Davies, and they are saying it is duty travel, but they are going in their Bermuda shorts with golf clubs. When foreigners come down here to run our local enterprises and you do not have proper management contracts and clear performance indicators and penalties associated with that, that is what you get. They will run up the islands, up and down and play golf and laugh at the banana republic because you have given them over US \$115 million, a clean balance sheet, all the assets and they do not have to make profit, paper or otherwise, until three years.

I find it alarming that they cannot make a profit in the first year. A US \$115 million injection and you cannot make a profit in the first year? You have a projected loss of some \$50 million? Unacceptable! I want the Government to put on this parliamentary table the terms and conditions of the Peter Davies contract, the CATALIZE contract and all the outsourcing contracts. Because, you see, at the end of three years, we may find ourselves with Caribbean Airlines as just a shell and Mr. Davies would have then reached retirement age of 60; at the expense of BWIA; at the expense of the taxpayers of this country; at the expense of Caribbean Airlines. And you are silent on that side.

So successorship is clear. The third issue deals with the right of the minority shareholders. That, too, is a big ping-pong. And dealing with this issue of travel benefits, the consultants are travelling free first-class; the children of certain consultants are traveling free first-class—A3. They will bump off paying passengers to give non-

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paying consultants' children and family places in the first-class cabin. This is what is happening, the kind of rip-off that is taking place in Caribbean Airlines.

In fairness to the chairman, Arthur Lok Jack, I am advised he always travels on tickets that are fully paid—he and his sons—but the consultants, CATALIZE, other local consultants and their family, are travelling first-class for free.

Mr. Achong: How do you travel?

Mr. G. Singh: I pay for my tickets, unlike you, who would seek an upgrade every time.

I want to deal with the issue of treatment of minority shareholders. The treatment of minority shareholders, really, is foul because of the manner in which they have been treated by the Government. We can take the classic position, as the hon. Minister Conrad Enill indicated—and this is what Minister Enill had to say and I quote from an article by Sandra Chouthi in the *Guardian* of Thursday, January 04, 2007:

“Government is pouring cold water on appeals for compensation by BWIA shareholders after the State-owned national airline went bust and shut down at the end of last year.

The fact that people invested in BWIA shares and that the company ‘goes under’ is not the responsibility of the government,...

‘Quite frankly, if you decided that you are going to put your money in an investment because you believe that is in your interest, that is a personal decision that you have made. The fact that the organization goes under is really not a function of the government.’”

What? Where did the hon. Minister bury his head? A principal part of the minority shareholding was the 15 per cent provided as part of the arrangements made valued at \$38 million. The workers never got their share certificates; they were never given the opportunity to be able to deal with those shares. Never! But he takes the classic position: See nothing, know nothing, therefore do nothing.

This is what the BWIA shareholders in the *Express* of December 29, 2006 had to say:

“‘Our board (of directors) treated us like nothing. They did not even bother to get our views as minority shareholders when certain things were happening. BWIA is not being closed per say but gift wrapped in another package,’ one shareholder said at the meeting.

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‘It was insulting that we were never consulted on anything. Many of us are workers, we are poor people and our \$2000 means a lot to us’, another distraught shareholder said.

Many have lost a significant part...of their savings.”

It is not only the workers of BWIA and the minority shareholders; it is also our Caribbean brethren. I quote from the same article in the *Guardian* of January 04, 2007, headlined: “Enill Rejects BWIA Investors Plea”. It states:

“Meanwhile, Barbados Prime Minister Owen Arthur said he hoped T&T authorities will do the right thing for BWIA’s minority shareholders.

In an article published in the Barbados Nation on January 1, Arthur said the Barbados government could not weigh in on behalf of Barbadian minority shareholders since it was not a shareholder in the airline...

‘I am really not in a position to say to you what is in the mind of the government of T&T, but I would rather want to believe that if a company is listed on the stock exchange the minority shareholders’ rights have to be protected.

I can’t imagine that any action would be taken by a corporate entity that would not respect the rights of the minority shareholders. The Government of Barbados cannot get directly involved, but there are rules governing how companies on the stock exchange should function, especially in relation to the minority shareholders, and I would have to say that in this matter as in other matters: where minority shareholders’ rights are at issue, those rights would have to be fully protected,”

This Government went about its business, protecting no rights. The SEC in their communiqué of December 26, 2006 had this to say when they decided on the delisting of BWIA from the stock exchange:

“Treatment of Minority Shareholders

A strong complaint arising out of the comments of the minority shareholders present reflected that the interests of minority shareholders were being ignored. Guidance on the manner in which minority shareholders ought to be treated can be found at the By-Law 26 of the Securities Industry (Take-Over) By-Laws 2005...The circumstances are such that GORTT’s increased shareholding to 97.18% occurred in 2004, prior to the coming into force of the Take-Over By-Laws in March 2005. Although the Take-Over By-Laws were not in force at that time, they existed in the form of the Take-Over Code.

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The Commission is of the view that there should have been compliance with the spirit of By-Law 26 in treating with minority shareholders.”

This Government is not interested in the spirit of the law. It would take any device to shaft you. It goes on:

“The spirit of the Take-Over Code would have required a majority shareholder of in excess of 90% of the issued share capital of BWIA, to have notified the minority shareholders of their right to require the majority shareholder to acquire their shares.”

So even at the level of the SEC, the Government was not acting within the spirit of the law, in succession, in the pension and now in the whole question of shareholding. It continued its callous disregard. But I do not know if they sing from the same hymn book or they have compartmentalized the Ministry of Finance, but this is what Minister Christine Sahadeo had to say on January 20, 2007 under: “Stock Exchange strikes out BWIA”:

“Minister in the Ministry of Finance Christine Sahadeo, however, said that the Government is currently considering what will be the final fate of BWIA shareholders.”

What is really happening at the level of corporate governance in the Cabinet of the country? Minister Enill said: “Nothing for you”, then Minister Christine Sahadeo says: “We are now considering the final fate of the shareholders.” What is the status? We need the Government to answer in this Parliament what is the status of the shareholders, having been defeating the spirit and the intention of the law.

The final point I want to make in the time allotted is the issue of culture change. Peter Davies obviously regards himself as a kind of transformation artist. In my talks with employees of BWIA it is clear that they are now introducing a non-Caribbean culture into the airline. You have a kind of Euro-centric culture that is taking place. You might want to talk about on-time delivery. I will tell you my experience. They are closing the gates one hour before departure. So whereas previously you could have allotted two hours, now you have to allot three hours in order to fly on Caribbean Airlines.

When you take BWIA 424 and you go to New York; you arrive at 4.10—a winter time—they put you in a bus; no jet-way for you, and then when they take you to immigration you have 400 people in front of you, because El Al, Egyptian Air, Pakistan Airlines, all come before you at that point in time. So what you gain in the air you lose on the ground. The worst possible time to arrive at the JFK International Airport is around that time where the significant international flights

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arrive. So this on-time performance must be checked against the breaches of security that are taking place. So do not hold this on-time up for seasoned travellers.

I want to deal with the issue of culture change. It seems that there is a distinct approach that the culture of Trinidad and Tobago is inappropriate for the aviation industry. So we are waiting to see whether on-time—I am always on time, but that is part of your ethos. Caribbean Airlines on-time is fine. What I am saying, having regard to all that has transpired, I want to congratulate the hon. Member for Nariva for bringing this Motion. Were it not for this Motion we would not know anything about successorship, the capital investment of US \$359 million, the US \$115 million direct injection; we do not know the terms and conditions of Davies' contract and his cohorts in CATALIZE; we do not know about the issue of the pension.

There are a series of gaps in the knowledge, but what is happening, Caribbean Airlines continues and once more I am of the view that this Government, in its incompetent fashion, has bungled the transformation with significant capital outlay to the loss of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, in preparing to respond on behalf of the Government and to make contributions—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Where is the Government?

Mr. Singh: They are on a safari in Africa.

Hon. C. Imbert: I think you know where they are. You talk about it at your meetings.

In preparing for this Motion, I took a look at the contribution of the Member for Nariva. I went through the various issues that the Member for Nariva put on the table and a lot of what he said was basically wild statements, unsubstantiated allegations, arrant nonsense, of course—that goes without saying; that is par for the course on that side—unadulterated rubbish; old, tired rumours and stories going back 20/30 years—I see something here going back to DC9 and Lockheed; I do not think I was even born then—and not too much with respect to the Motion itself. Even NBN passed in the rush, Mr. Lee Sing and VMCOTT as well.

But let me go to the substance of the Motion itself. In the Motion the Member for Nariva has asked for an account, explanation and rationale for the decision to close down the operations of BWIA in 2006. There is some information which I

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thought was widely known and should be obvious and should be known to Members opposite because it has been widely publicized. Perhaps Members opposite do not read, or if they read they do not understand, or they just do not care to read or understand. It is necessary to make the point that hon. Members opposite just talk rubbish.

I have here the presentation made at the annual shareholders meeting by Mr. William Lucie-Smith on December 28, 2006 and this presentation dealt essentially with financial matters. I think the matter that the Member for Caroni East has spoken about across the floor is not a financial matter. That is a technical matter. Mr. Lucie-Smith was dealing with money and in this presentation he gave—I guess it was a PowerPoint presentation of BWIA's profit and loss over the period 1996 to 2006 and BWIA's financial performance over the 10-year period 1996 to 2006: Shareholder equity, share price history, a brief summary of the airline industry over the last five years or so, revenue expenditure statements and various other details relating to the balance sheet of BWIA.

Allow me to read the facts into the record as opposed to the fantasy put into the record by the hon. Member for Nariva and the hon. Member for Caroni East. The cumulative losses of BWIA over the 10-year period, 1996 to 2006, were US \$149 million—approximately US \$150 million—or in excess of TT \$900 million.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Are these the same figures that Minister Enill gave to us in his contribution? Would you want to repeat them, per year, so we can say it is the same information or not?

Hon. C. Imbert: As I indicated, I am reading into the record extracts from a presentation made by Mr. William Lucie-Smith at the BWIA annual shareholder meeting, December 28, 2006. I cannot tell you to the last dollar whether the figures that Minister Enill gave you on the last occasion were the same because I have not studied his contribution in the amount of detail I have studied Mr. Partap's contribution. But there were US \$149 million cumulative losses over the period 1996 to 2006—over TT \$900 million in losses over a 10-year period.

That is fact; that is not fiction. You get the impression while listening to hon. Members opposite that BWIA was a wonderful organization in terms of its financial performance. It was wonderful in terms of the manner in which you would be treated when you went on a BWIA aircraft. I think we all know that as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. One of the great things about BWIA was the way they treated travellers. When you went on the airline you felt like you belonged to part of a very warm process. But I am talking here about BWIA's profit and loss.

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The figures that I have for the Member opposite, who is confused, obviously are as follows—[*Cellphone rings*]

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: A cellphone is ringing and I hope that I do not know whose phone it is because if I do, I would have to deal with that Member, or member of the public gallery or press. Please take off your cellphone. Please continue.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The figures are as follows:

Years	Figures (US million \$)
1996	27.3 (loss)
1997	18.2 (loss)
1998	9 (profit)
1999	3.6 (profit)
2000	1.1 (profit)
2001	under 1 (loss)
2002	34.4 (loss)
2003	21.9 (loss)
2004	15.4 (loss)
2005	26.3 (loss)
2006	50.1 (loss)

As I indicated to hon. Members opposite and in particular the Leader of the Opposition, she does not have to write anything. This is in the public domain and when I am finished with my contribution I would hand it to you. To assist you to correct your records I would hand you this document. It is not a secret document.

The cumulative losses for BWIA over the 10 year period, 1996—2006 amount to US \$149 million, over TT \$900 million, as I said.

I go to the liabilities. I heard some mutterings from the Member for Nariva about under the UNC. I remind him that under the UNC in 1996 and 1997, BWIA lost almost US \$45 million. The small profit of \$13 million still left BWIA under the UNC in a net loss position in excess of US \$30 million, over TT \$200 million, after the balance sheet had been cleaned under the previous PNM administration.

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The other issue that Members opposite like to forget is something that affected the global aviation industry. That is 9/11. Members opposite will like us to believe that it never occurred, but I am afraid that it did. When one looks at the situation in terms of airlines all over the world, one saw that after September 11, when terrorists attacked in 2001, airlines all over the world went into difficulty. Airlines that had been making billions of US dollars in profit began to have financial problems because simply, people were afraid to fly. Many airlines never recovered from that. Many airlines went into Chap. 11 in the United States and other airlines went into bankruptcy. Air Canada folded up. The hon. Members opposite need to be realistic.

As I said, in 1998, BWIA made a profit of US \$9 million; in 1999, a profit of US \$3 million and US \$1 million in 2000. The profit was going down and they went into a deficit position in 2001. In 2001, there was the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and the virtual global collapse of the airline industry. Only a totally mischievous person would try to say that BWIA was not affected by the impact of the events of September 11, 2001.

As the hon. Member for Siparia knows in Trinidad and Tobago at this present time, the Bankruptcy Bill is before a committee of Parliament. We do not have Chap. 11 legislation in Trinidad and Tobago. We are now trying to create something that would allow airlines that are facing bankruptcy to get protection from creditors to restructure and renegotiate agreements and debts to come out of bankruptcy using legislation similar to Chap. 11. That was not available to BWIA. The Chap. 11 protection that other airlines have been able to use to come out of their difficulties in the United States is not available to BWIA or any other corporation in Trinidad and Tobago. Whereas other airlines in the United States were able to go to Chap. 11 to get protection from their creditors; restructure their operations and debts; emerge and continue their operations, BWIA had no such protection. BWIA was subsidized by taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago and it has been so in hundreds of millions of dollars. This is public knowledge.

When I read the contribution of the Member for Nariva who gives the impression—let me use his records. It is fantasy of the highest order where he describes BWIA as the national patrimony and crown jewels. It is the height of absurdity. Here you have an airline that has struggled to be profitable from its inception. In the last 10 years as I have demonstrated, the airline has incurred losses of almost \$1 billion. Yet, the Member for Nariva had the “brass face” to describe BWIA as the national patrimony and crown jewels. What absurdity! It is

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as if the Member for Nariva does not live in Trinidad and Tobago. You do not live here! Every year when BWIA posted their accounts you saw that the airline was in trouble and losing hundreds of millions of dollars.

I was about to read the question of the accumulating liabilities of BWIA as time went by.

Years	Figures (US million \$)
1996	89.7
1997	106
1998	103
1999	138
2000	146
2001	153

In 1999, there was a jump of \$35 million in the airline's liability from 1998 under the UNC. There was a situation where under the UNC the liabilities of BWIA went from US \$89 million to US \$153 million. If the hon. Member could count, that is in excess of US \$60 million or close to TT \$450 million. That is all in the public domain.

Let me read from the contribution of the hon. Member for Nariva on Friday December 01, 2006.

“Let me say at the outset that the United National Congress is not in favour of holding a fire sale of our national patrimony.”

What wonderful sounding words. The airline is \$900 million in debt, but according to the hon. Member for Nariva they are not in favour of holding a fire sale of the national patrimony. What patrimony? Negative worth. That is no patrimony. Obviously, the Member for Nariva has problems with the English language. That is not an asset. It is a liability.

“We are not in favour of disposing of the family jewels.”

Listen to the language. The family jewels; \$950 million in debt. Is that the family's jewels? “Well, I doh want to be in your family if that is what you call jewels.” It is a joke when Members like the Member for Nariva come here and talk such arrant nonsense. I have to use it. Arrant nonsense! He described a bankrupt organization, almost \$1 billion in debt as the family's jewels. You are giving away the family's jewels. Nonsense.

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The Government assured all the creditors of BWIA were paid—in the United States BWIA would have gone to Chap. 11 and all the creditors would not have been paid. The airline would have been able to get protection. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Government decided to make the decision to honour all BWIA's liabilities. When the Government increased its shareholding in BWIA to over 90 per cent, it was ensuring that all BWIA's creditors which involved many companies of Trinidad and Tobago—many persons and corporations were providing goods and services in Trinidad and Tobago. Rather than walking away which is what could have happened in the Chap. 11 scenario, the Government protected the citizens by covering and assuming responsibility for all the liabilities of BWIA. This was not an easy decision. You were talking about US \$350 million, close to TT \$2 billion. It was either you walk away and let the company go into bankruptcy and insolvency or the creditors fight among themselves and get nothing. The airline was in debt of \$900 million and there was nothing to get. BWIA had no assets! People talk about the assets of BWIA. It was an insolvent bankrupt company.

The Government had a decision to make. Should we walk away from this unprofitable venture or should we—in order to protect the assets of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who had advanced goods and services to BWIA and would have been left out in the rain—take the decision not to cause that kind of distress in the financial and corporate sector in Trinidad and Tobago and take the liability for BWIA's debts? I need to put that in its proper perspective. There is too much old talk.

I listened carefully to what the Member for Caroni said that Mr. Davies was given US \$150 million. [*Interruption*] I listened to you but I happen to know that after that, out of that \$350 million almost \$100 million was for severance benefit. I know that because I have a keen interest in the separation and severance benefit arrangements for the workers of BWIA. If my memory is correct it is the sum of US \$95 million for separation benefits. That drops it to \$250 million. Out of the \$250 million almost \$200 million is to deal with the liabilities of BWIA.

If you look at BWIA's balance sheet it is a public document. I can always get another copy. I would pass it over to the Members opposite and they can take a look at it. In 2005, the total liabilities of BWIA amounted to US \$193 million. When you take the liabilities of almost US \$200 million and the severance benefits of almost US \$100 million that is US \$300 million. The start-up capital Caribbean Airlines has received is about US \$50 million.

Mr. Singh: Perhaps, in anticipation I took the liberty of looking at the contribution of the hon. Minister. I will give you the breakdown; this is how I

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arrived at \$115 million. To retain key transition personnel, \$13.3 million; inventories, \$3.6 million; to refurbish the fleet, \$5 million; tools and equipment, \$5 million; US \$21 million for the business re-engineering legacy systems, IT and safety; US \$15 million for penalties and to re-deliver the eight 340 and seven 37 aircrafts; to cover operating losses in the quarter of 2001, US \$2 million and working capital US \$50 million. That is what was injected in total as of January 01, 2007. The question was asked: What is the injection as of January 01? The figure is \$115 million after adding those.

Hon. C. Imbert: You have the correct figure there. The capital injection is \$50 million out of that \$115 million. The penalties on the leases would have accrued to BWIA. Let me go back to the figures. The injection into BWIA, you said \$359 million, that number sounds correct to me; severance payments approximately US \$95 million and BWIA's liabilities which is public record, \$193 million.

The hon. Member referred to penalties on the leases of the aircraft but that is not a matter for Caribbean Airlines. Think about it logically. The planes were leased by BWIA. The penalties on the leases could not be a matter for Caribbean Airlines. It is one pocket into the other. The actual capital—you keep saying Mr. Davies was given US \$115 million—is about US \$50 million that has been put into the new airline to capitalize it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Would the Minister give way? We have been informed that the employees of the new airline have not been paid for January. If money has gone in, why have they not been paid?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I would have to ask for injury time. Let me deal with issues one by one. Let me continue with what I was saying. *[Interruption]* You will have your chance to speak. *[Interruption]* I do not believe her. They say all kinds of things.

I go back to the issues raised by the hon. Member for Nariva. Hon. Members opposite have the habit of making the most ridiculous comments in this House. I would come to another statement of the hon. Member for Nariva that is an example of the kind of nonsense that hon. Members like to put in the public record. Let me deal with the question of Tobago Express. The hon. Member for Nariva wanted to know who owns Tobago Express. Full of sound and fury, he asked: Who owns Tobago Express? As if he did not know when Tobago Express was formed. Mr. Speaker, when was Tobago Express formed? Under the UNC. As if the hon. Member for Nariva, a former UNC minister who was present in the government when Tobago Express was formed did not know. Of course he

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knows! Let me read into the record since he does not want anybody else to know. Let me tell you what the situation is with respect to the shareholders of Tobago Express.

It is public knowledge and the Member for Nariva knows this; he saw it in his Cabinet papers when he was a member of the discredited UNC government. BWIA owns 48 per cent of Tobago Express. That is public knowledge. There are four other shareholders in Tobago Express, from the private sector; Tobago Air bridge Consortium, 14.6 per cent; R. S. Holdings, 14.6 per cent; Orchid Investments, 14.6 per cent and Air Trinidad and Tobago, 7.3 per cent. BWIA has 100 per cent of non-voting redeemable preference shares. That is public knowledge. Go to the Companies Registry and you would see it there. It is amazing how Members come and talk such foolishness in this House when they know better. Since you cannot remember, these are the shareholders of Tobago Express.

Let me move to another ridiculous statement made by the hon. Member for Nariva in similar vein to the Member for Siparia. That is the relationship between BWIA and Tobago Express. The hon. Member for Nariva was a minister when Tobago Express was created and he knows that BWIA had certain arrangements being a 49 per cent shareholder. Tobago Express is not an authorized maintenance organization. That is public knowledge. It cannot maintain its aircraft and therefore, it had to receive these services from an authorized maintenance organization. BWIA being an authorized maintenance organization—Caribbean Airlines now provides maintenance services to Tobago Express. BWIA also provided some limited check-in services. Everybody knows that. When you went to the airport sometimes you would have been checked by a Tobago Express employee or a BWIA employee. You would get the impression that the Member for Nariva never goes on the air bridge. BWIA provided limited check-in services and ramp services for Tobago Express; provided some office space for them in Trinidad and Tobago and limited IT support.

In addition, three of the aircraft on the air bridge were operated by Tobago Express. The head lease was with BWIA and they subleased these aircraft to Tobago Express. The other two aircraft are leased directly by Tobago Express but the lease was guaranteed by BWIA. All this is in the public domain. Since the Member cannot remember I am refreshing his memory.

Tobago Express was charged for the services for which they were provided. It is also public knowledge that they did not pay for all the services with which they were provided. The information I have is from BWIA and I cannot vouch for its accuracy. The debt owed by Tobago Express to BWIA at this time is US \$9 million. I

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asked them: Why did BWIA allow Tobago Express to accumulate a debt of US \$9 million? Apart from the fact that BWIA owns half of the airline, the other reason was that if BWIA did not do that the air bridge would have collapsed. It was clearly—I do not want to use the word patriotic—BWIA did the right thing in ensuring that there was continued service on the air bridge. They did not shut down Tobago Express. They avoided a collapse of the air bridge. The end result was an accumulated debt of US \$9 million to BWIA by Tobago Express. BWIA owns half of Tobago Express. Those are the facts and not all this “simidimi”, fantasy, fabrication, innuendo, wild allegation and nancy stories that the Member for Nariva brought into this House.

Let me give you an example of what I call a nancy story The Member for Nariva in an effort to scandalize the whole issue of Tobago Express said:

“My understanding is that BWIA continues to be responsible for the pilots payroll at Tobago Express.”

I am advised that that is arrant nonsense. I have listed the services, maintenance, check-in, sublease and so on. I am not aware that the pilots of Tobago Express are paid by BWIA. All nonsense.

Let me move to some of the other issues raised by the Member for Nariva. One of the allegations made by the Member for Nariva on page 12 of the *Hansard* is:

BWIA’s chief executive officer, Peter Davies was brass-faced enough to tell the *Guardian* the airline had to be closed due to unsuccessful negotiations between the company’s management and the four workers’ unions.”

He went on to describe that as nonsense and untrue. All this was in the public domain. One gets the impression that the Member for Nariva does not live in Trinidad, or if he lives here he does not read the papers; listen to the radio or watch television. He is asleep all the time. It is a matter of public record that the management of BWIA sought to have negotiations with the four unions throughout 2006. It was in the newspapers. [*Interruption*] What does he listen to? Perhaps, you have to check that station. They are not reporting the news correctly. I can tell you that the status of negotiations with respect to the management of BWIA and the four workers’ unions, the outcome and result of the negotiation were widely publicized.

Let me put the true facts into the record in contrast to the inaccuracies of the Member for Nariva. In May 2005, the Lok Jack Task Force, a group of

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independent businessmen analyzed BWIA and outlined three options. They were closure of the airline; restructuring and closure of BWIA and formation of a new airline. That is in the public domain. Everybody knows this. *[Interruption]* “Don’t be silly!” Caribbean Airlines is the new airline and BWIA has been closed.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, a new board was appointed in 2005 to further the restructuring of the airline. It was observed that the Lok Jack report had indicated that in order to be efficient the airline had to achieve revised work rules and in December 2005, proposals for a new collective agreement were made to the unions to commence negotiations for new work rules and for the restructuring of the airline.

For the benefit of the Member of Siparia, the Lok Jack report had indicated that in order to have an efficient restructuring of the airline, in order to achieve option two—because that was the preferred option at the time, not now. Mr. Speaker, through you, I know the Member for Siparia sometimes experiences a little time lag but the original option in 2005 and the beginning of 2006 was to see whether the airline could be restructured and in order for the airline to be restructured to become efficient, the airline had to achieve revised work rules and as I said, negotiations commenced on these work rules and the restructuring of the airline.

In February 2006, a new independent CEO, the man that the hon. Member for Caroni East loves to hate, obviously—I do not know the man—a man criticized by the hon. Member for Caroni East was appointed and a new business plan was formulated for the restructuring of the airline in March 2006. Negotiations began in March 2006 and took place over a six-month period. The parties were unable to agree in relation to the big items that required change such as last in, first out, and the parties arrived at an impasse in June 2006 when the CEO reported to the board that the new work rules were not achievable.

For the benefit of the Member for Siparia and the Member for Nariva—I know you do not want to hear this but this is the truth. The management sat down with the unions and sought to achieve agreement on the new work rules and negotiated for months and then they reported in June 2006 that the new work rules were not achievable. And as a result, option two was not viable. They negotiated for months, they tried to achieve restructuring, they tried to deal with the work rules, and it did not work out; there was no consensus, there was no agreement, there was no meeting of the minds, it was not working—*[Interruption]* option two was restructuring; option one, total closure, option three was close and start a new one. So that they tried option two first, it just did not work out—it happens. They could not reach agreement in 2006.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: For how many months?

Hon. C. Imbert: The information I have is that negotiations took place over a six-month period. The whole process started in 2005 so that in December 2005—let me repeat. Proposals for new collective agreements were made to the unions. They negotiated for six months and then in June 2006 the CEO reported that the negotiations had broken down, that there was no possibility of closure on the negotiations. So option two having failed, option three then became the option because option one was not viewed as a viable option. It was felt that by completely closing the airline and having no airline, it would expose Trinidad and Tobago to risks and, therefore, option three was the preferred option after option two failed. Option three, closure of BWIA, formation of a new airline and this is where we are today and this is what has led to this Motion. The fact is BWIA closed in December 2006 and we do have a new airline, Caribbean Airlines.

To deal with the point made by the Member for Caroni East, that he travelled on Caribbean Airlines and he saw BWIA plate, cup and napkin. Those are not people—when one is raising this question of successorship, you are talking about people, human beings, but those are the typical items of a distressed company. Any company that is going into receivership and is disposing of its supplies will dispose of them on the market.

I do not see any big deal in Caribbean Airlines acquiring plates, cups, knives, napkins. In fact, one should compliment them.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Would you kindly give way?

Hon. C. Imbert: It depends. You promise to behave?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, I give no promises to the Member for Diego Martin East. How did that acquisition take place? How did Caribbean Airlines (CAL) acquire the assets of BWIA? What was the process, what was the instrument?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to give way again. How can a company that is \$900 million in debt have any assets? BWIA has no assets.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You just said that.

Hon. C. Imbert: Those are not assets. Let me go back to this successorship issue. The successorship issue as the hon. Member for Caroni East knows and the Member for Nariva knows—because he must have picked up something in the couple years he spent in the Ministry of Labour. This is a complex legal matter.

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That is something that a court will determine. The successorship of the unions with respect to the airline is not going to happen because the Member for Nariva gets up in the House and jumps up and down and screams. That is not going to create successorship for the unions nor the noise coming from the Member for Siparia or the Member for Caroni East. Successorship is a legal matter and it is up to the unions to establish the conditions if they so desire. They may wish to do so, I do not know. My information is that there is no matter in the Industrial Court relating to successorship. I do not know what information the Member for Nariva has. There are matters in the Industrial Court relating to the winding up of BWIA, and protection of the creditors of BWIA and so forth. That is my understanding. There are injunctive orders relating to the winding up of BWIA but I am not aware that any matter has been filed in the Industrial Court with respect to the successorship of any of the four trade unions going from BWIA into Caribbean Airlines, and I see the Member for Nariva is keeping quiet. So, in accordance with a statement made by Pope Boniface VII, silence is consent.

Whenever the unions decide, if they so decide, to contest the successorship issue, then that becomes a matter for the Industrial Court. It is not up to you, it is not up to me and it is not up to the Member for Caroni East. It is based on the legal arguments, on the legal precedents and whatever the judges in the Industrial Court decide is the situation. I am not going to comment on that. I am not going to fall into that trap and I am not going to give anything at all for the hon. Member for Nariva and his associates to hold onto in terms of what is said in this House with respect to successorship. It will remain a matter for the courts.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I thank you, I thank the Members on this side, Members opposite, those who agreed, to the extension of my time.

Mr. Speaker, through you, the Member for Caroni East knows you cannot go in a corner shop and deal with the issue of successorship. You cannot go out on the pavement and deal with that. It is a complex legal matter that will be dealt with in the proper forum, and this is not the forum for it. You could jump high, or jump low, or whatever you say or I say, will have no effect on whether trade unions will be granted successorship with respect to the transition from BWIA into

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Caribbean Airlines. And I am sure many lawyers will get a lot of money out of that. The lawyers are always the winners in these matters. A lot of big fees will be charged.

The other issue is another false statement made by the Member for Nariva. The first one I identified is this story about how BWIA was paying salaries of the pilots on the Tobago Express airline service. I do not know where he got that nonsense from. He just dreams these things up. Let me go to another point made where he said that there was no industrial action BWIA. Nonsense!

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Nariva—I am reading from the *Hansard*—“as far as we are aware workers had not been engaged in any work stoppage, any industrial action.” Nonsense! Where are you living?

In June 2006. That is just six months ago. There was sick-out action arising from the union negotiations causing disruption of service to BWIA passengers. It was in the newspapers. A number of flights could not depart because they did not have their full complement of crew and there was sick-out action by some members of the staff particularly, the crew in BWIA, and anybody who wants to deny that is just not living in Trinidad and Tobago.—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I must inform the hon. Member for Fyzabad that this House was in a very harmonious a mood when he was outside of the Chamber, and I would like the mood to continue. So please lend us your assistance.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Member for Fyzabad is capable of that. He likes to provoke us and then we have to move motions.

Mr. Speaker, in June 2006 there was sick-out action which caused BWIA—and again, this is a matter of public record in the newspapers, the radio, television. It is only a blind, deaf, or dumb man will not know that BWIA was forced to wet-lease aircraft in 2006 to ensure flights, to ensure that passengers got to their destinations, and that cost BWIA TT \$6 million. Everybody in Trinidad and Tobago knows that, yet the Member for Nariva will say, as far as we are aware, workers have not been engaged in any action. Where is the Member living?

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the challenges we on this side have when we have to sit and listen to this foolishness. Let me continue with some of the statements made by the hon. Member for Nariva.

We understand that Caribbean Airlines will be honouring all frequent flyers miles chalked up to December 31, 2006. It is true and that is to maintain customer loyalty. Persons who have acquired passenger miles under BWIA, Caribbean

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Airlines is honouring those frequent flyer miles. And I cannot see that any serious person will have a problem with that. So persons travelling on BWIA had got frequent flyer miles, they had racked up points that allowed them free flights. Caribbean Airlines decided to make a corporate decision that it will honour all the frequent flyer miles held by former BWIA passengers, they did that. It is a fact. Caribbean Airlines will be using some of BWIA's planes. Again, it is a fact that one of these aircraft has already gone back and I have to wonder, where is the Member for Nariva living. In January 2006, one of the airbuses was sent back and the other one, as the Member for Caroni East pointed out, is going back within the next couple of months. In fact, the second airbus is going back in June 2007 so there will be no equipment on the London route that belongs to or is leased by Caribbean Airlines. This nancy story that the Member tried to paint here, that BWIA and Caribbean Airlines is the same thing; they just changed the logo on the plane, is nonsense. One airbus has returned and a second airbus is going back in June. Of the seven aircraft which were leased from somebody else—because they were not owned by BWIA, they do not belong to BWIA. They belong to various companies that have acquired these airlines and have leased them—six of them are being leased by Caribbean Airlines.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken this opportunity to deal with the issues raised on this particular matter by the hon. Member for Nariva.

The Member for Caroni East made the point that there were serious issues with respect to retirees; there are serious issues with respect to separated workers—good point—it is true and I am not going to get up in this House and say it is not true. There are serious issues that have to be dealt with, with respect to retired workers of BWIA and separated workers of BWIA.

All of the workers of BWIA were separated and, therefore, there are certain benefits that accrue to them and not everybody accepted the offer from BWIA with respect to separation. The vast majority did but I understand there are a number of workers who did not and that will have to be addressed in the appropriate forum in due course or maybe, it is being addressed now, I cannot tell you. There is no doubt that the benefits of former BWIA workers in their totality are something that has to be dealt with. I do not know if the hon. Member for Caroni East knows that usually when you have these situations, when you are winding up a state corporation and you are in the process of doing so, normally the board of the corporation—let us call it old BWIA at this time, would be comprised primarily, usually, of public servants or persons working in the Ministry of Finance, the Divestment Division. That is known, you have it all over the place and you have now a group of public

servants and persons in the Ministry of Finance who are managing the residual matters related to BWIA, like in any other transaction, and it falls to them to deal with all the issues that you have raised in terms of pension benefits for BWIA employees, separation benefits and so forth. That answers your question and I thought that would have been obvious.

Mr. Singh: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Perhaps, this is the first instance in the context of accounting to the population, and the former employees of BWIA that such a statement has been made because simply the knowledge is not there and there is a gap in that knowledge.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what to say now. I thought it was common knowledge. Now you can correct your records. As I said with respect to the traditional approach when a state corporation is being closed down or whatever the case may be, a group of public servants or persons of that ilk are put there and you leave them there to tidy up the matters, because it is two separate organizations.

I see the Member for Nariva laughing. Maybe he has no clue about what is going on. It is two separate organizations. BWIA was closed in December 2006 and now we have Caribbean Airlines, two separate companies. [*Interruption*] It does not matter and as I said, issues like that, if you are going to be advising someone, go ahead. Those are complex legal matters. I am not getting into whether it is the same board. That is not my business. That is something for the lawyers to deal with and they will argue it out. But the fact is, it is two separate companies, one owned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—98 per cent, will be dealt with by this group of public servants and contract employees in the Ministry of Finance and they will handle all residual matters.

The other thing I take objection to are some statements made by the Member for Caroni East with respect to the former President of the Industrial Court and the former Chairman of the Integrity Commission. I do not know if the Member really means it. Sometimes hon. Members opposite say things in the heat of the moment that they might not really mean or they say them just purely for political purposes. Isn't the former president of the Industrial Court Mr. Addison Khan, an eminent expert on labour law? I am sure the Member for Nariva will agree with me that the former President of the Industrial Court can be properly described as an eminent expert on labour. I am sure the hon. Member for Nariva will not object to that description.

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Is the former President of the Industrial Court supposed to starve so that when he retires as the President of the Industrial Court, that is it for him? He goes into oblivion and all those years of learning and training and sitting as the President of the Industrial Court will just go to waste so he must not work as a consultant, he must not work in the private sector, he must not give anybody the benefit of his knowledge and experience. That is rubbish! What else do you expect the former President of the Industrial Court to do but to advise on labour matters? Do you want him to go and advise on sugarcane? Do you want him to go and advise on pumpkin? Obviously, the president of the Industrial Court, if he is going to work as a private consultant is going to work within his sphere of competence and obviously he is going to use his tremendous experience and knowledge and advise corporations and individuals on labour law. I think it is discourteous to persons who have served at the highest level to make these cheap shots at them when they are practising their profession and are out there giving back in terms of their knowledge and experience to say that they are cooking up something.

Then the former Chairman of the Integrity Commission Mr. Gordon Dean came straight out of the private sector; a well-known businessman; Chairman of Algico and various other corporations in the private sector for years. Everybody knows of Mr. Gordon Dean's background, of his experience in the private sector and you are going to tell me that a private sector person who decides to sacrifice how many years of his working life—I do not know how long he was chairman of the Integrity Commission, I cannot recall, I think five or six years—you are going to tell me an experienced person from the private sector who decides to sacrifice several years of his working life to be the chairman of the Integrity Commission—when he leaves the Commission, is he supposed to starve too? Is he supposed to take a vow of poverty and say that is it, I am not working for the rest of my life? Are you saying that he must avoid every single entity and corporation, and personality that he ever came into contact with?

The last time I checked the number of persons and entities that had to report to the Integrity Commission was over 1,000. In fact, I think it is over 2,000. Is the hon. Member for Caroni East saying that any person who served on the Integrity Commission, the Public Service Commission, the Teaching Service Commission or the Judicial and Legal Service Commission or any one of these Commissions, when they retire from the Commission that is it for them, pack up their bags and starve? Do not ever work for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Singh: I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. I want to clarify firstly with respect to the Addison Khan matter we may choose to call it. When you are a

judge of the Industrial Court, it is a superior court of record, in a similar vein you have the same status as a judge of the High Court and in that sense judges of the High Court cannot go before the High Court. In this instance, you have a situation where the former president of the court is going before the Industrial Court and, therefore, the whole question of bias and perception of bias, and if one were to look at the question of the Pinochet case, one will recognize that may arise. But we may want as public policy when judges retire from the Industrial Court that you provide for them in the context of emoluments upon retirement. I think my friend from Point Fortin may share that view, you may provide for them so well that they do not have to earn that kind of living and, therefore, the perception will emerge.

The second issue with respect to the Integrity Commission, it may similarly be that here it is that the Chairman of the Integrity Commission having regard to the public interest in maintaining integrity in public life, you may want to have emoluments for the Chairman of the Integrity Commission. The point I wanted to make about Gordon Dean is he sat on matters dealing with Repsol and the Prime Minister, Maranatha and BP and then went to work for Atlantic LNG.

Hon. C. Imbert: I am not giving away again. I have only 10 minutes left and I will not give way for the next 10 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, it is all very well for the Member to say that. Retired Judge, Sonny Maharaj left the bench, went back into private practice and although he may not have been in the court was certainly giving legal advice. And former Aeneas Wills; there are temporary judges who are appointed to the court routinely going back into private practice and, therefore, I do not accept the arguments of the hon. Member for Caroni East and I go back to my root argument, that persons who served in the Industrial Court and persons who served on the Integrity Commission, I do not agree with the concept that they are debarred for life from providing services commensurate with their knowledge and experience.

3.30 p.m.

I am coming specifically to the point made by the hon. Member for Caroni East about the former Chairman of the Integrity Commission. I have no way of checking this, so I take the Member's word at face value—that the former Chairman of the Integrity Commission has gone to work, in some capacity, for an energy sector company.

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Hon. C. Imbert: I have no way of checking it. I am taking the word of the Member at face value. The former chairman has gone to work in the energy sector and is coming into contact with corporations that may have been examined by the Integrity Commission.

That will happen every single day with the Integrity Commission. Every day, there will be issues being brought. The Member is saying essentially that anybody who serves on these commissions, after they leave, the choices available to them are extremely narrow. If you take that argument to its logical conclusion, they have no choice because at some point they will encounter someone who was associated in some way with somebody or some corporation in public life. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I think if the Member for Caroni East had these concerns, when the Integrity Commission legislation was being piloted—hindsight is 20/20 vision—why did he not bring them up then? Why did he not say that persons who serve on the commission should be banned for life from getting work in the corporate sector? It is just a convenient argument. They have a problem with the gentleman and they use whatever opportunity they have, from time to time, to take potshots.

When Mr. Addison Khan was the president, it was the greatest thing. Now he is outside as a consultant, he is not; just because it does not suit their interest—convenient arguments. I have heard the hon. Prime Minister, from time to time, make the point that politicians have themselves to blame for their poor image in the public. That is why, Mr. Speaker, hon. Members opposite have a habit of speaking out of both sides of their mouth.

Let me go back to the text. A statement was made by the hon. Member for Nariva about the suspension of BWIA shares. I put this on record even though the Member for Nariva is very well aware of the facts. In 2005, the share price of BWIA was 33 cents. When a new board was appointed and the Government announced it would restructure the airline, the first preferred option; there was unhealthy speculation in the market. So the Government appointed a new board of independent businessmen and announced that attempts were going to be made to restructure the airline. The view was that the restructuring would be successful; that the airline would be turned around and that it would become profitable. The share price increased from 33 cents in mid-2005, to 97 cents in November 2005. This put a valuation on BWIA far in excess of its real worth.

It was worthless; it was bankrupt, but there were people trading in shares on the stock market. The Member for St. Joseph said it. A lot of Trinidadians and Tobagonians have lost a lot of money on the stock market over the last two years. There was a situation where people were trading in the shares of a bankrupt company. They pushed the share price up. It went from 33 cents to 97 cents—it tripled. Speculators were spending large sums of money speculating in BWIA shares and the shares were worthless. This is why the trading in BWIA shares was suspended.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. C. Imbert: That is another reason. The information I have is that the application was made in mid-2006 to delist the shares of BWIA because of an application by the board of BWIA to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to suspend trading. The truth is that the board of BWIA approached the SEC and asked them to suspend the trading of BWIA shares.

There is another point I would like to deal with in the few minutes available to me. The Member for Nariva said that it was a criminal act and a travesty of justice for BWIA “big boys” to mismanage the company to the point of insolvency and now be handed secure jobs in a new entity. He was talking about persons who managed the airline within the last year or two.

I want to put on record, again, the facts. Under the United National Congress (UNC)—the now hopelessly split UNC—the accumulated liabilities was: US \$89 million in 1996; US \$106 million in 1997; US \$138 million, almost TT \$800 million, in liabilities in 1999; US \$146 million in 2000; US \$153 million, almost TT \$1 billion in accumulated liability. Liabilities went from US \$89 million to US \$153 million under the UNC. The only criminals the Member for Nariva could be talking about are the people who managed the airline during that period. Because I know that the Member is prone to hyperbole and that he is just talking nonsense, I will ignore that.

The fact is that the global aviation business got into trouble after the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001. Airlines all over the world collapsed. Why should BWIA be any different? At that time the airline was undercapitalized and it had accumulated liabilities of almost \$1 billion. How does the Member expect an airline of that nature to survive, when airlines that had billions of US dollars in reserves failed? How could he expect a weak organization like that to survive? They did not and we have to face facts. They could not cope with the problems that arose from 9/11 and, regrettably, it had to be closed in 2006. That is the reality of the situation.

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As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, we need to focus on some of the issues raised by the Member for Caroni East in terms of benefits for retired workers. We need to focus on the human issues. This nonsense about family jewels and patrimony is rubbish. We need to focus on what has been done and will be done for retired workers of BWIA.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, we are in an election year once again, 2007—double election: local and general. The year 1995 was also an election year and on the eve of that election we saw what we are seeing again. The PNM, in government, sold out BWIA, in 1995, before the election and we saw what happened after Acker came in. Other Members spoke about it. He gutted the airline and left it. Again, in an election year, the PNM is once more moving to give away BWIA.

This Government engages in serious policy decisions, high-handedly, without any recourse to the people, to the representatives of the people and to this Parliament. I congratulate the Member for Nariva for placing this Motion in the public domain. If it had not been done, the secrecy that has shrouded the closing of BWIA and the formation of this new airline would have continued. The only reason we got snippets of information is because of the Motion moved by the Member for Nariva. This Government would not otherwise have disclosed anything with respect to the airline.

What they have said pales in comparison to what they have not said about this new airline. When I listened to Minister Enill on the last occasion, he spoke a lot about restructuring. When this Minister spoke, he spoke about option three, which is to shut down and start a new airline. Somewhere along the way, they have changed the options. They have deferred in their explanations. Both came to this House—I have the *Hansard* here; I read it last night and again while the Minister was speaking—and they both seem to be saying different things with respect to BWIA. That is why we still say they have not provided the information needed and they have not given us a true evaluation of what took place to shut down BWIA and to take over Caribbean Airlines Limited.

We look at the financial mismanagement, the accounting scandals, the cronyism, the absence of transparency and the corruption that is the hallmark of the PNM. It is most present in this demise of BWIA. It is like DNA. We listened to the very flippant comments of Members on the other side. The Member for Diego Martin East attempted to trivialize the comments by the Member for Nariva and the

Member for Caroni East, spewing out his normal string of—by now we can consider them expletives—he repeats them on every single occasion in a very flippant, foolish manner and will not listen. They are deaf, dumb and immune to the voices of the people of this country.

Look at the Government Bench today! BWee is not important? CAL is not important? They are totally absent from the Chamber. They have no interest whatsoever in this matter and the only reason the Member for Diego Martin East is here is that he was hoping to make a nice, big speech in the Parliament and be on Channel 11. That is the only reason they left him here.

It is not important, but we must be reminded. We are talking about over 2,000 persons directly affected by what has happened to BWee and CAL. There are 2,000 persons, but they have families too. If there are four persons to a family, we are talking about 8,000 persons being affected. They have no concern for them. When the Member for Caroni East raised the issue of the minority shareholders, they said that the court will deal with that. They became the most legal government in the world. In the same way, they have no heart; they have no care for the tenants they are evicting from Malick and the Beetham. Since when do they follow law?

The Prime Minister is on record right through the system breaking the law and today continues to break the law. He still drives the car with the Coat-of-Arms in breach of the law. They must be in breach of the Industrial Relations Act when they are breaching the rights of the retirees given for discounted travel as part of their package under the compensation plan. So they tout the law when it is convenient and break it on every occasion they can get.

We see it with the CEPEP contracts in the Auditor General's report. There were serious breaches in what is taking place with SWMCOL. They break the law when it suits them and when they can skim money from the Treasury, they break the law.

The Minister mentioned the cups, plates and knives of BWee. I asked him how CAL acquired them. He could not tell us. What about all these pronouncements about shutting down BWee and replacing it with this new airline? What is the true status of BWee? Does it still exist or not? I went on the BWee website, logged in and Caribbean Airlines Limited jumped up. BWee is off the website. I checked the FAA website for airline certificate information and in the column headed "Operator doing business as", I saw very clearly, "BWIA". Does BWee not exist?

The Member for Caroni East mentioned they still have everything. They still have the planes, the plates, the spoons and some of the staff. If you go under

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Caribbean Airlines Limited, it is operating as BWee, so why are they perpetrating this deception on the people of Trinidad and Tobago that there is a new airline when they are still using BWee for everything? I believe even the tickets have a BW code. What is the deception about? Why are they doing it? There must be something more in the mortar than the pestle.

When you look, the airline's address is listed as Golden Grove Road, P.O. Box 604. Get this! Contact P. Davies at BWee.com. Is this the Davies the Member for Caroni East was speaking about? Is this the CEO of the new airlines? The gentleman is now at Caribbean Airlines Limited. [*Interruption*] This is not out of date; I did this yesterday. You changed it today? Only if you changed it today. P. Davies has now become Caribbean Airlines Limited, but you must contact him at BWee.

It gets more interesting. Caribbean Airlines Limited is listed as having 26 years in operation. Where did that come from? The company is still using the BWIA International code, so why was it so important to change the name? All you have done is a name change. I asked about the assets. Is it a successorship or a change of name? Can BWee be transformed into CAL? You have the same directors, CEO, owners, assets, locations, routes and flight numbers. The only thing you did not keep was the name. Is this legal?

My colleague indicated that for purposes of the Industrial Relations Act, Caribbean Airlines Limited can be considered a successor entity. Whether this is proper under other laws is a totally different issue. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that all the assets of the old BWIA, which was then Trinidad and Tobago (BWIA International) Airways Corporation, by Act of Parliament, in February 1995, the BWIA International Airways Limited (Vesting) Act, the assets of BWee were vested in a new company, BWIA International Airways Limited. There was a change of name but they kept the BWIA there. Under this Act all the assets of BWIA were transferred to the new BWIA. That is 1995 when the Acker deal was coming into place and the liabilities were kept.

The same thing is happening now. We do not know because there is no instrument. There has been no vesting Act. I am saying that the Government has moved illegally. It was a state asset before. It was moved from the State to another company and there was a vesting Act and we debated the issue as a policy decision. You came to vest the assets in the new company. Nothing has been done with respect to that. How have the planes been transferred to CAL? Have they been transferred? Are they still in the name of BWIA? Are the locations in the name of BWee or Caribbean Airlines? There must be a legal instrument of transfer in the same way land is transferred.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you know a lot about the transfer of land. There is the conveying instrument, the deed or the memorandum under the Real Property Ordinance, as the case may be. If you transfer shares, there is a share certificate. If you transfer an aeroplane from one company to the next, there must be an instrument. That is why I say that the secrecy in which this whole thing is shrouded leaves so much unanswered. If they were transferred, at what value were they transferred? At how much did it go?

The Member for St. Augustine asked of Minister Enill in the debate on December 01, 2006: Will you be prepared to lay an opening financial statement? We have absolutely no problem, he said, in giving that information. We are now in February 2007 and we have not seen it. This Minister says today that it is \$50 million. It is start up, I know, but where is the opening statement. Let us see a balance sheet. Let us see what is in CAL? What else has been injected in CAL? Are the planes still in BWee?

How did CAL acquire these things? You do not know. They have not legally done the transaction. They continue to break the law whenever it suits them. When we go into what is happening in this airline, we see a tangled web that we need to untangle. We see interlocking directorships. The Member for Caroni spoke about persons involved in the Integrity Commission. I think that the Member for Diego Martin East totally missed the point—trivialized it as usual—and went into extremes.

The issue was that a person is sitting in a particular position where he is adjudicating matters and comes out thereafter and gets a job with the very companies that were involved in allegations of mismanagement. If an ordinary layman connects the dots, the question is: Is this payback time? He was adjudicating in a particular manner the issues before him and as soon as he leaves he picks up a job with persons affiliated to this company? He is perfectly right to be concerned about it.

It is in the same way we talk about a judge in the court not being able to practise for 10 years after he comes off the Bench. The reason is the same. We talk about justice not only being done, but being seen manifestly to be done. This Government has no honour with respect to the rule of law and the pillars of a democratic society in this country, so the Minister can make those flippant statements in response to the Member for Caroni East.

It goes further. When we talk about judges and lawyers making a lot of money, even now in this country the Acting Chief Justice is proposing a candidate for nomination to sit in the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker: No! That matter falls squarely in the ambit of Standing Order 36(10). You can discuss it, however, on a substantive motion. Do not refer to it *en passant*.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: You cannot bring it up. You cannot allude to anything about the Acting Chief Justice being the head of the Judicial Service and Legal Commission and appointing anybody. That comes under Standing Order 36(10). However, you can discuss it if you file a substantive motion.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, I am guided. We will do that. There are issues that are of serious concern when it comes to the administration of justice.

Where there are PNM appointees sitting in positions, they appoint other PNM-affiliated persons. That is what is happening. Therefore, they stack their boards and benches, everywhere, with friends and family of the PNM. That is the concern we are sharing. There is payback time. That is what the Member for Caroni East meant when he spoke about the Integrity Commission.

The task force that was appointed to review the operations of BWee, consisted of these persons: William Lucie-Smith, Gervase Warner, Shafeek Sultan-Khan, Terrence Farrell. Mr. Sultan-Khan, you will recall was an industrial relations consultant who was used by BWee to negotiate the union settlement for VSEP. Mr. Arthur Lok Jack was the head of the task force. Mr. Farrell was on the team, but left shortly after he was appointed.

The board of directors of CAL consists of: Arthur Lok Jack, William Lucie-Smith, Gervase Warner and Shafeek Sultan-Khan. These persons served on the task force. They shut down the airline, created a new airline and put themselves as the board of directors. The web grows even tighter. There must be some conflict of interest where these persons who were asked to assess the power points of an institution, selected the most expensive option, which is that it should be shut down. They decided to shut it down and make themselves directors of the new entity. This must be conflict of interest and, most certainly, totally unethical behaviour. So they created a space for themselves.

Look at how these directors are tied together. That is the web of interlocking directorates. William Lucie-Smith on April 06, 2003, the *Sunday Express* carried a story entitled, "How BWIA's flight plan went off course", tracing some corrupt dealing by one Mr. Conrad Aleong. In the article, she suggested that the Prime Minister, Mr. Manning, was familiar with the corrupt transactions. When asked

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about allegations of impropriety, which were substantial and included the award of contracts by the Aleong-led board to companies, including offshore registered companies, and the alleged doctoring of accounts to show a profit, Mr. Aleong asked:

“Why would a chartered accounting firm like PWC sign an audit statement if it was not acceptable accounting practice? Why don’t you ask William Lucie-Smith? He and our financial comptroller deal with those questions and when they have finished dealing with those questions, it is brought to the audit committee of the board.”

The context of the article suggests that Mr. Lucie-Smith was involved in some kind of shadowy or questionable accounting practice.

Of course, from the above, you would know that Mr. Lucie-Smith was first an auditor of BWee, then a former BWee director, then a task force member and is now a CAL director. They are talking about change; they are talking about restructuring and revitalizing and making the airline work, and they are putting back the same people who failed the company in the first place.

Can we now trust the analysis of the figures by Mr. Lucie-Smith? Those were the ones the Member for Diego Martin East was quoting. Given that he worked for PCW in auditing BWee, is it a conflict of interest for him to have served as part of the investigative Lok Jack team or as a director now?

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Smith was working for PWC he allegedly found nothing strange in BWIA generating a profit for three straight years, but four years later, he feels that the company cannot be salvaged, and these are the numbers we saw from 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000; we see a profit. Nothing was wrong with that. He comes now to these losses and he says the company cannot be salvaged. How is it so when you saw within that time frame that there was a profit under the UNC—small though it might have been, it was a profit; it was a turnaround—with respect to BWIA?

The Minister talked about US \$149 million being cumulative losses. When I total the losses under the PNM, it was a net loss of US \$146 million from 2002 to 2006. When you total in 2002, \$34 million; \$21 million in 2003; \$15 million in 2004; \$26.3 million in 2005 and \$46 million, which Minister Enill had told us but this Minister now tells us it is really \$50 million for 2006; it gives you that US \$146 million loss. These are the people; Mr. William Lucie-Smith was there all along, you are putting him there again.

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In addition to being on the board of the directors of Sagicor Financial Corporation, Mr. Lucie-Smith has been a special advisor to the Trinidad and Tobago Government at Central Bank on divestment. He also served as a director with Electrical Industries Limited; a member of the Daly Committee on Corporate Insolvency and Company Law with special reference to severance pay.

Perhaps of more relevance is the fact that he was appointed in 2004 as a member of the Board of Directors of? Neal & Massy, Mr. Speaker, by then, chairman of the board of directors of Neal & Massy Holdings Limited, Mr. Arthur Lok Jack. I am talking about the interlocking directorates, the cronyism that we are seeing surfacing and we are putting these people there, you say, to turn around Caribbean Airlines.

It is a known fact that Mr. Ken Gordon, in 2003, also headed a task force to deal with BWIA and he was a former chairman of Neal and Massy Holdings. Mr. Lucie-Smith is now a member of a company called Ratings Committee of CARICRIS. I received a letter recently at the Office of the Opposition; it says CARICRIS has been hired by Government to do a risk assessment. Mr. Lucie Smith is also a member of the Ratings Committee of CARICRIS. And so, I am talking about the interlocking directorships, the cronyism; it is like a big gang, a gang of PNM friends and family.

Mr. Arthur Lok Jack. Mr. Speaker, the history of Mr. Arthur Lok Jack is riddled with controversies, allegations of wrongdoing and abuse of office. In the *Guardian* newspapers of September 16, 2004, Nicholas Lok Jack and Shiraz Ahamad were brought on as directors on the board of Guardian Life. Nicholas is, of course, the son of Mr. Arthur Lok Jack. Shiraz's brother Imtiaz was already a board member. So brother and sister on the board of Guardian Life and you had father and son on the board of Guardian Life.

There were numerous newspaper reports in 2005/2006 featuring Guardian Holdings Limited (GHL) of which Mr. Lok Jack was chairman. In 2004, Guardian Holdings Limited and RBTT shared a symbiotic relationship with each other holding significant shares in each other: GHL owned 13½ per cent of RBTT and RBTT owned 20 per cent of GHL.

Mergers and acquisitions expert, Professor of Finance, Columbia Business School, Columbia University, New York, Mr. Arzac on the issue of this relationship said:

“‘Perhaps they have the way to do it but every other thing that has been done, mixing insurance companies and banks, has not worked,’ he said.

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‘If I’m an investor and I’m a minority shareholder I want those two guys separate. I’d be very concerned of mixing the two because then where the money goes, how it operates...not only the fact that implementing that may not be that great.’”

This is the *Guardian* of March 24, 2005. The headline is, “M&As booming...but investors are wary”.

On April 01, 2005, RBTT Financial Holdings sold nine million GHL shares in a put through which was not disclosed until the newspapers questioned GHL and RBTT spokesmen. The major shareholders of GHL were at the time RBTT and Tenetic which is owned by GHL chairman and the estate of deceased Naz Ahamad—both sons were on the board of GHL. GHL CEO Peter—and it is difficult to pronounce this French word—Ganteaume, thank you—claimed that he was unaware of who the buyer was. By the way, he is also a former executive chairman of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), the same firm that had done that first audit report.

Within days it was discovered that Mr. Arthur Lok Jack and the Ahamad family who were directors of GHL were the buyers of the nine million GHL shares sold. Himself to himself. Interestingly, at the time Mr. Lok Jack was also a director of RBTT Financial Holdings, the company which sold the shares in the first place. Himself to himself from himself. And GHL CEO Peter—the same gentleman with the French name—was also a director in RBTT; the web, the web, Mr. Speaker.

Curiously, it took 11 days before RBTT confirmed that it had disposed of the shares. The local Securities and Exchange Commission began examination into the transaction. Jerome Sooklal, the RBTT CEO issued a press release several days later advising of and defending the transaction and simultaneously announced the formation of a new company, Prometheus Energy Partners featuring GHL and RBTT. Again, you have all of those persons intertwined.

In October 2005, Mr. Peter was replaced by Rory O’Brien as CEO of GHL. I have not been able so far as to determine how this SEC investigation ended. What I do know is up to late last year, the SEC was examining the movements and the excessive price spikes of RBTT shares. WISE, the Stock Exchange, SEC called in RBTT, November 30, 2006. They were called in with respect to these transactions. We are still looking to see how this one ends.

I can tell you though, that 2007 is not a happy year for GHL. They are looking to offload its RBTT holdings in order to cap a running loss. GHL reportedly made a loss of TT \$707.4 million in the nine months to September 2006.

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Dr. Shafeek Sultan-Khan. He is not a Neal & Massy director, nor is he on the board of the UTT. He was however with Mr. Lok Jack on the PNM's Vision 2020 secretariat.

Hon. Member: "Ohhhh."

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Yes, Mr. Lok Jack I said. He was with Mr. Lok Jack in that secretariat. I am showing you the web. I am showing you the interlocking directorates that you have. These people; it is a gang; cronies altogether that you keep putting into everything. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Yes, but you connect all the dots now, Sir, with due respect, through you. Connect the dots. In is all of this, probably, it is to pull all of it together and see the web that has been woven, to see what is happening here, and there must be conflict of interest when this happens. It will not be in the best interest of the new airline. It will not be in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago.

Some may be familiar with the fact that Dr. Khan was a former member of the Board of Directors of BWIA having served perhaps the shortest stint. He was appointed to the board on December 06, 2004 and he tendered his resignation on March 31, 2005. No explanation was ever given. Here we see him resurfacing again; director in CAL.

By February 1995, Dr. Shafeek Sultan-Khan was the advisor to the Ministry of Planning and Development. He had previously served as World Bank Technical Assistance Loan and Project Coordinator focusing on the EMA with the same Ministry, leaping into the advisory position when his stint at World Bank finished. So he is no stranger to conflict of interest; he has done it before. Being the World Bank Technical Assistance Loan and Project Consultant, while at the same time leaping into an advisory position to the Ministry as soon as he could.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the characters that we are seeing, resurfaced, recycled; they have been there, they have done that; they failed and you put them back again and say you want to run CAL at a profit. Would not happen. It would not happen. This Government has attempted to blame the workers for the shut down of BWIA. That it was the workers. Even Mr. Enill, when he spoke about the workers and the workers agreements and so on; totally against the workers; blames the workers. It was the management. [*Desk thumping*] It was the management and these are some of the same people who brought down BWIA.

Mr. Speaker, some reference has been made with respect to the value of the slots. We still need to know the true value of the slots at Heathrow that we sold for £5 million. What is the true value? Was a valuation ever done? How did you arrive at £5 million and give it away. Our information is that there were seven pairs of slots; so there were 14 slots. Each one is valued at £5 million. So you should have sold those if you had to sell at all—14 by 5—for £70 million. Why did we sell it for £5 million? You are not going to ever, ever, ever get those slots back. Why did you need to get rid of the slots? When Minister Enill was speaking in this Parliament on December 01, 2006, I asked him what had happened to these slots and he got up with such a foolish answer. He said, the situation with the slots is that you “use it or you lose it”.

So did we not use them? Why did we not keep them and use them? What is the benefit of giving them away for £5 million? What benefit has that brought? That was an asset; that is not a liability that you want to get rid of. That was a vital lucrative asset that we just gave away for £5 million and we have not had any proper explanation from this Government as to why it was necessary to lose it because you were not using it, when CAL could have continued to use the slots. Nonsense answer; “use it or lose it”. So why did we not use it, Mr. Speaker? Why are we not using it? Why did we prefer to give it away? We have not had any proper explanation about these slots; none whatsoever.

They claimed that the London route was not cost effective. The same BWIA CEO Davies, the predecessor of this airline, has always indicated that London was a profitable route. So who is speaking the truth? CEO Davies is on record that that London route was profitable, yet the Minister comes here to tell us, the London route was not profitable. And I do not understand what his explanation was.

The traffic is coming from the North to this direction; it is one way. So how are the people going back up North? [*Laughter*] You mean people coming from North, Europe and London and staying here? They are not going back? [*Laughter*] Nonsense answer that he gave. It is in the *Hansard* when he said the traffic is one way, so this thing is not profitable. So what we will do is take the passengers from Trinidad, drop them in Barbados, we will come back to Trinidad and we will let somebody else—BA—take them to London.

Why we could not take them to London? Those Trinidadians leaving here are coming back home too, and those foreigners coming for tourism are going back home too. So the nonsensical explanation for that route not being profitable—that route has been given to British Airways. They would do it three times a week as

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opposed to the daily flights that we had. If that was the case to make it profitable, why did you not reduce it and keep it for yourself; restructure?

You talk about 9/11 and airlines going bust and that is the reason why our airlines went bust and so on. Yet you have the miracle of Southwest Airlines; you have Jet Blue; airlines that have restructured themselves gone in free and are making money, because people travel all the time. The entire Cabinet is now travelling on a safari somewhere in the world; people travel. So to say that you could not restructure the airline—you want to stand and say something?

Mrs. Job-Davis: Bombardier [*Inaudible*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: The Bombardier, too? Thanks for reminding me. I understand the Bombardier was parked up in Antigua and then was boarded in Antigua and “gone”; I do not know if it is true. That is what the town say, as they say.

Mr. Speaker, we really need a detailed explanation; we need justification; we need documentary proof that someone did not just give away our patrimony with respects to these slots. We need to do a valuation; we want to see a valuation. How did they determine the £5 million was the acceptable price? We need a professional valuation; that has to be done; it must have been done, because people do not just give away something like that, unless there is some corrupt act that took place. You would not have just picked £5 million out of a hat; there must have been some way you could have valued this.

We are talking about what our information is in terms of the valuation of the slots and we are saying you had 14 of them, £70 million; we are looking at a lot of hundreds of millions of dollars; \$815 million. [Interruption] Well, bring your valuation. Who did it; who valued it? What were the other options? Use it or lose it.

The Minister tells us that they have injected, whether it is \$50 million, \$115 million, whatever injection; my information is—and I asked him the question, he did not answer us—that CAL employees have not been paid for the month of January. That there is a letter from the same CEO Davies, who says to the employees, we want to make it perfect; we have not had time to get it right; so you just have to wait, and they have not been paid. That is my information, certainly it can be verified. The BA employees are getting the benefits of the route sale; BWIA’s are gone, they are getting none.

In addition CEO Davies, I am told, has given all branding and marketing to be done, outsourced to a London company; we do not know what cost; we do not know who this company is. And the further question is there not a local company that can do this job? Is there not a local company that can do branding and marketing?

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As we talk about that I recall when they changed the logo on the plane to put the humming bird; we were told that they paid some man in London millions of dollars to come up with that design to put a humming bird. You mean a Trinidadian could not tell you, “you could put a humming bird if you want, you know”, and the nonsense of putting a humming bird, when the humming bird is also used by other airlines. We had a steel pan; we talk about being proud of our culture and so on. We had a steel pan; we could have put a steel pan crossed with a tassa drum and reflect the people and culture of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Why we could not have done that? You did not have to go to London; you would have found a local designer who could have said that to you. [*Crosstalk*]

So you take away the steel pan, coming into Carnival again and everybody is singing the praises of steel pan and steel pan men and so on. I saw the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs going to honour an old steel pan man for all his work over the years. It is the same incompetence by this Government; lack of foresight and vision that allowed our national instrument not to be patented in Trinidad and Tobago; allowed it to be taken up all in Japan, so Trinidad and Tobago cannot have the steel pan as its own.

The steel pan is the only acoustic instrument that was invented in the 21st Century. Trinidad and Tobago should have had that proud history and that proud parentage, but the PNM never put things in place for that to happen. When you had a chance and you know that steel pan was there; it was flying worldwide; it was branding the culture of Trinidad and Tobago as well. You talk about branding and marketing; the steel pan brand is Trinidad; we could make that brand Trinidad. But no, you remove that; put a humming bird which several other people have on their airlines. Where is the logic? On top of that, you paid millions of dollars to this man in London to tell you put a humming bird on the plane and take off the steel pan.

I am also advised that Mr. Davies, CEO loves to play golf—I do not know if it is true, they can tell us—and he flies on BWee, now CAL, every week to go and play golf.

Hon. Member: Where?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: To Florida. And you have on the other hand, what you are doing to the BWee retirees, where you are saying to them, look we are not honouring what was part of your compensation plan that is discounted travel. The BWee retirees and VSEP workers, because of their contracts, because of IATA resolutions and so on, they are entitled to discounted travel, they are not honouring

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those at all. I have a letter here where a retiree wrote to BWIA to enquire about their discount cards, because they were given a discount card and BWIA replied:

"Dear ...

We confirm receipt of your letter... and wish to advise that we have no authority over the new airline's policies and so regrettably, will not be able to respond to your requests."

"We have no authority over the new airline's policies", but they have every authority over all the BWee planes, all the BWee plates, cups, knives and forks; all BWee 's rights; all BWee 's locations; the BWee 's website, everything from BWee, but they have nothing to do with the new airline's policies. So the retirees are left in the lurch. But you see people in Trinidad and Tobago are very litigious people; they do not give up so easily, and so those retirees will be taking the Government to court, [*Desk thumping*] because they are in breach of workers' rights. They will take them to court.

I am saying then, whilst they are flying up and down you have these retirees who are being left completely out of what is happening. There is also a question with respect to the medical package. We are now being told that the medical package is being shifted from CLICO where it is presently housed and you know where it is going to?

Dr. Moonilal: Guardian.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Allegedly it is going to Guardian Life.

Hon. Member: No, no.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Himself to himself. Claimants are being told that Wednesday 31, was the last day of claims from CLICO, apparently the airline is not the only thing that is in transition; the insurance policies are also in transition.

Mr. Speaker, this is contrary to established practice and again, it is suggestive of corruption, of conflict of interest. It may well be, it was all above board, but again because of the secrecy that has always been throughout, you do not know. In the first instance the medical plan as well as the pension and insurance plans are not BWee plans; they are not Government plans. These plans are BWee and workers plans and any changes must be the subject of discussion between the management and the employees through their duly appointed representatives; the union. This was not done at all.

Secondly, the relationship between Guardian Life and the Chairman of the board of directors, Mr. Lok Jack, is not an arm's length one clearly, because he

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sits in both. He sits on the board of the new company and I think he is the chairman of the new company too; of CAL. He is also the chairman sitting on Guardian Life together with other friends and family on those boards. That is not an arm's length transaction at all; it cannot stand up to scrutiny.

Mr. Subhas: He is the principal of fairness.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: "Uh?"

Mr. Subhas: He is the principle of fairness.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: He is one of the principles of fairness, okay. A note on victimization of retirees. In every unionized industry, workers negotiate their terms and conditions of employment. Oftentimes the concessions are made where certain terms are accepted instead of a higher salary. So, you may take, for example, a higher travel allowance and less of the salary itself; so you negotiate terms and conditions. These may include contributions to employee pensions. They are quantified into dollar terms and constitute the workers' compensation for employment. These are not gifts, they are entitlements, in that they form part of the remuneration package of employees to which employers are bound.

Under BWIA, one of concessions provided to workers who worked for the airline for 25 years and more was an entitlement to what I mentioned before, discounted travel. This concession was considered to be part of the terms and conditions of employment. It was very, very valued because it served as an incentive for the workers not to accept—

Hon. Member: Free travel.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: It is not free travel, it is discounted travel. It served as an incentive to accept salaries which were not the highest in the industry, so that they got it as a part of their package.

The concession had an associated dollar value to be included in calculating the overall compensation that was associated with the job. Under this arrangement retirees would be provided with a card, and have been provided with a card, which operates like a discount card. It allows travel discounts on major international airlines, concessions on sea and air bridges and so on.

This card now has no value as the retirees are being told that Caribbean Airlines has no relationship with the retirees and there is no one in authority who is advising these people what else they can do. I make the point again, this is not a gift; this is a negotiated term of employment accepted by all parties in the bargaining

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process; it was implemented. It served as part of the package of the persons who have given more than half a decade—over 25 years—serving the national airline.

This is a clear violation of the Industrial Relations Act for the Government to simply ignore legitimate compensation package of employees and former employees in determining its next step. We are not here talking about free rides. A lot of people have a different view of it; these are discounted trips made on the basis of available space. As a rule, revenue passengers are given first priority and it is neither unheard of nor even common that retirees are asked to give up their seat if a revenue passenger is—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Leader of the Opposition has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: We just have about four minutes more before we take the break. I am saying this is part of their package; their entitlement and Government should move to ensure that they continue to enjoy those rights.

It is similar with the VSEP workers. It is reported that several of the former BWEE workers who were forced to take VSEP were provided with travel allowances similar to what the retirees received. These VSEP employees have now discovered, like the retirees, no one is honouring these travel concessions.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we must note this formed part of an agreed settlement with Government; it is not being honoured; Government has turned a blind eye. As part of the VSEP arrangement, this discounted travel had a value which is being illegally withheld from the awardees. This again, in my view, is a breach of the Industrial Relations Act.

The PNM has no qualms about breaching the Industrial Relations Act at all times, when it comes to workers in this country. I will not go further with respect to the issue of the shares, although I had intended to speak on it because I think it was dealt with; the minority shareholders in BWIA, what has become of them and their shares.

What I would like to know is on December 01, 2006, Minister Enill indicated that the SEC would be sitting in two weeks time on the issue of the minority shareholders. We are now way into February and we have had no word whatsoever from him as to what has happened with the SEC with respect to that matter.

Finally, what is happening in BWIA is very similar to what happened to the close down of Caroni (1975) Limited; the parallels are there. The workers were not consulted—BWee, Caroni. Government claimed that the company was bankrupt but they undertook deliberate process of taking apart the company bit by bit including the more profitable aspects; Caroni is the same, BWee is the same; over the years they have been whittling away. For example, the maintenance rights, BWee was able to do their own maintenance and in fact offered to offers, they took away all those things bit by bit. They really gutted the airline; bit by bit they stripped it. They made promises to the Caroni workers about Caroni lands; up to today the workers in Caroni cannot get any land. They still cannot get any land despite all the promises all these years. In the same way the promises made by BWee are not being kept; for example, the discounted travel, the travel allowances and so on.

The treatment of workers as incidental to the process. BWee workers, the Minister said, can be absorbed due to the general shortage of labour in Trinidad and Tobago. They can be absorbed because there is a general shortage of labour. That is it; fire you; you go out there and knock on a door looking, after 20 years of working; you go out there and be absorbed. The same way they said the Caroni workers would be retrained and would serve as the basis for the food revolution; never happened. These BWee workers are not going to be absorbed.

Hon. Member: They are still looking for work.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: They still what?

Hon. Member: Looking for work.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: They are still looking for work. Unions were not consulted in both cases. The manipulation of the assets of the company, Caroni land in that case, and here we are seeing BWee plant and equipment, the same thing taking place. There was no real VSEP. It was more like take this or resign or you will have nothing whatsoever. Nothing was voluntary about it. It comes like, "use it or lose it". You take it or you get nothing. Exactly the same thing; the sacrifice of the workers. The two things are so similar; that is the pattern of behaviour of this Government when it comes to workers in this country. [*Desk thumping*] And we have said it over and over; totally anti-worker. When they came—wait, wait—it was like it was Germany.

Mr. Imbert: You telling me to wait?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: I have one second.

Mr. Imbert: You cannot tell me to wait.

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Mr. Speaker: Would you be coming back?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: He can in fact move the Motion.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Well, adjourn the House.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: I have one second which I must say.

Mr. Imbert: Sit down, “nah”.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Can he tell me sit down? Can he say sit down? You cannot tell me sit down! You rule this House? Are you in charge of this House?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am on my feet, please.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: You can tell me sit down.

Mr. Speaker: And I would not in that manner. [*Laughter*] He has the right to move the adjournment of the House. Whatever time you have remaining now will be added on to your extra time on the next occasion.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes the Member opposite gets carried away.

I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, February 09, 2006 at 1.30 p.m. on which day we will be doing the Equal Opportunity Bill, as well as the DNA Bill.

Hon. Member: Which one first?

Hon. C. Imbert: DNA Bill, then Equal Opportunity Bill and then, having done those two Bills, we will do the Accreditation Council Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the Motion for the adjournment of the House, may I take this opportunity to remind Members, those of you who are present, to remind those Members who are absent that on Sunday we are having the church service at the Holy Trinity. Do not forget that Sunday is the 100th anniversary of the reopening of the Red House and all Members have been invited. The church service starts at 10.30 a.m. and I am appealing to Members to remind Members that it is 10.30 on Sunday at the Holy Trinity.

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Following the church service there will be an exhibition at the Rotunda and during the week following the exhibition will continue. There will be a lecture by Dr. Brinsley Samaroo on Wednesday at 10.30 a.m. and I am appealing again, to all Members to try and attend that, because it will be of tremendous historical value and interest to all Members of Parliament.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.32 p.m.