

*Leave of Absence**Friday, March 02, 2007***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, March 02, 2007*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members requesting leave of absence from sittings of the House: Hon. Kenneth Valley, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, for the period February 25, 2007 to March 14, 2007; Miss Gillian Lucky, Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre, for today's sitting of the House; Hon. Roger Boynes, Member of Parliament for Toco/Manzanilla, for today's sitting of the House; Hon. Diane Seukeran, Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, for the period February 17, 2007 to March 08, 2007.

The leave which these Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago report on insurance and pensions for the year ended December 31, 2003. [*The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
2. The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago report on insurance and pensions for the year ended December 31, 2004. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
3. Annual report and annual audited statement of accounts of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2006. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

Papers 1 to 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

4. The Immigration (Amendment) Regulations, 2007. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
5. The Immigration (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 2007. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
6. Annual financial statements of the Tourism Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
7. Annual financial statements of the Tourism Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2006. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

Papers 6 and 7 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

DEOXYRIBONUCLEIC ACID (DNA) BILL
Joint Select Committee Report
(Presentation)

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the First Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Bill entitled, "The Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Bill, 2006."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I simply want to point out that this select committee really did some tremendous work and completed examination of this Bill in just two meetings.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government would be answering questions Nos. 17, 22, 35, 52 and 55. I ask that the other questions on the Order Paper be deferred for a period of two weeks.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to bring to your attention the fact that question No. 36 has been deferred already for a sixth week; three, two-week extensions, and that therefore this ought to, certainly, be the last period.

Mr. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, question No. 5 if you read it, it is in front of you, has been on this Order Paper more than a year; it was there about five months before and now in the new term another five or six months.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence. With particular reference to the matter raised by the Member for Caroni East; the question asks for all contracts entered into by the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Apparently, there are hundreds and it is a voluminous amount of work, and is taking a considerable amount of time. But I was advised by the responsible Minister just yesterday that they have assembled all of the documentation, so it is quite possible that we will be able to answer it within the two-week time period; we ask for the deferral.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, I take it that an attempt will be made to answer all the questions as quickly as possible. [*Crosstalk*] Nonetheless, question 17.

Deshifting of Government Secondary Schools
(Status of)

- 17. Dr. Adesh Nanan** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:
- (a) Could the Minister advise how many government secondary schools have been deshifted annually from 2005—2006; and

(b) the time frame for the completion of the said deshifting exercise?

The Minister of Education (Sen. The Hon. Hazel Ann Marie Manning): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ramnath: You are going to read out all of that?

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: All of this; we do plenty work in the Ministry of Education. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to inform this honourable House that with respect to part (a) of the question it is to be noted that during the period 1995 to 2001 the former government, that sits now on the other side deshifted not one school, [*Interruption*] although this was a recommendation of the Education Policy Paper 1993 to 2003 which the former Government had endorsed as an official government policy.

When this administration on this side came into office in the year 2001, 19 out of a total of 25 junior secondary schools remained to be deshifted and converted into five-year government secondary schools. Further, prior to 1995 two junior secondary schools were deshifted and converted to government secondary schools and these schools are:

Morvant/Laventille Junior Secondary School which was deshifted in 1988 and converted in 1989; and

Ste. Madeleine Junior Secondary School which was deshifted in 1990 and converted in 1997.

Secondly, four whole-day junior secondary schools were converted from three-year to five-year government secondary schools and these schools are—Remember, that these are whole-day schools; they were always whole-day schools. [*Interruption*]

El Dorado Junior Secondary School, established in 1984, converted in 1994.

Barrackpore Junior Secondary School, established in 1985 and converted in 1994—again another whole-day school;

Scarborough Junior Secondary School established in 1972, converted in 1997; and

Rio Claro Junior Secondary School established in 1979 and converted in the year 2000.

Originally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these last two schools, Scarborough and Rio Claro were established as modern secondary schools in 1961. Mr. Deputy Speaker, thirdly—

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order of relevance. [Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: What Standing Order is that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One second; what Standing Order are you—take your seat?

Dr. Nanan: Standing Order 43(1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Continue Minister.

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very relevant. [Desk thumping] Complementary to the deshifting process seven senior comprehensive schools were converted to secondary comprehensive schools as follows:

Barrackpore Senior Comprehensive School in 1988;

Malick Senior Comprehensive School converted in 1988, also;

San Juan Senior Comprehensive School converted in 1988;

El Dorado Senior Comprehensive School converted in 1992;

Barrackpore Senior Comprehensive School converted in 1994;

San Fernando Senior Comprehensive School converted in 1997; and

Rio Claro College converted in the year 2000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is to be noted that the process of creating whole-day schools requires that senior comprehensive schools be converted to full seven-year schools by admitting students at the Forms One to Three levels and facilitating those students up to Form Six. Secondly, that junior secondary schools continue beyond Form Three by promoting students into Forms Four and Five, making them full five-year government secondary schools.

The deshifting and conversion process is team based. The office of the Director of School Supervision is leading this deshifting and conversion process in the school system. That office is supported by the Students' Support Services Division, by the Educational Facilities Management Division, by the Curriculum Development Division, by the Human Resource Management Division and the Communications Unit. From 2005 the new approach in creating single shift schools has been simultaneous, the deshifting and conversion.

To date 15 of the 25 junior secondary schools have been deshifted and/or converted to five-year secondary schools and 13 of the 17 senior comprehensive

schools have been converted to secondary comprehensive schools. That is a total of 28 schools or 66.67 per cent—

Mr. Callender: Very good.

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning:—junior secondary schools that have been deshifted and senior comprehensive schools that have been converted. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, 28 schools out of a total of 42 schools.

Mr. Ramnath: And you all were saying that her appointment was based on nepotism. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: This leaves 10 out of a total of 25 junior secondary schools to be deshifted and converted, and four senior comprehensive schools [*Interruption*] out of a total of 17 to be converted to secondary comprehensive schools. [*Crosstalk*]

It is also imperative that I take the opportunity to advise this House that the Ministry of Education has been approaching this exercise of deshifting of junior secondary schools in an organized and comprehensive manner. The ministry has developed a deshifting road map in consultation with its many stakeholders of those schools that have been deshifted and converted. For example the principals, the heads of departments, the deans, the curriculum division, the Parent-Teacher Association, Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association and the students, themselves. This road map provides a generic conceptual framework on which we will build the deshifting and conversion approach for the remaining schools.

Essentially, the framework for any school being deshifted and converted includes data collection which will inform placement of students, the subject offerings, the courses offered, as well as classroom and accommodation requirements. It includes analysis of data, it includes statement of objectives and it includes model development which is adapted and treated, as research and experience of the deshifting exercise continue to ensure that quality delivery is maintained. It includes dialogue with all stakeholders; it includes training for principals, for parents, for teachers and other administrators; [*Interruption*] it includes district and school adaptation to deal with the changes occasioned by the move from operating on a shift system to a full-day school. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it also includes school implementation which requires assistance provided to the school community in the initial stages after the deshifting and conversion structure has been put in place. [*Interruption*]

Finally, it includes ongoing [*Desk thumping*] assessment and evaluation to inform the ministry of what additional changes are [*Interruption*] needed to be made and making the changes as the exercise continues.

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I am happy to report that this Government over the period 2002 to 2006 has deshifted and converted nine of the 15 junior secondary schools that have been deshifted and/or converted. These schools are:

Marabella Junior Secondary School, deshifted in the year 2003 and converted in the year 2003;

Siparia Junior Secondary School, deshifted in the year 2004 and converted in the year 2006;

Carapichaima Junior Secondary School, deshifted in the year 2005 and converted in the year 2006;

Aranguéz Junior Secondary School, deshifted in the year 2005 and converted in the year 2006;

Five Rivers Junior Secondary School, deshifted in 2005 and converted in 2006;

San Fernando East Junior Secondary School, deshifted in 2006 and converted in 2006;

Point Fortin Junior Secondary School, deshifted in 2006 and converted in 2006;

Williamsville Junior Secondary School, deshifted in 2006 and converted in 2006; and

Sangre Grande Junior Secondary School, deshifted in 2006 and converted in 2006. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the same period the following six senior comprehensive schools were converted to five-year and seven-year secondary comprehensive schools as follows:

Marabella Senior Comprehensive School converted in 2003;

Carapichaima Senior Comprehensive School converted in 2005;

Arima Senior Comprehensive School converted in 2005;

Pleasantville Senior Comprehensive School converted in 2005;

Union/Claxton Bay Senior Comprehensive School converted in 2006; and

Siparia Senior Comprehensive School converted in 2006.

At the present time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to complete the deshifting exercise 10 junior secondary schools still remain to be deshifted and converted to five-year secondary schools and four senior comprehensive schools still remain to be converted to secondary comprehensive schools. These schools are as follows, and these are the junior secondary schools to be deshifted and converted:

Belmont Junior Secondary School;
Mucurapo Junior Secondary School;
Diego Martin Junior Secondary School;
Barataria Junior Secondary School;
Mount Hope Junior Secondary School;
Curepe Junior Secondary School;
Chaguanas Junior Secondary School;
Couva Junior Secondary School;
Penal Junior Secondary School; and
Princes Town Junior Secondary School.

The senior comprehensive schools still to be converted are:

Mucurapo Senior Comprehensive;
St. Augustine Senior Comprehensive;
Chaguanas Senior Comprehensive; and
Princes Town Senior Comprehensive.

With respect to part (b) of the question, the experience of the Ministry of Education to date with deshifting and conversion shows that the minimum lead time required for full implementation of deshifting of any school is nine months. The challenges of deshifting and conversion are many and are varied. Among these are the provision of additional accommodation, for example additional classrooms, the upgrade of science laboratories and other alterations to the physical plant, increased staff room space and parking facilities. It includes staffing which requires the recruitment of additional teachers to teach the new subject offerings at the new Forms Four and Five levels. Despite proactive planning and timed implementation, recruiting teachers for certain subject areas is very difficult. It includes issues related to subject offerings [*Interruption*] which now have to cater for a wider range of subject options including technical/vocational subjects and non-traditional subjects.

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So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, education for change is a continuing work in progress. It is therefore anticipated that the deshifting exercise will be completed by the year 2009.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister in her answer spoke about proper planning and organization; is the Minister aware that the students in the Sangre Grande Secondary, the recently deshifted school, are attending classes for two weeks and then they are out of classes for two weeks? And, secondly—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hold it; is that one question?

Dr. Nanan: Okay, I will ask the other one after.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. [*Interruption*] Rather than two questions. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I answered that question already. I was here on two occasions answering that question and those children are in school at this point in time—whole-day school—and they are working from 8.00 a.m. until about 2.00 p.m.; all of them, every day. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister in her contribution here this afternoon gave us an entire listing of schools. Is the Minister aware that at the Williamsville Junior Secondary School there is no proper accommodation for students?

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is another question and they could invite me to come back again.

Hon. Member: No, no. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: I will come back; I am willing to come back with all the statistics.

Hon. Member: No, no. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Have a seat, please. You will raise that on another occasion. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Members, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that we have in the public gallery students of the Diego Martin Government Secondary School. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. H. Manning: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to welcome them.

Mr. Panday: No cheap politics. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please, hon. Members.

Status of Legislation

22. Dr. Adesh Nanan asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:

- (a) Could the Minister advise on the status of the following legislation:
 - i. the Beverage Container Bill;
 - ii. the Air Pollution Rules;
 - iii. the Water Pollution Rules;
 - iv. the Oil and Hazardous Waste Rules; and
- (b) Could the Member identify the time frame for introduction in Parliament?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Yes, thank you very much. [*Interruption*] I will try and be as short as possible. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to question 22: The Beverage Container Bill is intended to encourage the re-use and/or recycling of container waste and to discourage the wasteful, unsanitary and environmentally degrading practice of disposing of empty beverage containers into the environment. The revised draft Beverage Container Bill is completed and is to be submitted to Cabinet this month.

As it relates to (ii): The Air Pollution Rules are intended—

[*Hon. H. Manning leaves Chamber*]

Mr. Panday: “Doh go yet; hear how to answer questions.”

Hon. P. Beckles:—to regulate the release of airborne pollutants into the atmosphere and thereby protect the air quality and health of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The draft Air Pollution Rules are presently before Cabinet for consideration.

As it relates to (iii): The Water Pollution Rules are intended to ensure that the freshwater and marine resources of Trinidad and Tobago are protected from

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pollution. The Water Pollution (Amdt.) Rules, 2006 were laid in the Senate on January 09, 2007 and in the House of Representatives on January 12, 2007 for the negative resolution of Parliament. The Water Pollution Fees (Amdt.) Regulations, 2006 are not required to be laid in Parliament but by Legal Notice No. 330 these regulations were published by the Government Printery on December 29, 2006.

As it relates to (iv): The Oil and Hazardous Waste Rules are correctly termed the draft Waste Management Rules; Cabinet recognizing that there was need for a national inventory on hazardous waste agreed, *inter alia*, on April 07, 2005 to conduct a national inventory study on hazardous waste in Trinidad and Tobago. The study was completed in November 2006 and the report provides among other things information on the following:

A comprehensive list of all economic sectors' activities that generate hazardous waste in Trinidad and Tobago;

The system of data collection, retrieval, verification and geographic location for each hazardous waste source as far as is possible;

The generation export and import of hazardous waste and other waste, and accidents occurring during the transboundary movement and disposal of hazardous and other waste.

The report on the national hazardous waste inventory in Trinidad and Tobago is now being used by the EMA for crucial baseline information in the development of the Waste Management Rules, so that these rules can satisfy both national and international obligations, specifically this country's reporting obligation under the Basle Convention on the control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste and their disposal.

On February 08, 2007 the EMA procured a consultant to draft the Waste Management Rules. Work on the drafting of these rules will commence this month, March 2007, and a completed draft of the rules is expected in April 2007. The draft rules would then be subjected to a process of public consultation; the EMA would then revise the draft rules, taking into consideration the public comments. The EMA's revision of the draft rules should be completed in 2007. At that point the draft rules would be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

And (b):

- (i) Following Cabinet's approval of the Beverage Container Bill and vetting by the Attorney General the Bill will be laid in Parliament;

- (ii) following Cabinet's approval of the Air Pollution Rules and vetting by the Attorney General, these rules will be laid in the Parliament;
- (iii) the Water Pollution Rules were laid in the Senate on January 09, 2007 and in the House of Representatives on January 12, 2007.

Finally, following Cabinet's approval for the draft Waste Management Rules and vetting by the Attorney General, these rules will be laid in the Parliament.
[Desk thumping]

**Ramleela Groups
(Funding Received)**

35. Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs:

Could the Minister provide a listing of the Ramleela Groups that received funding in 2006?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Hon. Eudine Job-Davis): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Member: It is about time you do something.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: In relation to question No. 35, the very simple answer is that the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs would have provided funding to 35 Ramleela Groups in the year 2006 and these are as follows:

Antar Jyot Mandali;

Blue Bird Sports & Cultural Organisation—[*Interruption*]

You asked for it and I am going to read it. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: You might not be able to—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. E. Job-Davis: That is all right, you will understand what I am saying. [*Interruption*] Are you going to allow me to speak or will you continue to interrupt me?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Couva South, if you want to assist the hon. Minister you will have to do it outside. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Ramnath: I would like to do it inside, outside and elsewhere.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will ignore the Member for Couva South, [*Interruption*] and I will continue.

Brickfield Shiv Mandir Ramleela Committee;
Caroni Hindu Group;
Dharma Jyot Mandali;
Divya Ahram;
Dow Village Ramleela & Cultural Committee;
Gyaan Bhakti Ramleela Group;
Gyaan Deepak Kirtan Mandali;
Kashie Vishwanath Mandali;
La Pastora Action Group;
Longdenville Hindu Mandir;
Mc Bean Ramleela & Cultural Group;
St. Augustine Ramleela Committee;
St. John Trace Ramleela Committee;
Shukh Shanti Bhakti Mandali;
SWAHA Sri Ram Dhaam;
SWAHA Hindu College;
Tulsi Manas Mandir;
Trinidad Sevashram Sangha Inc.;
Tarouba Sports and Cultural Committee;
First Felicity Ramleela and Cultural Group;
Pierre Road Ramleela Group;
Palmiste and Environs Ramleela Committee;
Shri Ram Indian Cultural Association;
Hindu Prachar Kendra;
Rio Claro Ramleela Committee;

Sangre Grande Ramleela Committee;
 Gyan Jyoti Mandali;
 Swaha Aranguez;
 Swaha Educational Institute;
 Shiva Mandir;
 Sheshbhan Maharaj; and
 National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

2.00 p.m.

**Daisey Road and Caroni M1 Ring Road
 (Deterioration of)**

55. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

- (a) Is the Minister aware that the Daisey Road and Caroni M1 Ring Road began to deteriorate before it was officially commissioned?
- (b) Could the Minister state what steps, if any, are being taken to rehabilitate these roads?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Works and Transport wishes to advise that there were no failures in these roads before they were commissioned. These roads, the Daisey Road and the Caroni M1 Ring Road were previously gravel roads maintained by Caroni Limited, primarily for cane traffic.

In 2002, a decision was made to upgrade these roads to asphalt roads as the route was perceived to be a useful bypass to heavily trafficked areas. The roads were upgraded in three main segments which were undertaken sequentially. Firstly, the M1 Ring Road from Malgretoute to Craignish, a distance of 3.375 kilometres, commissioned in May 2004. Secondly, the M1 Ring Road from Malgretoute to Manahambre Road, a distance of some 5.4 kilometres was commissioned in October 2004, two different contracts. And the Daisey Road from the M1 Ring Road to the Naparima/Mayaro Road, 2.5 kilometres commissioned in October 2004.

The network was upgraded making use of four separate contracts. Traffic was allowed to use the roads uninterrupted throughout the period when upgrading

works were being undertaken. When the last segment was completed, the entire network was in a good condition. Before the end of the maintenance period, however, a number of defects showed up on Daisey Road which the contractor repaired at his expense.

The Daisey Road and certain sections of the M1 Ring Road are under stress for two main reasons: very high traffic loading and variable soil condition. With respect to traffic loading, these particular roads were initially designed as rural connector roads with the expectation that low to moderate traffic levels would ensue. However, these roads now act as a major alternative access route utilized by more than 80 per cent of the vehicular traffic in the region. Furthermore, a significant amount of heavy and extra heavy vehicles travelling to and from commercial areas in South Trinidad also use these routes instead of Manahambre and the Naparima/Mayaro Road. These routes now effectively accommodate traffic that will eventually use the proposed east-west highway between San Fernando and Princes Town.

In light of the above, the present traffic loading far exceeds that which would be normal for a road of this class, and as a result, the design needs to be revisited; there is no doubt about that.

With respect to the soil condition, in recent years the Ministry of Works and Transport has designed and upgraded a number of Caroni tasker roads making use of a consistent design strategy. All have functioned well with the exception of the Daisey Road and certain sections of the M1 Ring Road. Preliminary investigation indicates weakness in the sub-grade which is related to localized soil conditions.

The Ministry of Works and Transport has recognized the importance of the Daisey Road and the M1 tasker road to the travelling public in South Trinidad, and it is in the process of planning an upgrade for the network. Detailed soil investigations must now be undertaken along with design work to cater for the severe traffic loading in the affected areas which these roads are now being subjected to, before implementing rehabilitative works.

The Ministry is also considering making use of a relatively new cold-milling recycling technique, such that the benefits of materials already used on the road can be maximized. Rehabilitation works on these roads are expected to begin in May 2007. In the meantime, the Ministry would continue to carry on strengthening and de-patching works in order to provide an acceptable riding surface on these roads.

Mr. Panday: Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the hon. Minister aware that no patching has taken place on the Daisey Road up to 12 o'clock today; no patching whatsoever and no temporary relief to motorists on the Daisey Road?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not so aware.

Mr. Panday: Could the hon. Minister indicate who is the official in the Ministry of Works who is responsible for the supervision of the upgrading of the Daisey Road and the M1 Road?

Hon. C. Imbert: I will obtain that information for you and give it to you at the next sitting.

Mr. Panday: The hon. Minister indicated that he did not know whether the Daisey Road has been patched. What steps will the Minister take to enquire as to what is the condition of the road?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That was not the answer as I heard it. He said he was not aware that no work was done.

Mr. Panday: The question I ask him is: will the Minister then acquaint himself as to whether any work has been done on the Daisey Road?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you have correctly corrected the Member, I did not indicate that no work had been done. I indicated that I was not aware of no work had been done and as I have indicated to the Member, I will obtain the relevant information for him.

**GOTT and Comprehensive Care International
(Contract)**

52. Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (*Caroni Central*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) the value of the contract between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and Comprehensive Care International through the government to government arrangement; and
- (b) the services which Comprehensive Care International was contracted to provide?

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to question 52(a), the value of the contract between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Canada, through its agent Canadian Commercial Corporations (CCC), who contracted Comprehensive Care International (CCI) through the government to government arrangement is US \$10,365,745 and Canadian \$23,223,574.

With respect to 52(b), Comprehensive Care International was contracted to provide the undermentioned services:

Development of the National Oncology Centre (NOC).

Architecture and engineering designs specification.

Develop a tender document including contract documents to solicit bids from pre-qualified building contractors.

The architecture engineering design specification includes an independent electrical power supply as well as an emergency power supply, air condition and VPS systems for the NOC.

Oncology certification:

Provides certification services from a qualified medical physicist for adherence to Canadian licensing procedures, for all required radiation therapy equipment.

Procurement management:

Supply and install of radiation therapy equipment, includes linear accelerators and other radiation equipment, physic and quality assurance equipment, other minor equipment.

Installation and training integrity of the NOC information systems.

Technical and transition services:

Supervise installation and handover of the radiation therapy equipment in conjunction with assigned NOC and equipment vendor personnel.

Recruitment training of inaugural staff:

Develop and deliver a staff orientation and training programme.

Oversee the attendant training of operations and maintenance staff on oncology related equipment.

Communication facilities and management:

Develop communication plans and meeting schedules to facilitate interaction amongst stakeholders.

Report on the commissioning of the building.

Development of the national oncology programme.

Institutional network and programme development.

Develop programme implementation, priorities and assign responsibilities.
Create financial and operation administrative structure of the NOC.

Develop the NOC formulary and capacity for computer chemotherapy order entry using evidence based regimes.

Quality and safety operations:

Provide cancer care operating procedures manual.

Provide all procedural manuals for monitoring of the radiation equipment including, safety, quality assurance and preventative maintenance that can be adopted as Trinidad and Tobago national standard.

Plan and manage the physical move of the Cobalt Unit from the National Radiotherapy Centre at St. James Medical Complex.

Sustainability:

Develop academic sustainability strategy and define formal relationships between the NOC health professionals and the academic community.

Marketing and Communication:

Facilitate and organize cancer registry system.

Develop NOP home care programmes.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister mentioned two figures at the beginning of his reply.

Hon. J. Rahael: What?

Dr. Rafeeq: You mentioned two figures of \$10 million and \$23 million; could you just clarify that for me please?

Hon. J. Rahael: Sure. US \$10,365,745 and Canadian \$23,223,547. The contract was in Canadian dollars and US dollars because of the purchasing of equipment in Canada and in the US.

Dr. Rafeeq: So the total value of the contract is US \$10 million plus Canadian \$23 million, okay.

You mentioned supply and install equipment, is that one of the terms of reference of this Comprehensive Care International?

Hon. J. Rahael: Supply equipment and supervise installation and handover of the radiation therapy equipment in conjunction with the assigned NOC and equipment vendor personnel.

Dr. Rafeeq: So that Comprehensive Care International, their mandate is not to construct the centre?

Hon. J. Rahael: No.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can the Minister please advise the commissions paid on this contract and to whom; and the finder's fee paid and to whom?

Hon. Member: What?

Hon. J. Rahael: I do not have that information, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister does not have the information.

Mr. Sharma: He does not have the answer?

Mr. Panday: Could the hon. Minister state what is the stage of preparedness of personnel to operate the oncology centre?

Hon. J. Rahael: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many personnel in training and some are on scholarships, training to provide the personnel for the oncology centre when it is completed at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex in Mount Hope. We anticipate that we will still require other professionals that would not have completed their training, so that we will have to source them from overseas.

Dr. Rafeeq: You gave the cost of the contract, can you tell us the timeline for the contract and how long that contract was for?

Hon. J. Rahael: I do not have that information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: He does not have it.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Brian Lara Stadium

5. (a) With regard to the Brian Lara Stadium, could the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs advise:
 - (i) the status of work being conducted;
 - (ii) the expected completion date; and

- (iii) the cost overruns to date?
- (b) Could the Minister state what would the stadium be used for in relation to Cricket World Cup 2007? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Aluminium Smelters
(Emissions from and Water required)**

- 20.** Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment state:
- (a) what is the annual estimated total level of gaseous emissions from the proposed three (3) aluminium smelters; and
 - (b) the annual total volume of water required for the operation of the said smelters? [*Dr. A. Nanan*]

University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)

- 36.** Could the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education list:
- (a) all the contracts entered into by the University of Trinidad of Tobago (UTT);
 - (b) all consultants whose services are engaged by UTT and the fees paid to them;
 - (c) all legal fees paid to attorneys-at-law for and on behalf of UTT; and
 - (d) all foreign personnel of UTT and their respective salaries? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**Transportation of Prisoners
(Details of)**

- 41.** Could the hon. Minister of National Security indicate:
- (a) how many prisoners were due to be transported to Magistrates Courts throughout Trinidad on December 22, 2006;
 - (b) whether any prisoners were transported to any Magistrates Courts on that day; and
 - (c) how many prisoners should have been brought to court to determine their requests for bail? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

**Community Development Fund
(Status of)**

- 44.** Could the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs inform this House:
- (a) what is the present status of the fund; and
 - (b) the number of recipients and quantum of money disbursed and the purpose of the allocations for fiscal 2005/2006? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Community Development Fund
(Details of)**

- 45.** Could the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs indicate to this House:
- (a) the number of recipients of bursaries under the programme; and
 - (b) the quantum of moneys disbursed for fiscal 2005/2006 and for what given purpose? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Turner Construction
(Services to Scarborough Regional Hospital)**

- 53.** Could the hon. Minister of Health state:
- (a) the method by which Turner Construction was contracted to provide services at the Scarborough Regional Hospital;
 - (b) the value of the contract awarded to Turner Construction; and
 - (c) the services which Turner Construction was contracted to provide? [*Dr. H. Rafeeq*]

**University of Trinidad and Tobago
(Submission of Audited Accounts)**

- 56.** Could the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education state:
- (a) whether the University of Trinidad and Tobago has submitted to him or his Ministry any audited accounts since its inception; and
 - (b) if the answer to (a) is yes, could he provide same to this honourable House? [*Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

**SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club
(Money Market Account)**

- 58.** Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment state:
- (a) the purpose of the fund established in the form of a money market account in the name of SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club;
 - (b) the signatories to that account;
 - (c) the current balance of that account;
 - (d) the average monthly balance of that account since its establishment; and the total amounts contributed annually by SWMCOL to the SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club? [*Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

**Post of Solicitor General
(Appointment to Position)**

- 59.** Could the hon. Attorney General please state:
- (a) where and on what dates applications were invited for the vacant position of Solicitor General since the retirement of the last substantive holder of that office;
 - (b) whether any person/persons is/are performing, either individually or collaboratively, the duties of the Solicitor General;
 - (c) if the answer to (b) is yes, could the Minister state:
 - i. the names, substantive positions of any such person/persons and the dates on which he /they commenced such extra duties;
 - ii. whether such persons are in receipt of additional remuneration or benefits for performing these extra duties and the amount of such compensation;
 - iii. the number of legal matters, contracts for state organizations and other documents that these persons have (a) advised on, (b) vetted, and (c) approved since assuming these extra duties? [*Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

**SWMCOL
(Contracts from 2006 to date)**

- 60.** Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment provide:
- (a) the names of any consultancy firms employed by SWMCOL during the period 2006 to date; and

- (b) the duration of the contracts and the contract amounts? [Mr. S. Panday]

Mechanisms for Stabilizing Food Prices

- 61.** Could the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources state:
- (a) whether any mechanisms are in place to stabilize and maintain food prices; and
- (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state what are those mechanisms? [Mr. S. Panday]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME (GOVERNMENT'S MISMANAGEMENT)

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

Whereas the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) has been the subject of a special audit of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;

And whereas in the selection of contractors for the programme, there were no proper procedures and documentation of the process;

And whereas principles of good governance were not adhered to with respect to the financial management of the programme;

And whereas the special audit indicated that there were no proper mechanisms for monitoring, measuring and evaluating the performance of the programme;

And whereas the audit report indicated a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities between the Ministry of Public Utilities and SWMCOL;

Be it resolved that this House do condemn the Government for its lack of transparency, accountability and probity in the management of public funds allocated to CEPEP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, shortly after this Motion appeared in the Order Paper, I received in my mail a copy of a report entitled, "Report of the Central Audit Committee on the audit of the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) from the Ministry of Finance, Investments

Division, Central Audit Committee dated November 2005.” So therefore, I will in fact be dealing with two pertinent reports, the report of the Auditor General, the special audit on CEPEP and the report of the Central Audit Committee of the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the special audit report of the Auditor General is for the period May 2002 to September 30, 2004 and the Central Audit Committee of the Ministry of Finance report is for 2004 to 2005. Both reports written by dispassionate professionals in two key departments of Government, will demonstrate singularly and collectively, the organized and institutionalized looting of the Treasury taking place under the guise of CEPEP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from its inception in May 2002 to present, some \$1.6 billion has been spent or will be spent at the end of this financial year on CEPEP. The breakdown is as follows:

2002/2003	- \$378 million
2003/2004	- \$225 million
2004/2005	- \$244 million
2005/2006	- \$423 million
2006/2007	- an estimated \$350 million, making a total of \$1.620 billion.

Both these reports conjointly will reveal to this honourable House and to the citizens of this country, the culpability of four institutions, either through acts of commission or omission. That is to say, the Ministry of Finance, the Corporation Sole, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, and the Solid Waste Management Company (SWMCOL) culpable in this organized looting of the Treasury for the benefit of a privileged caste of persons associated with the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] You will see how the siphoning of public moneys was cunningly crafted—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Ali Baba.

Mr. G. Singh:—in the context of laudable public policy objectives as will be seen in the Cabinet Note of May 23, 2002. In May 2002, Cabinet agreed *inter alia*:

- (a) to the establishment of a Community-based Protection and Enhancement Programme in all communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago for a period of one year in the first instance;

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- (b) that the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment be the implementing agency for the programme and Solid Waste Management Company Limited be the executing agency.

According to the Note to Cabinet which formed the basis for the decision taken by Cabinet, the rationale for the establishment of the CEPEP was as follows:

The environment in many communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago is under severe stress from several activities including the indiscriminating dumping of solid and other waste along roadways, open spaces and watercourses. Not unrelated to this problem of improper disposal of waste is the poor maintenance of the aforementioned areas.

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment is of the view that there is need for a focused and purposeful intervention aimed at empowering communities to improve the condition of the local environment through the implementation of a community-based environmental protection and enhancement programme.

And it goes on to determine what CEPEP would do.

Collect and remove garbage from public roadways which are inaccessible to other waste-handling systems and so on and the Cabinet Note goes on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must keep in mind that it is not the incumbent Minister who piloted this Cabinet Note. It was the hon. Martin Joseph, the current Minister of National Security who piloted this Cabinet Note, and in this Cabinet Note before the Cabinet, he was then and still is the General Secretary of the PNM. I say so because we must view this Motion and the initiation and inception of CEPEP in the context of the political reality of Trinidad and Tobago in the calendar year 2002. At that time it was 18:18—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: The year of Ramesh.

Mr. G. Singh:—political gridlock and the then hon. President had anointed the hon. Member for San Fernando East as Prime Minister on the basis of moral and spiritual values. In an unprecedented setting—there was general election in 2000 in which the UNC won 20 seats to the PNM 16. However, with the done deal of October 2001 between the PNM and the Members of Team Unity: Ramesh, Ralph and Trevor, it precipitated another general election in 2001 in which the parties emerged 18:18. Political gridlock. So that notwithstanding his anointment which was in breach of all constitutional practices and conventions, the hon. Member for San Fernando East knew that his hold on office was at best tenuous.

There was no Speaker; there was no Parliament; the country was standing still; it was like an aircraft in the air on a holding pattern, going round in circles.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, into this maelstrom of political uncertainty for him and his party, the hon. Member for San Fernando East conceived of the CEPEP plan to secure political power. [*Desk thumping*] He recognized that he needed the lubricant of political patronage in the so-called marginal seats of Tunapuna, Ortoire/Mayaro and San Fernando. A cursory analysis will reveal that the concentration of CEPEP contractors in these areas against areas in Central Trinidad in which they did not stand a ghost of a chance. That is why there is no CEPEP in Caroni East; there is no CEPEP in Siparia—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: No highways.

Mr. G. Singh:—but there is a project officer for CEPEP in Caroni East, one Vivian Joseph who is not known to members of the community. There is also a project officer in Siparia by the name of Hewson Kelly Simmons; I do not know whether that person is known in the Siparia community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at least two Cabinet Ministers have stated publicly that the hon. Member for San Fernando East is responsible for conceiving CEPEP. At least two Cabinet Ministers have indicated to this country the hon. Member for San Fernando East has conceived of CEPEP. The Cabinet Ministers have indicated that the hon. Member for San Fernando East is the father of CEPEP. Firstly, Minister Pennelope Beckles in the *Newsday* of January 25 at page 8, a column entitled, “Penny preaches the CEPEP gospel” and I quote:

“I am of the view that when the Prime Minister conceived this programme in 2002, his objectives and ideas were laudable.”

Mr. Hinds: Well said. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. G. Singh: Secondly, Minister Abdul-Hamid in a column in the *Trinidad Guardian* of April 25, 2005 written by Yvonne Webb entitled, “CEPEP here to stay” and I quote:

“He said CEPEP, the brainchild of the Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, whom he represented yesterday, would bring about social and physical transformation of this society”.

Hon. Member: Oh my!

Mr. G. Singh: And like warm phalka ghee (clarified butter), he starts to butter up the PM and I quote:

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“He praised Manning who, he said, created the programme in two parts. ‘Part of it was created in the mind of Patrick Manning; the other part was created in his heart, because of his strong sense of compassion for his people.’”

Minister Abdul-Hamid stated that the Prime Minister created CEPEP with his heart and mind. So the reports of the Auditor General and the Central Audit Committee pointing to financial malfeasance ought to be a mind-blowing experience for the hon. Member for San Fernando East. So paternity is clear even without a DNA test—and you know how the Member for San Fernando East does not like to take DNA test. [*Laughter*] It is clear even without a DNA test that Patrick Manning is the father of CEPEP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am of the considered view that CEPEP was conceived in the lust for power and the desire to retain at all costs and by all means necessary the Office of Prime Minister by the hon. Member for San Fernando East. Consequently, commitment to principles of transparency, accountability and good governance were never vital ingredients in the conception and implementation of this programme. The lack of these basic ingredients of transparency and accountability in public expenditure is vividly brought to light in both these reports. It is indeed a telling indictment of the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this billion-dollar programme, this billion dollar slush fund as the reports will indicate, provides compelling evidence that the programme is a means by which to get state funds into the hands of persons who are supporters of the ruling party and the Government.

Hon. Member: True.

Mr. G. Singh: It is billion-dollar pork barrel politics and the pigs at the trough are the friends and family of the PNM, in a feeding frenzy. [*Desk thumping*] From its very conception to initiation and implementation and execution, CEPEP has been a fraud committed on the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] From the selection of contractors, the lack of financial management to the vagueness and nebulosity of the roles of the Ministry of Public Utilities, SWMCO and the abandonment of responsibility by the Ministry of Finance and the intimate linkage by the Corporation Sole, CEPEP has been a calculated exercise in deceit by the Prime Minister and the Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now make reference to this document, Report of Central Audit Committee on the audit of Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme done by the Ministry of Finance,

Investments Division, Central Audit Committee. And my hon. colleague, the Member for St. Joseph is the person who set up this audit committee and placed on that audit committee in any state enterprise, certain limitation so that there would be no abuse of power. Under this Government they have lifted the ceiling to facilitate one of their cohorts, Ken Julien, in particular, so that he can spend money.

The report of the Central Audit Committee for 2004/2005, I go to page 2, "Engagement of workers, Summary of findings". The engagement of workers is done by the contractors. The process is not monitored properly, in that, one: "Updated lists of workers are not submitted to SWMCOL. Only a first year list exists despite the programme being in operation for three (3) years.

2.30p.m.

So you submit a list and for three years it remains as the active list. Secondly:

"Workers without identification card numbers and bank accounts are engaged, which is a breach of the payment system and may be indicative of 'dummies' on the payroll."

The emergence of ghost gangs in CEPEP; the Ministry of Finance said that. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Repeat that!

Mr. G. Singh: The report stated:

- "(i) Workers without identification card numbers and bank accounts are engaged, which is a breach of the payment system and may be indicative of 'dummies' on the payroll.
- (ii) Some Contractors are paid for as much as eleven (11) teams on a continuous basis. Authority for this variation from the operating policies and procedures was not provided when requested from the project Officer, Finance. This situation may be indicative of the existence of ghost gangs." [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*]

The Ministry of Finance said that there were indications of the existence of ghost gangs in CEPEP.

Mr. Hinds: It did not say that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please. The Motion has just started and you will have an opportunity to reply. This is going to be a very interesting debate, so let us keep it cool.

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have only just begun. *[Laughter]*

This was not a partisan paper; this was a report written by dispassionate professionals in the Ministry of Finance; persons who are guardians of the Treasury. They said that there are dummies on the payroll.

Mr. Hinds: They never said that. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. G. Singh: It is hurting the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. *[Crosstalk]* I will deal with what the hon. Member for Tunapuna said when I come to the other areas, because I know he is against Shango Alamo in his constituency.

The report continues:

"4.02 The source document for payroll generation is the contractors' time sheets. These documents credibility are not monitored in the field in that there was no evidence that the Monitoring Officers sign these time sheets. Even the reports which should be submitted by Monitoring Officers was not submitted and presumed to be non-existent. Consequently, evidence of the basic principle of the receipt of services which forms the basis for payment does not exist. Opportunities for payment for the services not provided (ghost gangs) exist and can go unnoticed." *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, three times recurrence; telling you systematically and systemically how the CEPEP system was being abused and that you have the intrusion of ghost gangs. *[Crosstalk]*

The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant can get up and refute what the dispassionate, objective professionals in the Ministry of Finance said.

Mr. Hinds: You would twist a "socks". *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. G. Singh: The report continues:

"4.03 The processing of payroll is deficient in that -

- (i) There is no validation of the time sheet which forms the basis for the preparation of the payroll.
- (ii) There is no internal check or supervisory control or pre-audit of the prepared payroll.
- (iii) There is no internal control to counteract the deficiencies in the engagement of workers and the source document for payroll preparation."

At this stage of the system, the phrase "garbage in garbage out" is relevant and forms the basis for payment of wages. Do you understand what this is saying? You have no system in place. There was no monitoring, no checking; "garbage in garbage out" money being paid.

The report continues:

"Payment of Wages.

4.04 The payment of wages should be done by bank transfer. There have been instances where this was not followed. Workers were presumed to be paid by cheque by the contractor. Also a separate cheque for wages was issued by SWMCOL. There was no evidence that statutory deductions (PAYE, NIS, HEALTH SURCHARGE) are remitted to the appropriate authorities."

There was no evidence that the statutory deductions: PAYE, NIS and health surcharge were remitted to the appropriate authorities.

"Critical complete data on employees BIR number, identification number and NIS number are not maintained. This can facilitate payment to 'dummies'. The stock of blank cheques is not properly controlled. There have been missing cheques recorded in the register."

The thievery continued unabated. [*Crosstalk*]

"4.05 Compliance with terms and conditions of contracts by contractors"

Listen to this; it deals with the whole question of the very heart of the CEPEP system:

"This area of the system has broken down completely. The following violations have been committed by 95% of the contractors."

You understand that?

"(i) A valid contract document does not exist."

This Government will spend, at least by the end of this year, \$1.620 billion and it does not have basic requirements in place. I understand your predicament, Minister. [*Crosstalk*]

"(ii) Updated list of employees does not exist.

(iii) Valid workmen's compensation and public liability insurance are not in place.

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- (iv) Contractors' Audited financial statements are non-existent.
- (v) Evidence of annual General Meeting and appointment of auditors by contractors are non-existent."

These are cold, hard facts dispassionately written by the professionals at the Ministry of Finance; 95 per cent; the system has broken down completely.

I will deal subsequently with the question of the efficiency of the programme.

Based on what has transpired, the malady is deep. [*Crosstalk*] Therefore, the diagnostic has to take into consideration the chronology of events at the inception of CEPEP in order to appreciate the extent of the malady that has befallen our society under the guise of public policy.

On May 23, 2002, Cabinet agreed to the formation of CEPEP for a one-year period. June 12, 2002, the board of directors agreed to the Solid Waste Management Company Limited's full participation in CEPEP. June 26, 2002, a consultancy firm is hired by sole selective tendering, notwithstanding the fact that the Auditor General states at page 15 of its report:

"SWMCOL's established tender policy made no provision for a Sole Selective Tender Process. Further, no Board of Directors decision was seen in the Board Minutes of 2002..."

for the sole selective hiring of this consultant; corporate governance goes out the window.

Mr. Speaker, June 26, 2002, advertisement for entrepreneurs placed in daily newspapers; June 30, 2002, deadline for submission by interested parties. June 26—you put it in the newspapers, by the time you find out about it, "de deadline gone". Do you know why? They had already informed persons. When you look at how the companies were formed and by whom—and I will come to that—then you would understand why there was need for that. July 03, shortlist of contractors submitted by consultant to SWMCOL; July 10, recommended shortlist of contractors under phase one; July 17, shortlist of contractors under phase two; July 24, recommended shortlist of contractors under phase two; July 29, CEPEP officially launched in Moruga, Trinidad.

Mr. Speaker, do you understand? From May 22 to July 29, you have the official roll out of CEPEP and you have multimillions beginning to be spent. That is a remarkable feat in any language. I want to congratulate the hon. Members opposite for that remarkable feat; no doubt the lubricant of political patronage

made them act with swiftness. I do not know why they do not deal that way with the kidnapping of Vindra Naipaul-Coolman. They do not have the lubricant in that area.

It is clear that there was corruption in the CEPEP tendering process. Notwithstanding there was a ranking system; I want to point that out:

- “(i) Incorporation of Funds - 10
- (ii) Financial capability - 0
- (iii) Employment Capability - 15
- (iv) Management Capability - 15
- (v) Education and Training - 25
- (vi) Work experience - 25
- (vi) General Assessment - 10”

When you understand the extent of what transpired, then you begin to appreciate where the \$1.620 billion went.

This is what the Auditor General had to say with respect to selection at the tendering process.

"3.08 At the time of the audit field work,..."

This was 2002 to 2004:

"the following records/information relating to the award of contracts to the CEPEP contractors at the commencement of field operations were not produced:

- Application Forms
- The names of the members of the selection committee chaired by a consultancy firm
- The Minutes of meetings of the selection committee, and
- The evaluation forms and grading of each prospective contractor interviewed by the selection panel."

Fundamental to accountability; fundamental to transparency, but it was not produced or not seen. Throughout the report of the Auditor General, one thing is consistent: documents not seen, documents not produced; documents not seen; documents not produced; almost as if a blind man was running CEPEP.

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You have a consultancy firm chairing the selection committee; you do not know the selection criterion. Who is this consultancy firm? [*Crosstalk*] What is the name of this consultancy firm? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am advised that the firm which was paid \$1,938,000 was Market Space Limited whose principal one can get from the public record at the Companies Registry for a fee of \$25.

I say that because there was a ruling here in which I had asked the names of directors of 14 special purpose state companies and I was told by the hon. Speaker—not you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that it was within the public domain. When I attempted to get the names of those directors, I had to pay \$25 for every page; so, obviously, it is not really within the public domain. When you have that kind of nebulous ruling, it will force me to get the information in the public interest and send the bill to the Speaker so he will have to reimburse me. [*Desk thumping*] We are dealing here with public moneys in those special purpose state companies; so much for transparency.

I digressed only to point out that when there are rulings in this honourable Chamber, we must not be too eager in our partisan approach. Maybe the Speaker was not aware that you have to pay \$25, [*Crosstalk*] notwithstanding that he has been in practice longer than most of us.

The principal of Market Space Limited, who received a sum of \$1.9 million, was a PNM member and former campaign manager for the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, [*Crosstalk*] Jacqui Lazarus. She was CEPEP's first millionaire, Jacqui Lazarus. [*Crosstalk*] I could go outside, because I have the facts. There is potential in CEPEP for a further 110 millionaires who are contractors. While this Government is utilizing \$1.620 billion engaged in this public policy objective, the 5,640 workers of CEPEP are working for a measly \$1,500 a month while the contractors become millionaires. [*Desk thumping*] That is the perpetuation of the gap of the haves and have-nots in society; that is the effect of the programme conceived by the hon. Member for San Fernando West. [*Crosstalk*]

Jacqui Lazarus had a steal of a deal. She was paid \$25 per worker per month. [*Crosstalk*] That is \$25 for every worker on the payroll of each and every contractor. This service fee paid to Market Space Limited/Jacqui Lazarus was deducted from the monthly sums due to the contractor for the first 12 months. So if you employed 100 workers as CEPEP contractors, Jacqui Lazarus received \$2,500 per month as a service fee.

Mr. Panday: Into the PNM slush fund!

Mr. G. Singh: The money deducted at source before the contractor received his moneys. CEPEP has on its payroll 110 contractors and 5,640 workers. Work out the mathematics Eddie. [*Laughter*] By sole selective tendering without board approval, in breach of the companies tendering policy, a PNM party hack became a millionaire courtesy CEPEP. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*] No wonder the Auditor General's report at page 16 states at paragraph 3.22:

"There appeared to be a lack of transparency and accountability in the selection of contractors and service providers for the CEPEP in that:

Documented procedures did not exist prior to the selection of contractors and other service providers;

There was a lack of established policies at the commencement of the Programme."

That continued throughout the duration and still continues today. Clearly there is a putrid stench emanating from the process of selection of the 110 contractors of CEPEP. [*Desk thumping*] A cursory glance would reveal some familiar names to those on the other side: [*Crosstalk*] Marva Bostic; Ainsley Mathews; Kathy-Ann Cardinal Austin; Councillor Alvin Reyes; Prakash Persad; Horace Gordon.

It riles me when I think about Prakash Persad and Horace Gordon being part of the incubation of micro and small business in this country. It is simply unacceptable. If you put Horace Gordon in a business incubator he might come out as dry sticks. Prakash Persad is a university lecturer, a CEPEP contractor. [*Crosstalk*] There is also Jennifer Marryshow and so on and so on. What you have in these 110 contractors are really persons who are linked, intimately or otherwise, with the PNM. [*Crosstalk*] You have a link politically in the constituency of Moruga, Ortoire/Mayaro, San Fernando West, Tunapuna and other areas. The process for the selection of contractors was politically corrupted.

The contractors were aware that they were the beneficiaries of the use of the Treasury for political purposes. How have they responded? Not unlike the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP); non-compliance. If their purpose was to galvanize personnel to attend political rallies, then you do not need to comply with the agreement entered into with SWMCOL. [*Crosstalk*] Paragraph 4.05 of the audit committee report which I read before said that the system had broken down completely; non-compliance by 95 per cent of the contractors. They understood their purpose. At the same time, the hon. Member for San Fernando East, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, came to this House in 2003 and spoke about ethics, probity and integrity in public affairs. The hypocrisy! [*Crosstalk*]

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will provide to you what the audit committee said with respect to the compliance test done to contractors. Paragraph 20.02:

"A sample of thirty-six (36) files of pre-qualified contractors was examined to ensure adherence to the above requirements and the following observations were made...

20.03 An agreement was prepared between SWMCOL and each of the contractors at the inception of the CEPEP programme in September 2002. This agreement covered a period of one year. For the thirty-six (36) files examined, none of the contracts are renewed to date, neither is there any interim document in place to support the agreement."

So you had a contract for one year, the election year, and then whatever mechanism was in place was continued and perpetuated, creating legitimate expectations in the eyes of those 110 contractors. So there was no interim document; there was no contract in place, but there was increase in allocation of public expenditure every year.

The findings of the Ministry of Finance continued:

"20.04 A contract by law is a binding agreement between the company and the other party to the contract. The renewal of the contracts on a periodic basis is mandatory since adherence to its covenants is necessary in the interest of both parties to the contract. Also, renewal allows the parties to delete irrelevant and inappropriate clauses and to include more appropriate terms and conditions.

20.05 Transactions between SWMCOL and the contractors are being conducted without being supported by any legal documentation. Failure to renew may result in transactions being null and void. Neither can SWMCOL nor the contractors take any legal action against each other if either party defaults on the contract."

So you have a state enterprise supervised by the Ministry of Finance and by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment—and I will deal with the inadequacy of supervision—and you do not have a subsisting legal document.

When we come to this Parliament, it is government according to law. It is not government according to the caprices of the Member for San Fernando East who

is hounding the Chief Justice. [*Crosstalk*] It is government according to the rule of law. If there was no subsisting legal document, then what was the basis for the continuation of those contracts? Yet \$1.620 billion being spent on CEPEP, with not even a legal document to support it. What kind of Government is this? Clearly, it is a government that has no regard for the rule of law. They make the law on a daily basis. [*Desk thumping*] They make the law to suit them. [*Crosstalk*] So it is fine to have the non-renewal of those contracts.

The report continued:

"Of the thirty-six (36) contractors' files examined, twenty-four (24) of them contained one page of an insurance policy, which all bore the stamp 'Telly Paul General Insurance Services Limited'. [*Laughter*] It appears that this was the only document prepared to support Public Liability and Workmen's Compensation. An entire insurance policy was not seen on file. There is no evidence that these policies are operational with premiums paid up to date."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is this, an insurance scam?

"In accordance with the terms of the contract, the contractor agreed to maintain Policies of Insurance with reputable insurance companies to cover liability in respect of personal injuries or death of employees, arising out of or in the performance of the work or duties."

So if the ordinary worker working on the Priority Bus Route who holds up the screen is injured or killed, it appears that there is no subsisting insurance policy to cover them. The Members opposite are participating in that kind of fraud against poor people? [*Crosstalk*]

My colleague from Barataria/San Juan is telling me that persons have lost their legs already; therefore, they have nothing to get, because it appears to me that was a cover note. You know about the scam in the motor car industry where you have a cover note? This cannot even fulfill the requirement of a cover note, but yet the contractors who are making millions are required to have insurance services to cover the personal injuries or death of employees in the performance of their duties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the report stated:

"20.10 Of the thirty-six (36) files examined, thirty (30) contained the Certification of Incorporation while five (5) files contained both the Certification of Incorporation and VAT certificates.

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However, there is no information on the structure of the Company, the staffing, the expertise of the Company and the yearly turnover of revenue.

Such information would be of significance to SWMCOL to decide whether the Company continued to be suited to carry out CEPEP works.

Qualified Auditors

20.11 By memorandum dated February 25, 2004, SWMCOL informed contractors that they should hold an annual general meeting and appoint an Auditor. To date, none of the contractors have responded to this letter; there is no evidence on any of the thirty-six (36) contractors file examined, that these procedures were followed."

So what do you have? Whatever SWMCOL wrote, there was no response, but the money kept on flowing to the tune of \$1.620 billion.

This was what the Ministry of Finance said:

"Recommendation

20.12 It is recommended that SWMCOL take immediate steps to ascertain the level of compliance with this requirement since it could assist in preventing the occurrence of 'dummies'."

That is ghost gangs. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Caroni East has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. G. Singh: I thought when I was completed then that would take place; but I take interruptions from you kindly any time. [*Crosstalk*] I confined it to the Deputy Speaker.

The report continued:

"Authorised List of Workers

20.13 The list of workers of the companies that were contracted by SWMCOL for the CEPEP programme was not updated since the inception of the programme."

There was no movement in staff.

"This apparent absence of updated information compounded by the fact that CEPEP Officers at Wrightson Road prepare the pay sheets from timesheets submitted by the contractors can easily facilitate collusion and misappropriation of funds."

This was what the Ministry of Finance professionals said:

"CEPEP operating Policies and Procedures require that Contractors operate four to six teams of semi-skilled and unskilled labourers. Payments to four Contractors for October 2004 to September 2005 which were checked in detail revealed that they were paid on a regular basis for more than six teams."

So notwithstanding your operating procedures manual, payment; you just put teams.

- i Darwin Ltd. was paid continuously for ten to eleven teams.
- ii Two J's Beautification Ltd. was paid for seven to nine teams.
- iii Williams and Sampson Co. Ltd. was paid continuously for nine teams
- iv Mario Eco Co Ltd. was paid for seven to eleven teams."

Remember that the stipulation was four.

"Authority for this variation was not provided on request."

So the Ministry of Finance Audit Committee went to SWMCOL and said, "I want authority for this variation; please provide me with the authority." They refused; echoing what was said by the Auditor General on numerous occasions, "Evidence not seen; documents not produced." same thing. They have a method: money paid and continuously paid. There is a method in their madness; that method is to rip off the Treasury.

"The occurrence..."

of this variation in the provision of teams 10, 11 and so on:

"is indicative of the existence of ghost gangs and abuse of the programme by certain Contractors."

Do you understand? Absolute breakdown. From inception and conception to implementation and execution, complete breakdown. I will demonstrate how the stench emanating from CEPEP is really at the feet of the hon. Member for San Fernando East.

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The Auditor General in her report at page 25 states:

"The oversight function by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment appeared to be weak.

4.36 The financial system in operation for the CEPEP appears to be unstructured. Further, there was no independent review of the existing financial system for the CEPEP.

4.37 There was a lack of transparency with respect to the money market account entitled 'SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club'."

When I read that, it was unbelievable, but I will come back to this SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club.

"The absence of the links between certification of 'Works Completed' and hours worked with corresponding payments could lead to the absence of proper financial accountability.

4.39 The absence of assurances of the above-mentioned links could also seriously threaten the Executing Agency's (SWMCOL) satisfaction of its responsibility to ensure that the resources of the CEPEP are managed efficiently and effectively."

The Auditor General made certain recommendations. [*Crosstalk*]

I now want to deal with the Auditor General's analysis of this SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club:

"Another money market account was seen in the name of SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club."

However, there was no written evidence.

"Written evidence seen indicated that funds deposited in this account represented a collaboration between CEPEP contractors and SWMCOL in which each party contributed equal amounts. However, evidence of the goal and objective of the SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club...was not seen."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what you have here is dollar-for-dollar. [*Laughter*]
[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: "What wrong with dat?"

Mr. G. Singh: The contractor puts in \$1,000, SWMCOL puts in \$1,000; the contractor puts in \$50,000, SWMCOL puts in \$50,000. The contractor puts in \$100,000, SWMCOL puts in \$100,000. [*Crosstalk*] Who are the beneficiaries of this matching funding by SWMCOL? Where in SWMCOL's Articles of Incorporation

have they the capacity to engage in this kind of financial dealing? Did the Ministry of Finance give permission for them to engage in this kind of pyramid scheme? It is a scheme. [*Crosstalk*] When they put that in, the drawers of the money might be the contractors alone and not the taxpayers through SWMCOL in this country. What are the terms and conditions of this market fund, this Unit Trust account? What is the status of that Unit Trust Account? I wonder if the Minister is aware of how much money is in that account and who the signatories are. How is the money getting in that account? Is it a conduit, a slush fund? Is it meant to be a hidden campaign contribution? What is it? There are a lot of unanswered questions.

The report states:

"Evidence of a memorandum of understanding between the contractors and SWMCOL to effect the above arrangement was not seen. Moreover, documented procedures for the collecting and processing of the contributions were not seen."

Throughout the report there was no evidence of board approval for this SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club.

"Written evidence seen indicated that funds deposited in this account represented a collaboration between CEPEP contractors and SWMCOL in which each party contributed equal amounts."

You have no board minutes, no permission, but yet you have investment in a dollar-for-dollar arrangement for the CEPEP contractors. There are a lot of questions.

Mr. Panday: Anything for the workers?

Mr. G. Singh: Nothing for the workers, my brother. Both reports, the Auditor General's Report 2004 and the Ministry of Finance Report 2004/2005 points to the lack of compliance with generally accepted accounting principles and practices. The report of the Auditor General is particularly damning:

- 5.16 The Implementing Agency (Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment) did not establish a formal structure to monitor and evaluate the Programme.
- 5.17 A formal system for measuring and evaluating the performance of the contractors was not established by....(SWMCOL).
- 5.18 The lack of a documented system is an internal control weakness which would impact negatively on transparency and accountability."

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The General Secretary of the PNM, who was the line Minister for public utilities went before the Cabinet, sought to have the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment as the implementing agency, and did not provide the necessary personnel or management infrastructure in order to monitor the programme. But there was a method in the madness. At that time, he was running the campaign in Ortoire/Mayaro; [*Crosstalk*] that was where the moneys were going; pointed in that direction through a chap called Peter Marine, who is now deceased. He was a CEPEP contractor. Did you know that Peter Marine was a CEPEP contractor? [*Crosstalk*]

There were certain recommendation made, which I hope the Member would keep in mind. The Audit Committee of the Ministry of Finance at paragraph 19.31 to 34 pointed to some interesting findings:

"The following cheques listed in the cheque Register had not value or payee recorded next to them. In addition a large number of cheques are indicated as missing."

So cheques were missing from the cheque register.

"No explanation was provided for this discrepancy." [*Crosstalk*]

The Audit Committee found that:

"19.32 The sixteen (16) cheques voided in December 2004 were not provided for examination."

So they voided cheques, but did not provide them to the Audit Committee for examination.

"The policy is that Void Cheques must be marked cancelled or void across the face of the cheques, filed in numerical order with paid cheques and retained. The procedure was not followed since both paid cheques and cancelled/voided cheques have not been produced."

They were reckless with \$1.6 billion, and this was what the Ministry of Finance had to say:

"19.33 Paid cheques were requested but have not been provided to date."

If you paid and it was a legitimate payment, provide the cheque.

"Consequently the signatures, the amount paid, the payee, the number of endorsements (third-party cheques) and by whom they were endorsed cannot be verified."

So the cheques were not produced and you could not verify who cashed them.

In this society, without that kind of accountability, one can only come to the conclusion that there is a level of skullduggery taking place; fraud. When you look at what is happening so far, you understand that in the selection of contractors, in the financial management, in the lack of definition of roles of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and SWMCOL, the lack of clarity. Why was there a lack of clarity?

Sen. Joseph used to teach at the Institute of Business, I think human resource management. I cannot understand why he could not establish that, because this was what the Auditor General had to say with respect to monitor and reporting. [*Crosstalk*]

"5.19 The Implementing Agency (Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment) should ensure that requirements for the execution of the Programme are clearly defined, documented and communicated to key stakeholders and that appropriate performance standards are developed so that the Programme can be evaluated.

5.20 The Implementing Agency...should establish reporting requirements which are clearly defined so that what is to be achieved, how it was achieved and other supporting cost information are reported to ensure that there is accountability and transparency."

With respect to financial management of the programme after outlining, this was what the Auditor General had this to say:

"4.40 The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment should take a more proactive role in ensuring that the principles of good governance are adhered to with respect to the CEPEP Project Unit.

4.41 A well-defined accountability mechanism for the financial operations of the CEPEP should be established and clearly communicated to all stakeholders."

It is clear that this Government has breached every area through the various implementing agencies. I really sympathize with the hon. Member for Arima who now has to play catch up after \$1.6 billion. When I read the Auditor General's report she had written the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of SWMCOL on several occasions requesting certain requirements be put in place. She has been

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treated in a manner that is unbecoming a holder of high office, by the Chairman and CEO of SWMCOL, but you understand why he engaged in that. I read from page 9 of the Auditor General's Report. [Crosstalk]

"The specific responsibilities of SWMCOL as the Executing Agency for the CEPEP were not defined in any official documentation provided during the audit. The Executive Chairman of SWMCOL indicated that 'written directives received were embodied in the initial Cabinet Minute of May 23, 2002 and all other subsequent Cabinet Minutes...he has held discussions with the Corporation Sole...' [Crosstalk]

Corporation Sole, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Member for San Fernando East. So he does not have to take on the hon. Member for Arima. He has a direct line to the father of CEPEP. [Crosstalk] What the father says, goes; notwithstanding the fact that the emperor is without clothes. In this instance, the father is without clothes; no one can tell the father of CEPEP that it is corrupt, fraudulent and a waste of taxpayers' money as it is currently conceived and implemented.

The persons who are carrying the burden of CEPEP are the lowly paid workers for \$1,500 per month, while over 110 persons are made millionaires at the expense of the state Treasury.

Has CEPEP delivered on its objectives after \$1.6 billion expenditure? Let me list, without commentary, the statements made by several persons:

"CEPEP is the best thing after sweet bread"

Ray Braithwaite, Chairman and CEO of SWMCOL, *Trinidad Guardian*, Sunday 03 September, 2000. [Laughter] [Crosstalk]

"Our detractors are afraid of the success of CEPEP. They know that success of this programme can translate into success of the Government."

Minister Abdul-Hamid, *Trinidad Guardian*, April 2005.

"Manning talks big about CEPEP future. He said, 'Proposals are in the pipeline to make MTS just like .'"

Trinidad Guardian, March 15, 2004. [Laughter]

"The biggest problem with CEPEP is that it is opaque, vague and nebulous. The country does not know how taxpayers' money is being spent; the profits these contracts are making, how the contracts are awarded, what's the selection criterion for the contractors."

Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir.

"CEPEP is just another Unemployment Relief Programme...It offers no possibilities for skills development or advancement to those who get jobs, neither do the efforts at environmental protection and enhancement have lasting value."

This article was taken from Andy Johnson, *Trinidad Express*, April 25, 2004.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, having listed a wide perception of views, let me now turn to the report of the Audit Committee in dealing with efficiency:

- "21.11 The main objectives of the programme were threefold:
- i the creation of employment
 - ii Protection and enhancement of the environment and
 - iii the engendering of entrepreneurship among citizens"

You cannot fault that, but we have demonstrated the crookedness, thievery and fraud committed.

The Ministry of Finance said:

"Success in the programme would be evident or signalled by:

- i creation of employment where at least seventy five percent of expenditure relate to direct wages.
- ii Continuous well maintained roadsides and public areas throughout the country.
- iii An annual or at most two years periodic turnover of new entrepreneurs." [*Crosstalk*]

What was the finding of the Ministry of Finance professionals? I quote from page 28:

- "21.13 The programme has not successfully achieved its objectives for the following reasons—
- i Analysis of the expenditure reveal that 52% of expenditure comprise wages...

Our site visits revealed non-existent workers of one to four workers per team."

Ghost gangs.

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"Using an average of two workers per team being non-existent, effectively 20% of the wages paid...41.6%...reached the poor and unemployed. The programme is therefore not efficient in the creation of employment and reduction of poverty." [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have left?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Seven minutes.

Mr. G. Singh: Ten minutes.

- "ii the environmental impact created by the programme in its first year of operation has withered. Our site visits over three (3) days revealed many areas overgrown with grass especially commonly used areas like school environs, main roads, sport facilities environs and main roads to residential communities. The programme is in a catch-up mode to even maintain the grass on roadsides much less enhance it.
- iii The engendering of entrepreneurship among citizens implied that the programme would be used as an incubator. The findings in the area of contractors' compliance indicate that this objective has not been achieved. Operations fee which is paid direct to the contractor include Value Added Tax (VAT), National Insurance for employees and employer and Health Surcharge. It was seen that these were not remitted, yet the contractors continued to operate within the programme. Entrepreneurs who break the laws may have been created."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you understand? The Ministry of Finance was saying that by virtue of this programme we had created entrepreneurs who broke the laws; that is the legacy.

It continues:

"Further, the programme has been in operation for three (3) years and is entering its fourth year which is an extremely long period for incubation of business of any kind except Space Aeronautical Engineering. The need for a total replacement rotation of contractors is long overdue."

They were saying that the period was so long for incubation that you must have been having a space aeronautical engineering programme. It is the flying whacker.

"Most persons who are given income on average \$500,000.00 per annum (operations fee) to dispose at his/her discretion would willingly justify the need to continue."

So 110 contractors, \$500,000 per annum operations fee, would justify their need to continue.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion it states:

"While the programme was well intended it seems to have gone astray, vis-à-vis, its objectives. The negative impacts require urgent attention."

When you look at the content of this Motion, you recognize that in every arena, whether selection criteria, financial management, good governance or the clarity of roles, you have a telling indictment of the culpability of this Government. It is clear that this mutation created of half URP, half CEPEP, where the workers earn as much as the URP workers, \$1,500 a month; that is the URP half. The CEPEP half is the contractor half and the bureaucracy half who become millionaires. So this has not alleviated poverty; this has created a privileged caste of persons by virtue of their linkage with the PNM who have become millionaires and the ordinary workers, the 5,640 of them, continue to subsist and suffer.

Sen. Montano said that a food basket to feed a family of four costs \$1,740 per month. The CEPEP workers earn \$1,500 a month. They are below the poverty line. We must stand up for the workers. If anybody is to benefit from CEPEP, it must be the workers and not the contractors. [*Desk thumping*] Therefore, I ask each and every right thinking Member of this House to join with me in condemning this Government for its lack of transparency, accountability and probity in the management of \$1.620 billion allocated to CEPEP.

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

Dr. Fuad Khan (*San Juan/Barataria*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I vote to second the Motion and reserve my right to speak at a later time in the debate.

Question proposed.

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to join the debate on the Motion as filed by the hon. Member for Caroni East. The hon. Member has given considerable detail as it related to this programme. There are certain things I would want to repeat. First of all, two reports have been referred to: The Central Audit Report and the Auditor General's Report.

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I assumed responsibility for this programme as Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment in November 2003. The following year in the budget debate I indicated that there were a number of concerns about this programme. I think the concerns have been raised in the public domain by many quarters. Following those concerns, two things were done, among others. I would mention two things specifically for this debate. One was the request of the Auditor General to do a special audit and that was a request of the Government through the Ministry, as well as the request by the Central Audit Committee of the Ministry of Finance to do another audit.

3.30 p.m.

In the initial setting up of the programme, I would want to maintain that it was established with very laudable objectives and I do not think it is difficult to admit that somewhere along the line, some of the objectives were not met.

In my budget contribution in 2004, I indicated the intention to expand the programme simply because in its initial setting up, whilst it was intended to be national in scope, that was not the case, and it was necessary to ensure that the programme was extended throughout Trinidad and Tobago. I also stated that that new approach would not take place until a number of things were put in place. The Auditor General's Report and the Central Audit Report of the Ministry of Finance are actually not yet completed, there are still some investigations, and a final report that is to be tendered by that unit which would also be utilized for the purposes of deciding exactly how CEPEP should be reorganized taking into consideration the recommendations of the Auditor General's Report as well as the Central Audit Report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is important for us in the context of the establishment of CEPEP to take our minds back to 2002 when this programme was initially set up, and there are a number of criticisms and feedback that are very valid. The hon. Member for Caroni East spoke about some issues that relate to insurance for the workers and a number of things that not only need to be addressed, but are being addressed simply because of the nature of work in which the workers are involved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to take our minds back to 2002, and if I could just briefly state the objectives of CEPEP. They were the empowerment of communities to improve the condition of the local environment; the expansion of employment opportunities for the benefit of semiskilled and unskilled citizens within their communities; and the creation of opportunities for the development of small businesses.

To achieve these objectives, persons employed with CEPEP participated in the following activities which are: the collection, sorting, and removing garbage from the public roadways which are inaccessible to other waste-handling systems; conducting on going clean up of coastal areas by collecting, sorting, and removing shoreline garbage; the beautification of existing dumps; developing recycling centres for the dumping of recyclable materials; collecting, sorting, and removing solid waste from watercourses including ravines, drains and canals; developing of a yard waste composting facility, the output of which would be sold to farmers and home growers for agricultural support usage; and lastly, undertaking corrective environmental action based on the feedback and findings from community based assessment.

Having regard to the Motion before this honourable House, it is very important that those objectives are known. Initially, we are talking about 110 small and medium-sized contractors throughout Trinidad and Tobago and I would like to say that during the time I have been Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, I have observed the practices and work of the CEPEP workers in particular, and I would like to publicly commend the workers for what I consider to be in many instances, the transformation of communities as they relate to the environment. [*Desk thumping*] It is important to say that, because of the context of the comments of the Auditor General's Report and the Central Audit Report which, of course, focus on the processes on the issues as they relate to the appointment of contractors, and the absence of monitoring and evaluation.

Of course, in doing such a report very little attention if any at all is paid to the successes of the programme especially as it relates to the workers. I recall in 2004 when I visited Grenada shortly after Hurricane Ivan and a request was made by the Prime Minister of Grenada for assistance by Trinidad and Tobago, specifically for CEPEP workers, I had the opportunity at that time to have firsthand sight of the contribution of the CEPEP workers to the restoration of Grenada that was really devastated and there were a number of things one realized on arriving in Grenada. Of course, there were Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) and the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) but what stood out more than anything else for the Grenadians was the presence of those workers and their attitude to working there.

The Prime Minister of Grenada has actually indicated and commended the Government for that assistance, but whatever criticisms, feedback and challenges that were faced, the objectives of CEPEP is something that the Grenadian Government has given consideration to as it relates to a setting up of an entity to

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do a similar exercise. I imagine that based on some of the criticisms that have been levelled, if at all they adopt a similar approach, they would probably be in a very good position to set up an entity and have a structure based on what has been set up and some of the feedback we have received.

Even as we returned home and looked at both Trinidad and Tobago and the workers employed at CEPEP, a number of us would have had the opportunity on a daily basis either to pass on the bus route or visit a number of communities where CEPEP operates, and one of the things that is very important for me to say is the fact that a number of those workers have adopted an attitude of which I think Trinidad and Tobago can be very proud.

Many mornings at 5.30 a.m. and 5.45 a.m., because many of them actually start working at six o'clock or before, they have clearly demonstrated a commitment to the transformation and cleaning up of the environment. Whilst, if they have visited areas and they have said in visiting groups that there have not been persons present particularly that period of 2000—2004, then those are matters that have to be addressed, and based on what I would say later in terms of what the ministry has put in place, I can give the assurance that a number of those concerns have been and will be addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had the opportunity to attend on a number of occasions the clean up of beaches whether in the south, the east, the north or in Tobago and we have seen—if I were to talk about Pigeon Point, Tobago—that the CEPEP workers did Herculean work of which I think Tobagonians are all proud and wish to ensure that it maintains its pristine condition. I have been to the north coast and the south and I have seen the work that the workers have done.

Very often, doing work after Trinidadians and Tobagonians who should have a better approach to the environment, but very often take the decision that says if I go to the beach, the river, or some public place, that they have a right to leave garbage and refuse behind. I have actually heard—and I have seen it in the newspapers sometimes after a flooding in Port of Spain, Arima or south—requests from persons asking for the CEPEP workers to clean up Port of Spain, here or there.

In my view, that request and consideration for the CEPEP workers have been in the main because they have recognized that they have been doing valuable work. Had that not been the case following flooding in Port of Spain or elsewhere, citizens would hardly request for any institution to assist in the clean up whether sewers or streets if they did not feel that job would not be done. Before I actually

go into some of the other points made by the hon. Member for Caroni East, I felt that it was very important for us to acknowledge the work of a number of very committed CEPEP workers. As the Member for Caroni East indicated, he is talking about a little over 5,000 workers and one of the things I would say is the issue of ensuring that as we make some changes that the recommendations of the Auditor General be heeded.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the major criticisms of the report was the issue of the failure of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment to do proper monitoring and you will see that the Auditor General refers to the fact that the unit in the ministry, that is the environmental unit at that time when this programme was set up, was only staffed by one individual where there were 14 vacancies. Those positions should have been filled by the Department of Public Administration (DPA) and having assumed responsibility in 2003, and having made several requests and those requests not being fulfilled, I eventually took a note to Cabinet and asked at least that for the interim, a unit be set up and filled with contract personnel to at least put the ministry in a better position to monitor and evaluate CEPEP. That Cabinet Note was approved and there are now a number of persons on board in that unit.

Following the setting up of that unit, you would see that the Auditor General refers to two very important decisions made by Cabinet as submitted by the ministry as they relate to the proper monitoring and evaluating of CEPEP and if I can refer to page 32 of the report you would see that in 2005, the ministry organized two consultations with the various contractors, SWMCOL and other stakeholders for the purposes of restating the policy. Of course, that would have been after the period the audit would have been done, but nonetheless having two consultations with the contractors, SWMCOL, and stakeholders on that occasion I sought to ensure that I indicated exactly what was the Government's policy, what is expected of the workers, and the contractors and ensured that feedback from both workers and contractors that we allowed that process to put us in a position to make some better decisions later on.

The report also speaks to the fact that several meetings were held with the Ministry of Finance and the board, SWMCOL, and the Ministry Public Utilities and the Environment with a view to indicating and giving certain directives to the better management of CEPEP. On page 32 of that report, the Auditor General indicates that one of the things the ministry also did was the draft strategic plan and included in that plan would have been addressing the issue of CEPEP. Following that strategic plan, discussions were then held with the public

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Management Consulting Division of the Ministry of Public Administration and Information with a view then to setting up a special unit in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and the PMCD noted at that time—and I am reading from page 32 of the document.

“Four programmes, the major one being the CEPEP, require immediate attention given its size and budgetary allocation. Current staffing (at the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment) does not allow for any significant monitoring and evaluation of these programmes...Key evaluation issues relating to these programmes, namely design and effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, impact and sustainability are needed urgently for decision-making purposes.”

We therefore approached the Ministry of Public Administration and Information knowing fully well that this was necessary and it agreed. As a result of that, you would see that the Auditor General refers to the fact that a unit was set up, which is the establishment of a customer service facilitating unit in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment with responsibilities for, among other duties, the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) Now, of course, the setting up of this unit would have been done certainly after the period for which the audit was done which is 2002 to 2004 and that unit was approved by Cabinet in August 2005.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was also felt that having regard to and at that time neither the Auditor General's Report nor the Central Audit Report would not yet have been released. Following that in 2006, another Note was taken to Cabinet for the establishment of the limited liability company with responsibility for the management and execution of CEPEP and upon the establishment of the company as a going concern, determination of the role and function of Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL), as the executing agency of CEPEP.

In my budget contribution last year, I indicated that the Government had taken a decision to separate CEPEP from SWMCOL and the reason simply would have been to ensure that SWMCOL continues with its core function together with a new mandate which would have been looking at issues of sewerage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Trinidad and Tobago now only one third of Trinidad and Tobago is sewerred. The Government is of the view that over the last couple years sufficient attention had not been paid to ensuring that the country was properly sewerred. Now the hon. Member for Caroni East during the period when he was the Minister started, or I should say, put in place for the construction of the

Beetham Waste Water Facility. That is now completed, but the area covered by that facility starts in Chaguaramas and only goes to Mount Hope and, therefore, there is still a large part of the country that needs to be sewerred.

The feeling therefore is that SWMCOL should continue its mandate as it relates to its core function which is substantively to look after the environment and deal with that very vexing issue of ensuring that as we talk about 2020 that we deal properly with our waste disposal. Sometime last year I also announced that the Government and Cabinet approve the establishment of a new design of a system of waste disposal. A number of citizens have complained and as late as two weeks ago, there was a fire at the Forres Park dump and in agreeing to have a new system of design for waste disposal it means that we have agreed to close the Beetham landfill and other landfills where appropriate, and that also means in terms of the functioning of SWMCOL that those matters will be addressed in a more comprehensive fashion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Beetham landfill as we know is located on a wetland, the Guanapo landfill is located on a watershed and there have been considerable environmental problems and otherwise, and particularly during the dry season the citizens have complained that when there is a fire it can continue for days and days. So in taking the decision to have SWMCOL focus exclusively on its core mandate and to have CEPEP removed from SWMCOL, the Government and Cabinet is of the view that that is going to put us in a better position to be able to ensure the proper monitoring and evaluating of CEPEP.

The two major decisions; one, the setting up of a unit that is now given greater responsibility for that monitoring evaluation and to deal with some of the problems as raised in both the Central Audit Report as well as the Auditor General's Report and to take into consideration a number of the concerns as raised by the public in relation to the management of CEPEP, we are in the process of putting in place the necessary guidelines for the setting up of that company and the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment together with the Ministry of Finance are in the process of those discussions for the purposes of ensuring that the company is set up in a way that is transparent and the public can feel comfortable that we have done all that is possible to deal with some of the concerns as raised by the Auditor General.

The establishment of that limited liability company to manage and execute CEPEP is referred to by the Auditor General on page 32, and on page 33, the issue of the Business Services Unit is also set up. If I could just read into the record the comments of the Auditor General as they relate to that:

“4.9 In a further attempt to address the management and implementation issues of the CEPEP, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment was able to secure another decision of the Cabinet Minute...of August 03 2006, which agreed *inter alia*:

- To the establishment of a limited liability company with responsibility for the management and execution of the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme.
- Upon the establishment of the company as a going concern, to the termination of the role and function of the Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL) as the executing agency for CEPEP.

5.0 FURTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

5.1 As Implementing Agency for CEPEP, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment recognizes that there is need for a re-organization of the programme if it is to function in accordance with the Cabinet decisions and to achieve its stated objectives. In so doing, the Ministry will be undertaking the following activities in order to improve on the programme's effectiveness:

- i. Establishment of guidelines for the management of the programme which will include the selection and modus operandi of contractors.
- ii. Establishment of mechanisms for collaboration between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment to oversee the utilization of funds disbursed to the programme.
- iii. Establishment of reporting mechanisms that would allow stakeholders to evaluate whether funds expended on the CEPEP were used in the fulfillment of its stated objectives and for the purposes intended.
- iv. Translation of the objectives of CEPEP into measurable targets for the achievement of the programme's objectives.

- v. Establishment of a system for monitoring and reporting on CEPEP. This would include the development of a prescribed format and timing for the submission of reports on the programme, which would be evaluated and would form the basis of reports to the Cabinet. This system would be operational through the Business Services Unit of the Ministry.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at page 33, the Auditor General also states:

“6.1 The Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment did initiate action which resulted in the following strategic decisions being taken with respect to CEPEP:

- The establishment and staffing of the Business Services Unit of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment which will have direct monitoring responsibility for CEPEP.
- The establishment of a limited liability company with responsibility for the management and execution of the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP).

6.2 In addition, the Ministry in its role as Implementing Agency for the CEPEP will be undertaking action in several other areas to ensure that the programme is implemented in an efficient, economical and effective manner. These include establishing mechanisms and guidelines for the management of the programme...These will form the basis for the implementation of a re-organized CEPEP.”

4.00 p.m.

The auditor's report deals with the concerns, challenges and investigations following the investigations of CEPEP. The Auditor General also speaks to what the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment has put in place in order to ensure that some of the concerns raised in the report are dealt with effectively. It is important that whilst that report speaks to the period 2002—2004, there are a number of things that the ministry has started already to put in place. The head of that unit has been appointed. As it relates to the staffing of other members of the unit, that process is well in hand. I am very confident that with regard to why the unit was set up, if the ministry follows that procedure we would be in a better position to deliver based on the concerns of the report.

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The hon. Member for Caroni East indicated and made some serious allegations related to the establishment of this programme. The Member referred to organized looting; the setting up of a slush fund and the fact that the sum of \$1.6 dollars was looted by persons who were selected deliberately for that purpose. I want to make it abundantly clear that as it relates to the both reports which the Member for Caroni East indicated, they were done by independent persons and public servants.

My clear indication to this honourable House is the commitment to take very seriously the feedback as given by the Auditor General and the Central Audit Unit of the Ministry of Finance. I indicated earlier that the Central Audit Unit has not yet completed its report and whatever recommendations would come from that unit have not been forwarded to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. I would not say it is in the draft stage but there is some work to be done. I give this honourable House the assurance that recommendations of the Auditor General as well as the Central Audit Unit would be taken very seriously.

When this report was first laid in this honourable House a number of questions were raised as to whether or not there is wrongdoing; the position of the Government and if the report and its findings would be taken further. The Auditor General's report together with the central audit report of the Ministry of Finance, the concerns raised, comments and recommendations will be taken collectively. Our position as a government is very simple. The money allocated to CEPEP is substantial; it is taxpayers' money and we have a duty at all times to ensure that those funds are properly managed. The reason for the setting up of the Business Services Unit and the separation of CEPEP from SWMCOL is to ensure that there is greater comfort in the community as it relates to the management of CEPEP.

Earlier this year I met with the contractors. Sometime last month I met all the contractors of SWMCOL with certain members of the board as I have done on previous occasions. One of the comments made in the central audit report of the Ministry of Finance is that a three-year period has passed and after that there is the need to revisit the objectives and the programmes and look very closely to see whether or not the programme has met the objectives and to ensure at all times that the persons who have been given the responsibility for implementing the programme, that is the workers and contractors in the programme, as well as the stakeholders and the board, that there is a constant reminder of the Government's objectives.

In having that meeting in January 2007, it was important that the ministry speak specifically to that. At that meeting held at Hilton in January 2007, the

Minister in the Ministry of Finance, hon. Conrad Enill and I spent a considerable amount of time that morning discussing the programme with the contractors and getting feedback from them on the way forward. I am quite certain and I feel more comfortable that the programme is going to move from strength to strength and we would give serious consideration to those reports.

A few weeks ago when this matter was raised Mr. Manohar Ramsaran made some recommendations with regard to issues of insurance and better working conditions. He submitted that consideration should be given as it relates to an increase in the salary of CEPEP's workers. As Cabinet has taken the decision to look at the re-organization of the programme; separate CEPEP from SWMCOL and set up a business services unit to ensure the proper management and functioning of CEPEP, there are considerations that the ministry and the Government would be considering. I remember that sometime ago there was a contractor whom the Industrial Court had fined. Unfortunately, because of the firing of a worker who was pregnant and apparently, during that period and after the pregnancy she was not re-employed, that tells us there are things that the ministry and SWMCOL needed to do to ensure that the contractors were knowledgeable as it relates to industrial relations and other matters relating to the employment of persons.

One important initiative that has been taking place is the training of contractors and workers. The programme is designed in such a way where the expectation is that the contractor would be able to move into doing other things. The point made about having other contractors come on board is a very valid one. The intention was that the Government wanted to put a number of the contractors in a position where they could move out the programme; do other things and give other people the opportunity to manage the programme.

Mr. Ramnath: You have to control Ray Braithwaite first. Your ministry is taking blame for nothing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I know that you have the great eloquence to deal with that matter. Let the hon. Minister finish first.

Hon. P. Beckles: The other intention is that the programme will be designed in such a way that the workers of the programme—bearing in mind that you are looking at many semi skilled and unskilled workers—would be trained in other things. We did not want a situation where those workers will remain in that programme ad infinitum. Now, we find ourselves, whether or not it is accepted where we are talking about an unemployment rate of 5 per cent. Some people have argued that the reason they cannot get workers is because a number of

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persons have indicated a preference to work in CEPEP. You are talking about over 5,000 persons. It is clear from the programme that in establishing it one would not want that after three years the programme, the Government and SWMCOL have not been in a position to help those workers to advance themselves. One major concern has been the issue of training. You will see in the Cabinet Note—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Arima has expired

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is a matter on the adjournment. The hon. Member for Tabaquite.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be adjourned to a date to be fixed.

I wish to inform hon. Members that a number of activities would be taking place over the next couple weeks. As you know, we have Cricket World Cup 2007. I am advised reliably by cricket enthusiasts in the House that on Friday 09 March, there is a warm-up match with South Africa and Friday March 16, India will be playing Sri Lanka. In keeping with that fact there are some Bills relating to security which are being finalized at the present time. There would be a special sitting of the House to deal with these Bills. We would be taking these Bills through all the stages and you would be informed shortly as to exactly when the sitting would be. We are looking at sitting on Wednesday next week. This is why we are adjourning at this time to a date to be fixed.

Tobago

(Decline in Cruise Ship Arrivals)

Dr. Adesh Nanan (Tabaquite): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I raise this particular matter dealing with the unacceptable decline in cruise ship arrivals to Tobago—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Member speak. You know that he has a love for Tobago.

Dr. A. Nanan: —and the failure of the Government to put any meaningful measures in place to address this particular concern. The *Tobago News* dated Friday, October 20, states:

“Cruise arrivals dive 800 %

Cruise ship arrivals will take an 800 per cent dive in the current season, Tourism and Transport Secretary Neil Wilson said on Tuesday.

He said he was very concerned with what was going to happen to the several taxi drivers who transport these cruise passengers and the booth owners on the Milford Road Esplanade who we are targeted to do business with the visitors.

...last year there were just over 53,000 cruise arrivals but this year that figure would drop to less than 7,000. ‘I am a little concerned with what is going to happen with our cruise business. That is a tremendous decrease...’ the reason... is the Scarborough Port extension which is still not finished.”

I have a serious problem with that.

“Caribbean Seaworks Limited was awarded the contract to complete the job in time for the 2005/2006 cruise ship season, which started in October but after providing several new completion dates, work was still going on.”

When we look at the facilities for cruise ships in Tobago as compared with the other islands as St. Maarten, Antigua and Barbados, they can accommodate four or more cruise ships. When we look at Tobago, a simple exercise of an extension to a jetty in Scarborough has led to an 800 per cent decrease in arrivals. The situation is critical. The jetty is unfinished and the cruise ship industry is collapsing because of the failure of the Minister of Tourism to deal with the issue. The Minister of Tourism is too busy with Carnival activities. It has been reported that the Minister of Tourism has contracted the virus. I do not know if he can contribute to this debate today. We have seen this ministry in total chaos. How can we expect any situation like what is happening in Tobago to be rectified by the Minister of Tourism?

We have seen a haphazard approach to the placing of lifeguards on the beaches in Trinidad and that has led to the death of a tourist at Tyrico Bay.

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Suddenly, there was a rush to put lifeguards in place. *[Interruption]* I am dealing with the situation.

In 2004, hurricane Ivan hit Grenada and in 2005, they built a complete port and the cruise ships are going there. You never thought Grenada would have recovered. We have all the money, the oil and gas resources and they cannot put a proper facility in Tobago for cruise ships. *[Desk thumping]* They could have spent the money. There are other ports. There is one in Charlotteville that was started by the United National Congress government. A port in Plymouth is possible. They could have done the work necessary in Charlotteville and Plymouth to accommodate these cruise ships while extending or repairing the jetty in Scarborough.

Recently, the Chief Secretary had to apologize to Tobagonians because they had to turn back a cruise ship because there was no space. That is improper planning. When ships are coming in they are rostered. There are specific times of arrival. The only time you will have a discrepancy is if there is a hurricane or storm at sea. Cruise ships bring taxes that go into government's coffers and there is spin-off revenue for taxi drivers and tour operators. There are major losses. We are not talking about small dollars; we are talking about millions of dollars in losses.

Mrs. Job-Davis: How many millions?

Dr. A. Nanan: Member for Tobago East, apparently, you do not care about them.

Fifteen vessels are scheduled to come to Scarborough in this season which started at the end of October and ends in April. Last season there were 43 calls. Charlotteville is expected to receive 18 calls by smaller vessels. The \$16 million extension to Scarborough Pier would have allowed the larger cruise ships if it was completed.

I make reference to Barbados which topped the region in tourism. Where is Trinidad and Tobago? Eighty-fifth out of 124. That is the ranking of Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister of Tourism should bend his head in shame. Look at the evaluation of this. Countries were evaluated for natural and cultural resources; safety and security; environmental laws; health and hygiene; air transport infrastructure; labour practices and the priority which the Government gives the sector. Barbados has also ranked second overall with regard to national tourism perception with a positive attitude towards tourism and the value of tourist in the country. What is the Minister of Tourism doing?

While the Minister of Tourism is dancing, I read from an article dated Friday, November 24, 2006 in terms of “Include Tobago in operations”:

“Tourism is the backbone of the Tobago economy at present...

The Government coffers also gain valuable foreign dollars from taxes from the cruise ships. It is therefore a heavy body blow to the Tobago economy from this drastic fall in cruise ship arrivals in the island for this tourist season.”

There is an editorial on “Tourism and tourists” in the *Tobago News* dated Friday February 23, 2007.

“It is with regret and a little sadness that I feel pen must be put to paper in order that a tourist view must be put to the general public of Tobago.

My partner and myself are both English pensioners on a fixed income, from one of the highest taxed countries in the world, UK. We have saved our money hard all year and looked forward to a relaxing holiday in Tobago. You have a wonderful island blessed with sunshine all year and the most beautiful of nature’s birds imaginable. What an incredible and gifted life you have! However, you must realize and act if you wish to expand and continue to enjoy the many millions of dollars the tourists bring to your country.

I sadly will not return here and will not recommend friends to come although I have over the past four years been to other Caribbean islands and felt safe and secure.

We were on a popular beach enjoying our day between Black Rock and Turtle Beach when a very large imposing pedlar asking how our day was approached us, and if we would like a bird’s nest box made by him. We did not, and said no thank you. He then casually chatted for five to ten minutes and showed no sign of leaving. He then proceeded to say he did not like to steal or do harm to people in order to take money.

He said his ‘good book’ said, ‘ask and you will be given money and so he was now asking’. He looked at me very intently and threateningly and said, ‘you understand what I am saying; then put his hand out and said, ‘Have you TT \$20?’ I believed that if I had not given him money, he would have taken it forcibly. We did not know if he was armed. Unfortunately, we were the last people on the beach and therefore at the mercy of these

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unscrupulous people. In England, what was done to us was criminal and classed as ‘demanding money with menaces’.

What with this incident and the incident the night before, when an English tourist was beaten, robbed, his car stolen, his money taken and left injured, it is an awful reputation Tobago is earning; the tourist will not come back to your island and will tell the world tourists to keep away.”

That is the scenario in Tobago. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office updated its travel advisory to British citizens and residents visiting Tobago, specifically targeting the popular EnglishMan’s Bay. What are you doing in Tobago? Minister of Tourism, you must act. You have to act. You cannot talk about arrivals for Carnival and that is the situation in Tobago. You cannot have cruise ships being turned away. Do you know that in terms of the number of cruise ships, they are going to intensify? The larger cruise ships are now coming into play.

Let me read what Grenada has in terms of state of the art. With the completion of the cruise port—in Charlotteville you still have ferrying of passengers from the cruise ship to land—the ferrying of passengers ashore by small boats is history. In Grenada, the cruise port accommodates two to three vessels simultaneously.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have two minutes.

Members of this honourable House, do we continue sitting until the completion of this matter?

Assent indicated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Dr. A. Nanan: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The cruise port accommodates two to three vessels simultaneously and it is designed with the most modern cruise ship in mind. The port is capable of berthing vessels up to 980 feet in excess of 9 metres including the Queen Mary and will have the ability to provide potable water and discharge service to the pier. The cruise port with 700 sq. metres visitor welcome centre has now been in operation for one month. It is being considered a major success for all parties involved, from captain to vendors to taxi drivers.

I want to read about the taxi drivers situation. When the Tobago News sought the views from those affected by the drop, that is taxi drivers angry over drop in cruise ship arrivals, a Calder Hall taxi driver said, it is a very big drop and you will be affected negatively. With the small number of arrivals there would be not

enough to go around for the drivers. The authorities are taking too long with the construction work at the port and they are not putting enough in place for visitors when they come to the island.

Do you know that if they use that port in Charlotteville on the north east they can travel and observe the rain forest as that cruise ship is passing along? That facility is there and it is not being utilized. At the rain forest there should be facilities for tourists to rest and cool off from the long walk and more activities particularly on a Sunday.

4.30 p.m.

What is also important, is when a facility is put to expand the vessel size in Scarborough there is so much traffic on a Friday in Scarborough that there is congestion—all these people are coming into that particular area and they cannot move around so there is the need to use other facilities. Go down to Plymouth and Charlotteville and move the traffic away from Scarborough.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the Government to understand that that situation in Tobago cannot continue, and this cruise ship arrivals situation with 800 per cent decline has to stop.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Howard Chin Lee): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will like to respond to the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, who after his contribution I am clear that he knows nothing of the cruise ship industry. [*Desk thumping*] Added to that, I question his ability to work out things mathematically because how can you have an 800 per cent decrease. There is no such thing as—it is a mathematical impossibility. It is not possible. You can have an 800 per cent increase, but you cannot have an 800 per cent decrease.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will like to also just briefly speak about the cruise ship industry and about the many accomplishments that we have made in developing that industry. What the Member for Tabaquite also refused to speak about is the total arrivals for cruise ships in Trinidad and Tobago. He clearly isolated and took out figures from Tobago alone, but he forgot to mention the total arrivals for Trinidad and Tobago which this year is at a record high. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me give you some figures about the arrival for Trinidad and Tobago, and then I will go to Tobago in isolation as the Member for Tabaquite would like.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2004 there were 86 ports of call to Trinidad and Tobago where Trinidad and Tobago received 54,254 passengers. In 2005, there

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were 82 ports of call where we received 67,196 passengers, and in 2006 which is this season, we received the highest number of arrivals with 94 ports of call and 85,859 passengers—the highest number of passengers that we have received with respect to passengers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason I say the Member of Parliament needs to be edified on the cruise ship industry, let me just give a quick history for the sake of the nation and for the sake of the Parliament about the cruise ship industry.

The cruise ship industry this year has probably the most number of ships that it has ever had, and every year as the industry grows, the size of ships are getting larger, the weights are getting heavier and the capacity to carry passengers is increasing. The vessels today can carry in excess of 2,000 passengers. The vessels today are in excess of 300 metres and the vessels today are the largest that have ever been built in the cruise ship industry. This year alone a vessel is being built that can carry nearly 3,600 passengers. That vessel is called the *Freedom of the Seas* and we are also pleased to announce that ship 339 metres arrived with 3,600 passengers in Port of Spain this year.

Having said that, with respect to Tobago, which this Motion is about, when the UNC was in power, I wonder—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Minister is answering, let him answer.

Sen. The Hon. H. Chin Lee: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to make some comparisons since we are making comparisons today. In 2001, when the Member for Tabaquite was the Minister of Tourism, do you know what the arrivals were? Ten thousand! Every year since then, including this year, we have exceeded those numbers. Even the numbers in Tobago alone have exceeded the total number in Trinidad and Tobago that this Minister has managed to accomplish. And on top of that he wants to come into this House and tell me that we have done nothing. Let me answer the question.

In Tobago in 2004, the Tobago House of Assembly hired a contractor to extend the length of the jetty for the reason I mentioned before. As most of the cruise ships are more than 300 metres long, most of the cruise ships carry over 2,000 passengers, it was needed to extend the length of the jetty. Let me give some figures.

The Government took steps to also widen the jetty from 3.6 metres to six metres and to lengthen the jetty from 160 metres to 248 metres so that the jetty can now accommodate cruise vessels up to 340 metres in length.

The work on the jetty started in April of 2004 and that was under the direct control of the Tobago House of Assembly. The contractor took a little longer than expected. However, the certificate for the project was awarded in November 2006 and the jetty is now completed. So that during the period 2006, while the jetty was being constructed, we saw a decrease in the arrivals and that was only because of the construction of the jetty. Now because of the fact that progress is taking place in Tobago, and the jetty can now accommodate voyager class vessels, it is already anticipated that next season, 2008—we already have a booking in excess of 10,000 passengers and will exceed that this year.

In addition to that, in 2001, the then UNC government did nothing to accommodate cruise ships in Charlotteville. In Charlotteville, the Government is going out for tender for a jetty to be built in Charlotteville with a net worth of about \$59 million that will also accommodate voyager class vessels. So that what we have taking place in Tobago and in Trinidad, is the improvement of the facilities so that we can accommodate voyager class vessels, the improvement of the facilities in Trinidad so that in Trinidad too, it can accommodate larger vessels. We are ensuring that the width of the jetty is increased, the length of the jetty, the depth of the water is also increased to accommodate those vessels and all of this improvement is part of our vision and will certainly redound to increase in arrivals and will definitely surpass anything that the UNC has ever done and anything you as Minister of Tourism has ever accomplished in your life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to that, the fact as I said in Charlotteville, \$59 million, that there is a new cruise ship terminal being built there and the fact that in the first five years that the Assembly was run by PNM administration, the cruise arrival numbers increased from 10,000 to 34,000 which is threefold. And even in 2006—2007, arrival shows an increase over 50 per cent over the year 2001 and the number generated was when the UNC/NAR coalition was formed.

Now that the Scarborough jetty extension is completed, it is expected that cruise calls and cruise arrivals will once again continue the steep upper curve.

With those words, I thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.40p.m.