

Leave of Absence

Friday, May 25, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 25, 2007

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received excuses from the following Members: hon. Penelope Beckles, the Member of Parliament for Arima, for the period May 22, 2007 to June 04, 2007; the hon. Lawrence Achong, the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, for the period May 25, 2007 to June 02, 2007; the hon. Kelvin Ramnath, the Member of Parliament for Couva South, for today's sitting of the House. The leave which these hon. Members seek is granted.

PAPER LAID

The annual administrative report of the Siparia Regional Corporation for the period October 2005 to September 2006. [*The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received two Motions and both were raised by the hon. Member for Princes Town. I want to inform the hon. Member that the Motion relating to the Human Resource Manager in the Police Service would be entertained. So, the Member could raise that Motion, and I would rule on it after. However, the other Motion is disallowed.

**Police Officers
(Problems Experienced)**

Mr. Subhas Panday (Princes Town): Mr. Speaker, I will deal with the matters in accordance with the sequence in which you have spoken. The first one is in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of this honourable House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the problems being experienced by police officers in relation to the non-payment of overtime and, increments, incorrect salaries and other allowances. They are also experiencing several severe problems with the Human Resource Manager.

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The matter is definite because it touches and concerns a large number of police officers in the Second Division of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. It is also definite because police officers intend to embark on a work-to-rule.

Mr. Speaker, the matter is urgent because the officers intend to embark on protest action within the next 11 days from today's date, if their problems are not addressed.

The matter is of public importance, because it is necessary to ensure that our police officers' problems are addressed, so that they would be able to perform efficiently, thus ensuring that the security of Trinidad and Tobago is not compromised.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have reviewed this Motion and I am to advise the hon. Member for Princes Town that it does not qualify under Standing Order 12. He may, if he so wishes, raise it under Standing Order 11.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect, may I humbly seek your leave to have an interpretation of the Standing Order. Standing Order 12(2) says:

“The Speaker shall...”

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, one second. If it is that you are attempting to raise the issue of the other Motion—

Mr. S. Panday: No, I will come to the other Motion.

Mr. Speaker: Sit down! I am ruling that you are not to raise this Motion about the Chief Justice and the Prime Minister. Could you listen to me, please? You are not to raise this Motion. If you want to address me on something else, I will hear you.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, I will come to that in a minute. This one is:

“The Speaker shall refuse to allow the claim unless he is satisfied that the matter is definite, urgent and of public importance...”

Therefore, there are three limbs that I must address. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, take your seat, please. I have ruled that the matter does not qualify. That is the end of the matter. If you wish to discuss something with me, then you can come to my Chambers and I would receive you. I have ruled that the matter is out of order, and it cannot be raised under Standing Order 12. I have so ruled.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, why?

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Mr. Speaker: I am telling you if you want to know why to come to my office and I am going to tell you. Proceed.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, the other matter you said with the Prime Minister interfering with the administration of justice—

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. S. Panday: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Listen, why are you abusing the privilege like that? I am telling you that the matter is out of order and not to raise it.

Mr. S. Panday: But, Mr. Speaker, why?

Mr. Speaker: Take you seat, please. I am going to tell you why. If you come to my Chambers I will be happy to receive you.

Mr. S. Panday: This is the Parliament of the people.

Mr. Speaker: I am on my feet. Take you seat!

Mr. S. Panday: I will.

Mr. Speaker: Right. I will see you at 4.30 p.m. and I will be happy to receive you and to explain to you—

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: That is the end of the matter. I will see you at 4.30 p.m. [*Interruption*] Please, proceed.

FINANCE BILL

Bill to provide for the imposition or variation of certain duties and taxes and to introduce other provisions of a fiscal nature and for related matters [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

(GOVERNMENT'S MISMANAGEMENT)

[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [March 02, 2007]:

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 programme. [*Mr. G. Singh*]

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: On the last occasion we met, the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs was on his feet. He has 35 minutes of original time remaining.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, may I crave your indulgence, please. I did send correspondence to you with respect to a—

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat, please.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Sure.

Mr. Speaker: I just indicated to you that I will see you. Why do you want to raise the matter? [*Interruption*] You must read the Standing Orders. I am going to see you shortly. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. R Boynes: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. If I may just indicate, on the last occasion we were here, we were dealing with the whole aspect surrounding the special audit of the Auditor General as it relates to the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). I was making the point, that it was upon the request of the Member of Parliament for Arima, in her capacity as Minister responsible for the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, for the Auditor General to review this particular programme, so that we would be in a position to see where we are with same, and by utilizing the experience and wisdom of the Auditor General and her entire staff and team, we would be in a position to see whether or not there is any room for improvement or enhancement.

Mr. Speaker, this programme, which was launched in 2002, was a very innovative and new programme. The intention at that time was to transform Trinidad and Tobago, the entire landscape, and in the process provide for new businessmen and businesswomen in Trinidad and Tobago. The fact that the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment was the one who requested this particular audit on the basis of trying to improve the system of CEPEP, and to provide for its proper operations, is proof and it demonstrates good principles of governance as they relate to transparency and accountability. As I did on the last occasion, I commend the Member of Parliament for Arima for taking that initiative. [*Desk thumping*]

As I said, this is a new programme, an innovative one and a new idea that has transformed the country. By seeing this programme in active operation, we would

also have the benefit of seeing it run, and by listening to those on the other side and the different voices in Trinidad and Tobago, we could all fine-tune this programme and make sure that we continue to see this programme evolve, because it is a programme that is a success story, and it is one that Trinidad and Tobago has, in fact, seen the importance of.

On the last occasion, I heard the Member of Parliament for Oropouche mention in his contribution that the Auditor General's report stated that there was no clarity of the role between SWMCOL and the ministry and, in fact, it did. They had recommended that proper documentation be put in place for this clarity of role between the ministry and the agency SWMCOL.

After looking at this particular area and discussing it with several members of the staff at the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, I understand that when this particular programme was launched, and Cabinet gave its decision and approval for the commencement of this particular programme, there were certain concerns with respect to the execution of this programme. Up to today, I have had discussions with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, and there were concerns as to whether or not this particular programme can be viewed as a sub-programme of SWMCOL, vis-à-vis a programme of the ministry that is to be executed by SWMCOL.

Now, there was a particular view a particular school of thought that seems to feel that it was a sub-programme and, in that case, what they were in the process of doing was establishing a business unit to assist in the monitoring of this programme by the ministry. Now, the Permanent Secretary is the accounting officer for the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. They were setting up a business unit there to monitor this programme.

What the Auditor General's team recommended is that there should be documentation between the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and SWMCOL. In other words, they feel that it is the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment's programme and that SWMCOL has to implement same on their behalf. So much so that a memorandum of understanding has to be signed between the ministry and SWMCOL. In the initial instance, that was not done because there were some questions as to how this programme is to be executed; I am told.

So, what the ministry is doing is working on the memorandum of understanding pursuant to the recommendation from the Auditor General; so that would be in place. Not only are they going to put that particular documentation in place, but

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they would also be establishing—quite apart from having the Permanent Secretary do her monitoring and evaluation—a business unit so that there would be accountability and transparency. I want to again commend the ministry for taking all of these steps to ensure that as this programme evolves, it will do so in the best interests of servicing the nation as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, if I may also indicate, from where I sit it is quite clear that this is a very important programme for Trinidad and Tobago. It has transformed the landscape of our beautiful country, not to mention that some 6,000 persons have employment in this programme. I recall when this programme was first introduced in my very own constituency there were a number of persons on the breadline and, as such, we were able to ensure, through this programme, that some of them were able to have gainful and sustainable employment. Up to this day, those who have remained within the programme have been able to feed their families, and for that I want to commend the ministry and SWMCOL for being in a position to help these families put bread on the table. I just wanted to make that point. Mr. Speaker, there are 117 new businessmen and businesswomen who have actually been in a position to come on board in this country, and all the effects of that I want to table in this House today.

Now, I do not think that people understand, perhaps they do, but in a sense one has to appreciate the role and function and how they have been able to transform this landscape. CEPEP Disaster Emergency Response Team has transformed my constituency. I could tell you that during the flood last year in my constituency, when Trinidad and Tobago was playing Bahrain in Bahrain, and when we scored that goal to put us through to the World Cup, when the television camera came looking for me, they found me in my constituency, and I was up to my waist in flood water. I have to say that because of this CEPEP Disaster Emergency Response Team, it made the clean-up of my constituency easier. We pulled in all the stakeholders like the Ministry of Works and Transport, Ministry of Local Government and we also pulled in this disaster team from CEPEP. They were in a position to move swiftly through people's homes and help them clean up. We have to be mindful of the impact this programme has made and played in Trinidad and Tobago during these very difficult times.

As you know, they clean the beaches throughout Trinidad and Tobago. A number of my colleagues on the other side are visitors to the north-east coast. When you travel along the north-east part of Trinidad and Tobago, you see how beautiful the side of the road is. They are well manicured and well kept. On a number of occasions, at the end of the Easter vacation, there is much trash on the

beaches, and in a very short space of time, we were able to communicate with SWMCOL, and they were able to send their different teams to clean the beaches. I have to thank them for that.

Mr. Speaker, several persons in my constituency, several National Service organizations (NSOs) and some of my colleagues have called and asked for CEPEP to assist in the maintenance of some of the recreation grounds and school grounds, and they have done so. So, I want to be in a position to add this to what is on the table as we discuss the whole circumstances surrounding the operation of this programme. They have done nature trails and community centres. This is just to name a few of the things that they have done.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I see the programme also assisting in is the actual removal of waste from some of the illegal dumping sites. Throughout the country, sometimes people may not follow the rules and regulations as they should. There are designated areas for dumping in the country, but a contractor may find that it is easy to dump trash along the Old Valencia Road where the quarries are, rather than take it to the organized dumping site. What CEPEP has been doing is assisting in the clearing of waste from a number of illegal dumping sites throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

I am sorry the Member for Oropouche is not here, but that Member has requested that the programme assist in the clearing of an illegal dumping site in his very own constituency. I am told that request is receiving the highest priority. So, Members on the other side have actually requested assistance from the programme. *[Interruption]* Member for Fyzabad, my point is simply this. It is a new and innovative programme, and it has its benefits for all. I am saying that the Member for Oropouche and several Members on that side have accessed the programme. It is not my fault or the fault of the Minister if, for instance, several Members do not access the programme. As Members of Parliament, what you have to do is to contact the agency that executes this programme and you will get the assistance. I want to thank SWMCOL and the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment for being in a position to continue changing the landscape of Trinidad and Tobago positively.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Oropouche chastising the Government for creating new entrepreneurs rather than creating an enabling environment for business. If I may respectfully submit, the whole aspect of creating an enabling environment for business so that there would be more and more entrepreneurs coming into the system is better said than actually done. How does one do it? The Government has said rather than just have the enabling environment—we believe

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that, and the Member is quite correct. There is need to create the enabling environment for business. We are doing that. There is also a need for one who lives in Trinidad to appreciate that there has to be a need to be very proactive in ensuring that you create businessmen and businesswomen. It has to be done.

The approach of the Government was simply to have a business incubator whereby you take persons who have gone through the process that is transparent, that is fair and speaks of equity to the good of all, and after these groups have been selected, you would have them now in a business incubator where you will assist them with financial resources, mentoring, training and so forth. So, you are ensuring that you give them the tools that are required for their success in business.

What we should be discussing is the whole aspect of how do we enhance the programme even in that regard, and not simply criticizing the Government for creating new businessmen. That is not the right way of approaching it, but rather with the Government coming up with this new creative and innovative idea of creating businessmen and mentoring them until they get off their feet. How do we preserve and enhance this programme that speaks to doing just that? I expected the debate to put forward ideas that speak to the fact that we can do it for a particular period of time, if it is we have to give a time-line on those initial contractors. Let us discuss that. Let us ensure that in the mentoring we have the larger corporations who would be able to work with the smaller contractors. They can then give these smaller contractors the type of assistance, mentoring, guidance and management that they need if they are to be medium size and bigger contractors.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes when someone gets a petty contract, he or she does not know where to go with that. What to do? First of all, if we are to create serious contractors from the grass roots level, we need to be in a position to train them, work with them and mentor them. They must be in a position to understand the formation of a company. When they have formed their company, they have to be in a position to tender competitively. When they have tendered competitively, and they have won their contract, they would have to know, for instance, what is the whole aspect of raising a bond. Where do they go from here?

Mr. Speaker, they have to establish contacts and connections with hardware to get a line of credit. These are the things that would help them and, luckily, in providing an enabling environment, the Government has been able, in some instances, to have mobilization fees, so that these smaller contractors would then be in a position to have initial fees to treat with their contracts. The Government

has also been able to have 10 per cent of our PSIP allocated to small contractors, thereby creating this enabling environment to encourage smaller contractors. I am saying that we can be debating here and discussing, as it were, the whole aspect of getting the larger corporations to be great mentors to some of these smaller contractors, and this should include even the CEPEP contractors.

When we look at the whole CEPEP story, we see some contractors who have been very successful. In my very own constituency, I have seen a number of these contractors branch off into other businesses. I have seen a number of contractors who have actually trained a number of their employees. They have utilized almost every training programme that the Government has to offer in training their employees to go to the next level. A number of these employees have moved on, and they themselves have now set up businesses. So, while you have some of the CEPEP contractors looking and getting into other businesses, they are also training their employees to get into business as well.

Some of these employees who have gone on to the next level, because of the training and mentoring that their own previous employers have given to them—the CEPEP contractors—are now in the process of supplying services to these CEPEP contractors. I can call a number of instances where this is presently happening, not only in my very own constituency, but throughout Trinidad and Tobago. It is business bringing business. I just wanted to point out that what we should be focusing on is ways and means of improving the system. We have some economists on board here, and I would think that we can look at ways and means and how best we can make this whole programme sustainable.

A very own idea that comes to mind speaks to what the West Indies Cricket Board at this time is asking all the countries to do. The countries throughout the region have been asked to contribute toward assisting the West Indies Cricket Board; whether it is with the development programmes, but in the whole aspect of West Indies Cricket. What has been put forward is a lottery system. Another thing that has been put forward is a trust fund. I am saying, in our debate, let us hear the views and ideas. Is it not possible to have a trust fund or a sinking fund as it were, and with the interest from such a fund, one can be in a position to run the programme? These are the things that we have to be in a position to discuss.

Mr. Singh: I want to thank the hon. Member for giving way. I want to know whether the Member is aware that there was some kind of device called an investment club, and if he has knowledge of this to share that knowledge as to

what are the components and the ingredients of that investment club. Maybe it is a trust fund with some kind of contribution, so, perhaps, the Member may want to expand on that.

Hon. R. Boynes: I do not have any idea of the working of any investment fund, but before the debate is wound up, I am sure Members on this side may be in a position to indicate the existence of such a trust fund, how it works, who has contributed to same and for what particular purpose and so forth. I have in mind an idea of what the Member is talking about. I was trying to get some information on that particular issue today, but I was trying to get something in writing so that when I come here I would have been in a position to address that particular issue as well but, certainly, before this debate is completed, information on that particular matter would be made available to this honourable House.

With respect to the point that we have been making, we are simply indicating that we need to be in a position to understand that this is a very novel and innovative programme. I have been listening to Members on the other side, and I do not think that anybody in Trinidad and Tobago wants to see an end to this particular programme. I think we all agree in this honourable House that this is a programme which has transformed the nation, and we want to see this programme enhanced. That is clear on this particular matter.

I also want to make the point that nowhere in the Auditor General's report—I am sure that the Member for St. Joseph would no doubt be mindful of that—did they say that there was corruption. They said, without a doubt, in terms of the role and responsibility, that there should be documentation. I went through the whole process of explaining that it was a grey area, and that documentation on the basis of what the Auditor General has recommended is now being addressed. Every aspect of the recommendation from the Auditor General would be addressed and implemented in order for the programme to operate better.

You see, at the end of the day, let us look at what the programme has done and what it means to Trinidad and Tobago. If it is that there have been some hitches in the programme, one must be in a position to admire the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment and the Member of Parliament for Arima who took the initiative of approaching the Auditor General and ensuring that she gets the advice and wisdom from this team of experts because they would be in a position to recommend best practices and the best way forward for this very new and innovative programme.

On the last occasion, I listened to the Member for Oropouche, and I wanted to indicate to him when he made the point that there is need for training in the programme, that there are two types of training that are taking place in the CEPEP programme. As I mentioned earlier, one is where the CEPEP contractors themselves—as far as I know, in my constituency, and this obtains in other constituencies and in other areas—are encouraging their employees, assisting them and working with them to go to the next level.

Mr. Speaker, CEPEP is in the process of training all the persons participating in this programme. I understand that there is training on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in the areas of anger management, conflict resolution, personal development, parenting and even the Les Brown Programme called “You Deserve”, to inspire and motivate them.

From an entrepreneurial perspective, further training will be outsourced and would commence on May 29, 2007. Some of the modules would comprise the *Knots and Bolts of Staying one Step Ahead in the Business Game*; *Walking the Business Stalk*; *Actions Today for Creating Wealth Tomorrow*; *Falling Prey to the Enemy Within*; *Out of the Box thinking for Business Acceleration*; *The Horizon Beckons*; and *Vision 2020 in Perspective*, among other modules.

In essence, this incubation period which takes into consideration the training of the contractors and the employees can be for a particular period of time, thus ensuring that the mentors work with them so that they themselves can go to the next level. That is what this whole programme is about. How do we get there? We have taken on board the advice of everybody in the country. There have been some hitches. On this side, we intend to gather the best way forward so that this programme can not only transform the landscape, but proactively create new businessmen and businesswomen.

Basically, we should be creating a lot of businessmen and businesswomen in Trinidad and Tobago, and encouraging them to expand their business throughout the Caribbean and throughout the world. That is what we should be doing. We are not supposed to be fighting one another. We are tigers. We are business tigers in the West. Look at what we have been doing in terms of methanol, ammonia and LNG! Look at where we are in the world! We should be training our businessmen and businesswomen to take on the world. That is what we are supposed to be doing! So, I am saying that this programme is an attempt at creating new businessmen and new businesswomen from all sectors and all walks of life throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and taking them to the next level while in the process of transforming the entire landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. I am so suggesting.

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Mr. Speaker, what we hear on the other side is only talk, talk and they complain, complain. I know that some of the concerns have been the expansion of the project and the reach of the project, and that is what we continue to hear every time this debate comes up. I want to take you and the House back to 2002.

I wonder if you recall that when this whole aspect of this whole programme came up, around that time I recall that Members in the Opposition were telling their constituents and supporters that they should not align themselves with any of the Government's programmes. Do you all remember that? There was civil disobedience—come down and block up the town and that sort of thing—but some of their constituents did not take them on. The ones that did not take them on prospered and they are doing very well in Trinidad and Tobago, and the ones that took them on have problems. They stayed out of the House for an entire year. Do you all remember that? They stayed out of the Parliament for an entire year and now they are trying to get paid for it, when they were supposed to be in the House doing the people's work.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much and also Members for extending my time. I was making the point that those on the other side had indicated to their supporters that they should refuse everything from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and we would not last. Do you remember those days? That is what they said! Mr. Speaker, as I said, some of their constituents did not bother with them and some bothered with them. As a result, a lot of their constituents are running from them. They are leaving them in droves, because they felt they were misled, rather than be part and parcel of the excitement, and taking part in all the opportunities that this Government has to offer. They run! They run and tell their constituents do not take anything that this Government has to offer them. That is what they did! Now, they are claiming that we did not spread all the opportunities around, but that is untrue. The opportunities have always been there for every single citizen of this country. That is a fact! They will continue to be available to all and sundry in this nation.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Prime Minister walks throughout Trinidad and Tobago to meet the people—he recently met with the people of Oropouche, and

they now understand that they could benefit from these opportunities and the Government's programmes. When the hon. Prime Minister goes from area to area, telling the people throughout the length and breadth of this country that the programmes that the Government is giving are their programmes, they now understand what is taking place.

So, they are now getting a sense of what is taking place and their eyes are now being opened. They are seeing all the opportunities that obtain in this country with the economy doing so well and that they can benefit from them regardless of whether you are from Cedros, Toco, Mayaro or Laventille. The programmes of the People's National Movement, the programmes of this Government and the programmes of this country belong to every single citizen of this country. [*Desk thumping*] That is what is going on. This is the reason why everybody is running from the Opposition. Large numbers of their supporters have been going to the PNM and elsewhere. Areas that were once safe Opposition seats are no longer safe. The people in Trinidad and Tobago want service in their communities, and the Government is giving these people service. We are not perfect. We may make mistakes, but we are committed to upgrading the lives and the standard of living of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are committed by 2020 to making this nation a developed one.

Mr. Speaker, according to a comrade and a Senator on the other side, a Senator from upstairs recently said that he is the king. So, all of us Ministers and citizens are his subjects. That is what he said! Mr. Speaker, that summarizes their attitude on that side. That is why everybody is running from them. Do not take it from me, Mr. Speaker. Look at the whole back bench! The whole back bench is running from them too. It is duck and run. Mr. Speaker, even a former person who was in the Senate with them—a man who has made this country proud; a man who is a double world record champion—"he and all run". He said: "Foot do not deceive me, let me run from here." [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, to make matters worse, and to tell you how sour they are, a temporary Senator resigned and "run" from them. Where in the world would you hear a man who is getting a 10-days would run from them? That is what is happening to them! Everybody is saying bye, bye.

We understand now, as we are everywhere in the community—we are not perfect, we make mistakes—that our commitment and dedication to transforming this nation must never be questioned, because we are totally committed. [*Desk thumping*] We want to send a signal loud and clear to all the people in Trinidad and Tobago that we intend to make this nation a great one and help every single

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person. All the programmes like CEPEP are there for every single one of you; “toute bagai”. It is there for the nation, and we want you all on that side to come on board with us and let us take this place to the great nation we know that we are capable of being.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Gerald Yetming (*St. Joseph*): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join this debate on a Motion moved by my colleague, the Member for Caroni East, dealing with the CEPEP, and dealing specifically with the selection of contractors for the programme and the fact that the principles of good governance and financial management have not been applied. The Motion calls for condemning the Government for its lack of transparency, accountability and probity in the management of public funds.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to let the Member for Toco/Manzanilla know that for all the people who are running from the Opposition bench, there are many more people running from the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] They are running from them because of their inability to deal with the security of the people; running from them because they have been unable to keep prices down—pauperization of people; [*Desk thumping*] and running from them for all kinds of reasons. I want to let him know that they are all running to the Congress of the People [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Toco/Manzanilla made the point on at least two occasions, as did the Member for Arima, which suggested that the Member for Arima, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment is the one who called on the Auditor General to do this audit. I want to say that did not happen. [*Desk thumping*] I want to quote from the report prepared by the Auditor General.

The Auditor General said in a report under “Audit Rationale”:

“Further, over the period 2003 March to 2004 March there had been extensive media coverage of the operations of the Programme. Specific areas addressed in the media included:

- the systems employed in the selection of contractors and workers of the Programme;
- the impact of the programme on the environment, and
- the social impact of the CEPEP in terms of national employment levels.

As a result, this Department undertook a preliminary research of the CEPEP to better understand the Programme and its administration. Arising from this preliminary research, it was decided to conduct a Special Audit of the CEPEP...”

Mr. Speaker, I recall having asked the Auditor General to do an investigation into a regional body. When that special report was prepared it stated, as I believe that they would normally do, that this investigation and report was as a result of a request made by the Minister of Finance or made by the Minister of so and so in a letter dated so and so. It is clear! This report says "as a result of extensive media coverage..." So, I want to put to bed, this suggestion being made that the Government and this particular Minister requested this report. That is not so.

Mr. Boynes: With respect to that particular point that you have raised, what I will do is clear the air on that particular matter on another occasion through one of my colleagues; that particular point that you have raised.

Mr. Singh: Are you going to backdate a letter? [*Laughter*]

Mr. G. Yetming: The Member for Toco/Manzanilla came up with a number of suggestions with respect to how this programme should be improved. I wish that with the Minister sitting next to him, would whisper those suggestions to her or that he meet with her in Cabinet and tell her those things. Coming and outlining what in his view are the ways in which that programme could be improved does not help us. Unless the Minister could accept those recommendations and put them in, we are just talking all kinds of things with no meaning.

The Member for Toco/Manzanilla also took some time this afternoon to talk about the fact that there is some debate going on with respect to the role of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment versus the role of SWMCOL in the execution of this programme. I got the impression that he was suggesting that the debate is still ongoing and a memorandum of understanding is now being concluded between SWMCOL and the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. Presently, there is a SWMCOL ad appearing in the newspaper that talks about the benefit of CEPEP, and it suggests that SWMCOL is still in charge of CEPEP.

When the Member for Arima spoke in this debate, this is what she had to say. In fact, she spoke about Cabinet approving in August, 2005 a special unit within her ministry named Customer Service and Facilitating Unit to deal with CEPEP and other things; whatever the other things might be. She went on to talk about another note that was submitted to Cabinet in 2006 for the establishment of a limited liability company with the responsibility for the management and execution of CEPEP

Mr. Speaker, the Minister went on to say:

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“In my budget contribution last year I indicated that the Government had taken a decision to separate CEPEP from SWMCOL”.

In fact, she went on at length to explain why SWMCOL was being removed from dealing with CEPEP. She talked about what their core function ought to be in dealing with waste disposal and so forth.

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment went on to talk about the fact that the Ministry of Finance was in the process of discussion for the purpose of ensuring that the company is set up in a way that is transparent and so on. The point is that you really do not know what to believe when the people on the other side speak. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister with the responsibility for CEPEP said that Cabinet took a decision to establish a new unit in her ministry; that Cabinet took a decision to establish a new limited liability company; that Cabinet took a decision that CEPEP must be separated and removed from SWMCOL; and that SWMCOL must be left alone to do what she defined their core function was originally intended to be. Now, we are hearing about a memorandum of understanding and some debate that is still taking place as if Cabinet did not exist and Cabinet made no decision.

Mr. Speaker, in the last debate in this House, I submitted what I believe, and most people in this country believe, that the Government have created and facilitated the breakdown of security in this country. There could be no doubt that they created and facilitated the rapid deterioration of the security of the citizens in this country. The statistics will tell you that. Whether we speak about the first appointment of their first Minister of National Security or we speak about the involvement of community leaders, whatever it might be, they have to take full responsibility for that.

2.30 p.m.

In another debate I raised a similar point that the Government, in fact, also facilitated and have contributed significantly to the erosion of the spending power of poor people in this country and the erosion of wealth of the entire population. [*Desk thumping*] And they have done that through the fact that they have been the main culprit in the escalation in the price of food and construction material in this country. They caused it.

Insofar as the wealth of the country is concerned we had a lengthy debate on the fact that in 2005 when the stock market crashed in this country, the people of this country, not just wealthy people, but poor people lost \$30 billion of their wealth almost overnight.

I have submitted, I am submitting and I will continue to submit because we have not heard the last of this point as yet; that this Government has created and is still facilitating the loss of billions of dollars of the wealth of this country through waste, through theft and through corruption—[*Desk thumping*]*—*and they are doing it largely through the state enterprise sector, of which SWMCOL is one. They created these 15 state enterprises because they wanted to expedite projects; they were anxious to make things happen, which is fine, except by virtue of the way they went about it. They have also expedited the theft of billions of dollars of this country's money. The unfortunate thing is that some of them know about it; some of them suspect it and most of them are deeply concerned about it. I know that for a fact; they talk to me too.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear on what our position is on CEPEP; let me be clear about it. The Government, any government and certainly a Congress government must be deeply concerned about the vulnerable in the society; must take care of them; must take care of those who are unemployable; must take care of those who cannot be employed. Few of us know what it is for a man—as we call it, "big hard back" man—to go home and tell his wife and children, "I do not have money to feed you"; few of us know that. Few of us know what it is like for a single mother to tell her children that they cannot be fed. I know of one situation where this lady had to pick leaves from her yard, boil them in water, sweeten that with sugar and that is what her children had to sustain themselves on for days. I do not know how many of us in this House know what that feels like.

CEPEP conceptually was a good idea. I do not think anybody could question that and I do not think that is up for debate. The problem is that this Government started off with the wrong intent. If the intent had been to take care of the vulnerable; to look after them; to develop them; to get them out of poverty, then we would not have been in the situation we are in today, and I will explain that. If that was your first; if that was your primary; if that was your substantial intent that would have been fine.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am submitting to you and to this House that their intent was not to assist the poor and unemployed, but it was to enrich their friends and supporters. [*Desk thumping*] It was not only to enrich their friends and supporters; it was to create that dependency syndrome; the enslavement of poor people—[*Desk thumping*]*—*so that they will continue to be dependent on that Government, all for the purpose of personal power.

Some of those on the other side are aware of it; that it is the very same CEPEP worker who will sustain Mr. Manning as the political leader of the PNM, as much

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as he believes it will help sustain him as Prime Minister of this country, because if anybody decides to challenge Mr. Manning for leadership it is those CEPEP workers whom they have arranged into what they call—these little units—the cell units of the party; party branches. It is those people who would ensure that in any vote for leadership Mr. Manning will win, and Dr. Rowley knows that.

Dr. Rowley: What you calling my name for?

Mr. G. Yetming: I will call it again in a little while.

Hon. Member: "You ah bad John? You ah bad John?"

Dr. Rowley: Leave me out of your argument, please. You leave me out of your foolishness.

Mr. G. Yetming: That is why from time to time you will see these CEPEP rallies organized by the Prime Minister; it is ready to consolidate his support within the PNM. If the primary intent behind CEPEP was to take care of poor people and the disadvantaged, then the people of CEPEP who were employed from way back in 2002 would have been far better off in their lives today than they are at the moment. But as I said, the original intent, the primary intent was the enrichment of friends and supporters. I will illustrate that by the manner in which they went about to set this thing up.

I want to refer to the contribution of the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, when she spoke in this debate. The Minister admitted that—in her words—somewhere along the line some of the objectives were not met. The Minister indicated that her intention was to expand the programme simply because in its initial setting up, whilst it was intended to be national in scope—which was not the case—and it was necessary to ensure that the programme was extended throughout Trinidad and Tobago. So the Minister had acknowledged that the original intent was not met. The Minister went on to say that the expansion of the programme would not take place because the Auditor General and the Special Audit Unit of the Ministry of Finance were still continuing their investigations and until those investigations were completed and they submitted their final report, they would be doing nothing further.

The Auditor General's Report covered a period up to the end of 2004. The Special Audit Report from the Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance took the report to the end of 2005; we are in 2007. The Minister contributed to this debate in March 2007, and we are still hearing in spite of all that had been said before in the previous reports about the weaknesses, the breaches; she is now

saying, still at this stage, that investigations are still taking place and in essence we will do nothing further until the investigations are completed.

I point that out to say, Mr. Speaker, that the original intent, which is to employ people, take care of the vulnerable in the society—and the vulnerable exists in every area in all the 36 constituencies in Trinidad and Tobago—and if the Minister has accepted that the original intent was not met because they did not do it throughout Trinidad and Tobago in 2002, and in 2007 she is still talking about awaiting a further report before she spreads the programme through all the 36 constituencies to deal with the poor and the vulnerable in all 36 constituencies; it suggests to me, and it should suggest to everybody that the intent is not for the poor, but their job right now is to protect the 107 contractors. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on one or two areas of the report because this is where the major breaches took place. Under the “Selection of Contractors,” and I am only going to deal with one or two areas of the reports because previous speakers had gone into a lot of detail. What the Auditor General said in her report, is that there was no tender policy for CEPEP in respect of the selection of contractors and other service providers; there was no tender policy; and this is at the time that this report was prepared. This report was prepared and submitted some time, I believe, in 2005.

In spite of the fact that there was no tender policy for CEPEP, by December 2002, 107 contractors had been selected, but it is more interesting than that. The Auditor General reported that SWMCOL's sole selective tendering procedures were employed in selecting a consultant to provide services with regard to the selection of contractors capable of undertaking environmental waste projects. The consultant engaged by that sole selective tender was engaged by the Chairman, himself, Mr. Ray Braithwaite, and it was not a decision of the board. So, Mr. Ray Braithwaite, in his own singular authority, without Board approval, using a sole selective tender process for which incidentally there were no tender procedures and there were no procedures that prescribed a sole selective tender process, appointed a consultant to provide services for the selection of contractors.

The Auditor General goes on to say, a consultancy firm, the one selected by sole selective tender, chaired the meeting at which selections of CEPEP contractors were made. So this report says it was not Braithwaite who did it, but Braithwaite appointed by sole selective tender, a consultant; the consultant appointed all the contractors and that SWMCOL was represented at this meeting. They went about it in a disguised, veiled process to deceive. It was an act of deceit.

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I come back to the original point; CEPEP was not created—they did not go through all that thinking and all that kind of process and all that kind of accelerating of a procedure to develop people; to make them more employable; to take them out of any dependency on what may be considered basic labour. Instead they diverted their energies, rather than to the employee and their development, to try to get the process in such a fashion so that their people would get the contracts, for it has been reported here many times that an advertisement appeared in the print media on June 26, 2002 with a closing date of June 30. So an ad appeared in the paper on June 26 for people to apply to be contractors with a closing date of four days later.

They went through all kinds of underhand processes to want to come and suggest now that, wait a minute, we advertised, but is this where their consultant probably helped them in developing this deceitful process? This report goes on to speak about the fact that their sole selective tendering procedures were also employed in selecting uniform providers and the sole selective tendering procedures were also employed in the selecting of trucking contractors, and the report is riddled.

While the Member for Toco/Manzanilla might be correct in saying that the word “corruption” does not appear in those letters, anybody with first standard education reading this report would see corruption before their eyes. [*Desk thumping*] And the problem with that statement is, that is how it hides what they try to do. He pretends he does not see it; he does not see the word “corruption” mentioned in the report. So, as far as he is concerned, there is no corruption.

I would concede that the Member for Arima, through the Ministry of Finance, might have requested the Central Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance to do the following audit; I would concede that. But that report which was done by in-house auditors—in-house meaning within the Ministry of Finance—which covered the period to September 2005 revealed a host of financial irregularities; a host of them.

I have not heard a word in this debate that reassures me that these hosts of financial irregularities have been attended to. This report of the Central Audit Committee of the Ministry of Finance talks about the inadequacy of internal control and about the fact that much of the financial data in CEPEP to the year that their audit covered, has not been seen.

Mr. Speaker, I will make a couple of references, only to make the point that this programme on the basis of what was seen and not seen by the Ministry of

Finance could be considered to have been riddled with corruption. The Ministry of Finance auditors spoke about the fact that workers without identification card numbers and bank accounts were engaged, which is a breach of their system. In the words of the Audit Committee:

“may be indicative of ‘dummies’ on the payroll”.

So, the people in the Ministry of Finance Audit Committee are saying that by virtue of the fact that a lot of workers who were employed did not have ID cards and bank account numbers, and the absence of those things were a breach of your system, it may be indicative of dummies on the payroll.

The words “dummies” and “ghost gangs” have appeared in this report on at least six occasions. I quote:

“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.”

Not my words, the words of Ministry people. They go on to say that the source document for payroll generation is the contractors’ time sheets and that those sheets are supposed to be monitored in the field, and that there was no evidence that the monitoring officers ever signed those sheets. They go on to say:

“Consequently, evidence of the basic principle of the receipt of services which forms the basis for payment does not exist.”

And they go on to say, Mr. Speaker:

“Opportunities for payment for the services not provided (ghost gangs) exist and can go unnoticed.

There was no evidence that statutory deductions (PAYE, NIS, HEALTH SURCHARGE) are remitted to the appropriate authorities. Critical complete data on employees BIR number, identification number and NIS number are not maintained.”

Their statement, not mine:

“This can facilitate payment to ‘dummies’.”

They go on to talk about the area; the system has broken down completely and violations have been committed by 95 per cent of the contractors. [*Desk thumping*] They went on to say that on the basis of their analysis, 41.6 per cent of the expenditure in CEPEP reached to the worker.

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Their words. They said:

“Only 41.6 per cent of the expenditure reaches the unemployed and the poor.”

Only 41.6 per cent of the expenditure of \$1.6 billion reaches the unemployed and the poor. Translated, Mr. Speaker; 58.4 per cent; more than half of the \$1.6 billion goes to contractors. [*Desk thumping*] Rough calculation, at least \$850 million of that \$1.6 billion does not reach the poor. Therefore, if I come back to my original point; and if this is of such good intent, so well conceptualized, if their primary concern was for the poor and the unemployed, you would not have had a situation where, of \$1.6 billion only 41 per cent would reach the poor and more than \$850 million reach elsewhere.

This Government have contributed significantly; they have created the opportunities; they are facilitating the rape of this country. [*Desk thumping*] How could SWMCOL have gone out there and selected contractors, service providers, uniform suppliers and so on without proper tendering procedures? They could do that because it was always this Government's intention to ensure that these state enterprises do not come with any control whatsoever; always their intent.

When they created these 15 special purpose companies to deal with the more than \$60 billion in projects—that figure might be wrong by now, but the last number that I had—it was always with the intention that they would not come under the control of the Central Tenders Board and that they would be able to proceed in an anyhow fashion, granting contracts anyhow they wished.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have raised this before; I will raise it again and this will not be the last time: the Government came to Parliament in 2004 with a Green Paper for new procurement rules to govern these same 15 state enterprises. When they came with that I will tell you what the Member for Diego Martin Central said. He made a statement to Parliament where he said that there were inherent weaknesses in the current procurement system. He talked about prevailing deficiencies in the legislative framework and so on.

He talked about the Government and he made reference to Vision 2020, setting as a goal, a quality of governance reflecting the highest standards of ethics, transparency and accountability; words of deceit. He comes and he tables this Green Paper in September of 2004; in August of 2005 they came with their White Paper, *Reform of the Public Sector Procurement Regime*. In the budget statement read by the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister for 2006; he said that the legislation following this White Paper would come to Parliament by the end of 2006—and it never happened.

When he came back to Parliament with his budget statement of 2007 he said that the legislation would now come in the early part of 2007. We are now in the latter part of the fiscal 2007 and that legislation still has not arrived. I have made reference to a particular point on this legislation; I am going to make it again because it would point to what their intentions are.

3.00 p.m.

The White Paper made reference to a regulator—the White Paper that the Government produced on the basis of which the legislation was to come—made reference to a regulator, and spoke of the regulator being appointed by the President after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Meaning, the appointment of that regulator would be in his own deliberate judgment, and in spite of that Minister Enill in his contribution to a debate in October 2006 had this to say:

“The establishment of a regulatory agency and an independent regulator with a monitoring and auditing function was to take place. At this point in time interviews for the position of procurement of a regulator had been conducted and a nominee is expected to be announced soon.”

So in spite of the fact, and in fact when I raised this in a previous debate, nobody on the Government side responded to that point, so that in spite of the fact that the White Paper spoke of an independent regulator appointed by the President in his own deliberate judgment, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance spoke about people being interviewed for this position and somebody was soon to be selected.

It points to the fact, Mr. Speaker, that when we are told that there is a lobby by certain state enterprise chairmen, a lobby against that very regulator and the very independence of that regulator, I have warned the Government that when they eventually come with that Bill, we would not wish to see that independent regulator and how he is to be appointed, and his role, function and his responsibility watered in any way. [*Desk thumping*]

Just a few days ago Transparency International had issued a press release calling for two things. They have called for a public enquiry into CEPEP and they have called on the Government once more to bring the legislation to Parliament to deal with this procurement regime. [*Desk thumping*] It cannot continue where we have, as in the case of UDeCott, and as we have in the case of SWMCOL with CEPEP, we cannot continue where we have—and I guess the intention of this Government is that by the time the legislation does come, and I am sure they are coming with a

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watered-down version, all the money would have gone. [*Desk thumping*] And their greatest concern is that they do not want to prevent whatever is happening from happening. They do not want to stop the facilitation of the corruption and the theft of public moneys. [*Desk thumping*]

Only in today's *Guardian* we are reading about an overrun in the waterfront project of \$1.8 billion.

Mr. Manning: That has been refuted by [*Inaudible*] You know that cannot be so.

Mr. G. Yetming: Well, we would wait for the Government to make a statement.

Mr. Manning: It was already done today. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. G. Yetming: When the project was originally announced—I do not know what statement was made, but I want to have a say on this. [*Interruption*] The Minister of Planning and Development made an announcement in 2005 for the award of the contract to the tune of \$1.67 billion for the Waterfront Project. We are now being told about this bank having raised US \$375 million for the same project; \$2.3 billion [*Interruption*] from the \$1.6 billion; now, what the *Guardian* article suggested, is that \$2.3 billion is in addition to moneys that had already been lent on the project. It did not suggest that this new facility might have been partly to repay the initial facility, but even if the new facility is the amount of the project, that project is now therefore \$2.3 billion and not the \$1.6 billion which suggests that the project has gone up by \$700 million. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for St. Joseph for giving way. Just to indicate that the very bank that has been responsible for raising the money and for which, incidentally, an international award was received, indicated in their statement that the project was on schedule and within budget.

Dr. Rowley: They do not want to hear that.

Mr. Manning: The bank itself said that.

Mr. Imbert: And he always—

Mr. Singh: That does not deny this reality. [*Crosstalk*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for extending my time. I do not want any bank, local or foreign, to tell me about any project in Trinidad and Tobago, a state project in particular. [*Desk thumping*] I want the Government to tell me about it, and if the original contract for this Waterfront Project was \$1.67 billion and it is now \$2.3 billion. Or is it \$3.4 billion? You want to tell me which it is?

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for giving way. The original design/build contract remains the same at approximately \$1.7 billion. From my understanding the person who wrote the newspaper article added the bridge finance to the long-term financing and came up with that ridiculous figure. In other words he did not understand that the bridge financing was retired with the long-term financing, something you as a former banker I am sure will understand.

Mr. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, when you deduct the bridging from the current facility you do not get \$1.67 billion.

Mr. Manning: There are other charges. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. G. Yetming: There will be a lot of time to talk about that! The facts are known—

Hon. Member: But we could let you know now.

Mr. G. Yetming:—it appeared in the *Guardian* this morning. It is obvious the Government has made a statement and at a subsequent date we are going to have a lot more to say about it. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: You are wrong already.

Mr. G. Yetming: But I want to come back to the point about the free rein being given to state enterprises to do what they want with billions of this country's money in the absence of a proper procurement regime. [*Interruption*] And I want to come back—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. G. Yetming:—for a quick minute to the Brian Lara Stadium.

Mr. Singh: Why you do not answer the question, Member for Toco/Manzanilla?

Mr. G. Yetming: The Member for Toco/Manzanilla does not have a clue—

Mr. Singh: He is clueless in Toco.

Hon. Member: Calder Hart, chairman of Nipdec and UDeCott.

Mr. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, in the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 2006 dated April 26, 2007, just a couple of weeks ago, tabled in Parliament under Infrastructure Development Fund, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, the Auditor General reported that amounts totalling \$275,332,460 were released to UDeCott; this is with respect to the Brian Lara Stadium and it says:

“Evidence was not seen that the necessary project review systems were put in place to ensure compliance with the directives of the Comptroller of Accounts, further only disbursement schedules were produced for audit inspection. The project briefs, project milestones, performance measurements and targets, contract executed between the company, UDeCott and the ministry, as well as a statement from the ministry indicating measures in place for managing the company were not seen. This is not in accordance with the requirements of paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Comptroller of Accounts Circular No. 12 dated November 09, 2005.”

The point is, Mr. Speaker, the ministry does not have a clue of what is going on with the Brian Lara Stadium and therefore the Minister is in no position to come and tell us anything about “no” Brian Lara. This Brian Lara Stadium is controlled by UDeCott, by Calder Hart and by somebody else in the Government—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: That is right.

Mr. G. Yetming: The main spokesperson on this Brian Lara Stadium today is Mr. Calder Hart. [*Interruption*] Apart from the initial announcement which was made in May 2005 when the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs made the announcement of Cabinet's decision to build this Tarouba facility at \$850 million of which the Brian Lara Stadium was supposed to be \$275—he made the announcement; he said it was a Cabinet decision—he said that the original construction in Union Park was not feasible, acceptable or advisable and it had been moved to Tarouba.

Hon. Member: Who advised him?

Mr. G. Yetming: So it is disingenuous for him to come and say that it is the move across to Tarouba that has escalated the cost. At the time that Cabinet took

this decision on the basis of the information that he provided they knew that it was in Tarouba. But, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Calder Hart in an article dated May 21, said that the \$275 million estimate was for the site in Marabella and that the estimate for the site in Tarouba was \$326 million.

Mr. Ramsaran: Somebody is not speaking the truth.

Mr. G. Yetming: But the Minister, when he announced his project in 2005 said that the move had already taken place, and he announced it at \$275 million, so for Calder Hart to come and talk about it [*Interruption*] well, because of the move it is now \$326 million, but the most interesting thing I will repeat here, I think I said it before, is that Mr. Calder Hart said that this complex is based on an entirely new design concept for Trinidad and Tobago and it is only when construction begins that the true cost will be calculated.

Mr. Ramsaran: And you believe that?

Mr. G. Yetming: And if that has been applied to Tarouba, it is probably applied to waterfront which is why we are seeing what we are seeing. From \$1.6 billion to either \$3.2 or \$3.4 billion [*Interruption*] Well, we are going to hear. The point is that all of this, somebody described the activities of UDeCott as if they are some CIA. The question of transparency does not exist. You know that! Even your own people, Mr. Prime Minister, do not know what is going on with a lot of these projects. [*Interruption*] But you know, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the free rein being given by this Government to these state enterprises.

Mr. Speaker, \$100 million was placed on deposit at the Clico Investment Bank by the Housing Development Corporation.

Mr. Singh: You hear that?

Mr. G. Yetming: I want the Minister of Housing and I want the Minister of Finance to establish whether a \$100 million deposit was placed at the Clico Investment Bank by the Housing Development Corporation of which Andre Monteil is the chairman—

Mr. Ramsaran: Was the chairman.

Mr. G. Yetming:—or was the chairman, but was chairman at the time that this transaction took place. I want to know whether that \$100 million, the terms and conditions of that deposit and I would like to know, and I think the public, because this is public money—

Dr. Rowley: That is your final question?

Mr. G. Yetming:—and we ought to know whether this \$100 million was tendered out, so to speak, whether bids were invited from the financial institutions for taking—we are not talking about \$5 million or \$10 million, we are dealing with \$100 million and who took the decision and under what condition was this money paid. But do you know the interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, about this deposit, is that Andre Monteil and/or a subsidiary which he controls, was granted a loan by the Clico Investment Bank for \$78 million for the acquisition of the shares in Home Mortgage Bank?

Mr. Singh: Hear that?

Mr. G. Yetming: The Home Mortgage Bank shares were placed as collateral at the Clico Investment Bank. Clico Investment Bank did not have the liquidity—

Mr. Singh: Monteil calling you.

Mr. G. Yetming:—to disburse this loan and therefore, Andre Monteil the major beneficiary of this loan caused the Housing Development Corporation of which he was chairman at the time, caused \$100 million of state money to be placed on deposit [*Desk thumping*] with the Clico Investment Bank so that, that loan could be disbursed.

Mr. Speaker, this is himself to himself, except that public moneys can now be said to have been channelled to this financial institution to fund a personal transaction of Mr. Andre Monteil or the company that he controls.

Dr. Rowley: Would the Member give way? Mr. Speaker, I was asking *sotto voce* a question of the Member, whether he would file a question which would require a response from me to the questions he raised, but since the Member has said that the chairman has done that, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record here that such a statement is not correct and further clarification would be forthcoming. It is unfortunate that the Member would come in the privilege of this House and make that statement, and I challenge him to make that statement about the chairman outside the Parliament.

Mr. Singh: Nonsense!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Singh: Facilitating corruption.

Dr. Rowley: You shut up!

Hon. Member: Everything is to get in your back pocket. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Do not let this sitting get out of hand, please. The Member for St. Joseph is on his feet, he is making a contribution, restrain yourselves, please.

Mr. G. Yetming: I am calling, Mr. Speaker, on the Minister of Finance, I am calling also on the Governor of the Central Bank, because while that loan of \$78 million to Mr. Monteil or his company might have met either prudential or regulatory standards—might have—because there is a limit. There is a limit to which financial institutions could lend to employees and to directors. I believe it is 5 per cent for unsecured loans, 5 per cent of paid-up capital and statutory reserves, and in the case of a secured loan, 25 per cent of its capital. I do not know, maybe those prudential and regulatory limits have been met, but the more important question is whether such a deposit—when did such a deposit originate? Under what terms and conditions? And in fact [*Interruption*] a serious conflict of interests situation arose, a personal enrichment situation has arisen. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: You defending that.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate that a statement has already been made by me on this matter in this honourable House. I had indicated to the Parliament and to the national community that the matter is under investigation, and I would now wish to indicate that the investigation includes statements from the Central Bank, statements from the HDC, statements from the Home Mortgage Bank and statements from another institution that is involved—

Hon. Member: SEC.

Mr. Manning:—SEC, the Securities and Exchange Commission. It also includes, Mr. Speaker, an opportunity for those against whom statements have been made to respond to those statements in the interest of equity and fairness, and the report when available would be laid on the Table of this honourable House.

Mr. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, the question of this deposit to facilitate this loan has not been made public before and I simply wanted the Prime Minister, in particular, to investigate that transaction [*Interruption*] and a statement from the company I expect he would find not acceptable unless he checks deep into the transaction. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I continue to be of the view, I continue to be strongly of the view, and I think this view is shared by many people in the population, that this Government has embarked on a series of massive transactions in an environment that I submit has made, is making it extremely easy for there to be waste. There is a view that the Government believe that the moneys are flowing and that they

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can literally do anything they want with them and anyhow they want, and it is the absence of proper legislation, it is the absence of proper checks and balances that has created a situation, as they did with crime, as they did with people's personal wealth and as they are now dealing with the country's wealth, created a situation where a lot of this money is going into the wrong pockets.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[*Mr. Imbert stands*]

Mr. Speaker: Are you making a contribution?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Then so be it.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I join this debate to deal with some general issues that have been raised by the Member for St. Joseph and I do apologize to my colleague, the Member for Tunapuna, who I am sure will make a sterling contribution as we continue through this debate.

But, Mr. Speaker, it was absolutely necessary for me to intervene or for some other Member of the Government to intervene, because the Member for St. Joseph, not for the first time has put misinformation into the system and has created an impression that this Government is profligate and engaged in squandermania. A false impression, and not for the first time! I remember with the rapid rail contract where the Member for St. Joseph came to this Parliament and said that the maintenance cost of that facility would be in the billions. Had no information, whatever, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: He forgot to find out.

Hon. C. Imbert:—it is in the hundreds of millions and it is revenue neutral.

Now let me deal with this piece of misinformation put into the system by the Member for St. Joseph. Today, Mr. Speaker, FirstCaribbean International Bank issued a statement as follows:

“Clarification of *Trinidad Guardian* story published May 25, 2007

FirstCaribbean wishes to clarify a number of errors in the story entitled ‘\$1.8 billion overrun on waterfront project.’ which appeared on the front page and page five of The *Guardian* Newspaper on May 25, 2007.”

And these are the facts, and this is not a politician saying this, this is a bank and I know the Member for St. Joseph as a former banker [*Interruption*] will know that a banker will not likely put out a statement like this.

“The total financing raised was US \$375 million and not US \$551 million.”

“The total financing raised”—this would be by FirstCaribbean International Bank—for the waterfront project “was US \$375 million and not US \$551 million.”

And it goes on:

“The interim financing of US \$176 million provided short-term funding for the project which was fully repaid by the proceeds of the US \$375 million long-term financing. The editor's conclusion that the total cost of the project was US \$551 million is therefore erroneous.”

And I would add, totally false. And anybody who has built a house—I will go into that in a while—will understand the concept of bridge financing. If you go to a bank to borrow money to build a house you get short-term financing called bridge financing. And any banker worth his salt will know that the bridge financing is retired on the completion of the project or when long-term mortgage financing is arranged and it is paid off by the long-term financing. Any banker worth his salt would know that, and I am certain that the Member of St. Joseph is aware of that with respect to this particular matter.

Mr. Singh: You still had a cost overrun.

Mr. C. Imbert: It is even mischievous, mischievous in the extreme; it is politically deceitful for an experienced banker to come into this House and propagate this kind of misinformation.

And I wish to repeat that what the person who wrote the *Guardian* story did was to add the short-term financing and the long-term financing to come up with this preposterous \$3.4 billion figure. It is simply not true! And you see, it is the silly season.

Mr. Yetming: So what is the \$2.3?

Dr. Rowley: Relax, relax.

Hon. C. Imbert: It is unfortunate—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Member: Relax, listen to him.

Hon. C. Imbert:—that the *Guardian* [*Interruption*] a paper for which I have respect found itself in this position, where it published that nonsense on its front page. These newspapers go all over the world, Mr. Speaker.

Now let me deal with the other bit of misinformation that the Member for St. Joseph sought to put into the system in order to try to prove some point that the Government of which I am proud to be a Member is involved in massive overspending and squandermania. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, and this is public knowledge, that a contract in the sum of \$1.67 billion was awarded to Bouygues for the Waterfront Development Project. That project involves, and this is also contained in UDeCott's statement:

- 2 twenty six storey office towers totalling 900,000 sq. ft.
- 55,000 square feet Conference centre...
- 30,000 sq. ft. retail space
- A seven storey 1200 capacity car park facility
- A 22 storey, 428-room Hyatt hotel
- 50ft. wide landscape promenade

and a new breakfast shed among other things.

It is public knowledge that the contract awarded to Bouygues—I believe the correct name is Bouygues Travel Publiques; it was Batiment in that particular case, Bouygues Travel Publiques is the parent company—was \$1.67 billion. And I am advised that that figure is a fixed price and it has remained constant. [*Desk thumping*] And I want to repeat that. The contract for the Waterfront Development Project, which I want to repeat, is two 26-storey office towers; a 22-storey, 428-room Hyatt hotel; a 55,000 square foot conference centre, among many other things, including 1200 car park spaces, remains fixed at \$1.67 billion.

And the hon. Member for St. Joseph, also as a former Minister of Finance will be aware, when the cost of a project is quoted—because he would have seen this in many Cabinet notes, in the many Cabinet meetings that he would have attended—it is quoted exclusive of VAT and there is a reason for that, because VAT is not a cost to the Government. There is \$308 million in value added tax that is going to come back to the Government. I hope the hon. Member for St.

Joseph is now beginning to understand where the \$2.3 billion figure comes from, and I am going to build it up for him.

3.30 p.m.

The fixed-price contract for the Waterfront Development Project is \$1.67 billion. Demolition of existing port infrastructure, relocation of utilities; facilities, et cetera, construction of the new breakfast shed and site preparation, \$30 million; finance charges, \$100 million; \$100 million on a \$2.3 billion financing is quite reasonable. I am sure the honourable former banker would be aware of that. Outfitting and equipping of the Hyatt Regency Hotel, which formed no part of the construction contract that has been awarded to Bouygues Batiment, is part of the Hyatt Regency costing in terms of operationalizing of the hotel.

The Waterfront Development Project is a construction contract. There is \$100 million for the outfitting and equipping of the hotel. I am sure that the Member for St. Joseph would be aware that you cannot run a hotel without putting in furniture and all the various pieces of equipment required to operate a hotel; 428 rooms. [*Crosstalk*] Does the hon. Member for St. Joseph think that a hotel could be operated without beds; without chairs? It is absurd!

In addition, you have \$60 million for the project manager, that is Geneva; again, \$60 million to manage. Geneva is the project manager, not the contractor. That is \$60 million to manage a project costing in excess of \$2 billion; it is a reasonable sum. [*Crosstalk*] The project management fee is only 3 per cent of the construction cost; that is a perfectly reasonable fee, completely in line with international norms, and, I dare say, a bit on the low side in terms of project management fees.

The Member also knows that when you are quoting the cost of a project, you quote the cost exclusive of value added tax (VAT) and you quote the cost exclusive of consultants' fees; that is well known. Do not come and try to fool people. I could go back in every budget that the former administration brought to this House and see where every single project was identified in this manner: exclusive of VAT and exclusive of consultants' fees.

Mr. Manning: Including the airport project.

Hon. C. Imbert: Yes, including that one.

Mr. Speaker, to round it up, UDeCott's fee for acting as the client and coordinating the project is \$50 million. That is the breakdown: \$1.67 billion, fixed price to Bouygues; \$30 million, demolition of existing port infrastructure, relocation

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of utilities, et cetera and construction of the new breakfast shed; \$100 million for finance charges; 100 million for outfitting and equipping the Hyatt Regency Hotel; \$300 million in VAT, which comes right back to the Treasury, so it is not a cost to the population; \$60 million in project management fees and \$50 million in UDeCott fees for being the client and seeking the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So there you have it.

Mr. Speaker, I am ashamed of the hon. Member for St. Joseph. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Standing Order 91 allows us to look at usage and procedure in the Parliament—in May's, in the Parliament of Great Britain—page 441 of the 23rd edition of May's. It says that a document which has been cited by a Minister ought to be laid on the Table, if it can be done without injury to the public interest; so we ask the Minister to lay both documents. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Manning: Look it here; that is no problem.

Mr. Rahael: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Sharma: What is it? You are killing time; you do not know the difference.

Mr. Rahael: You are a young boy in “dis ting”. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I think it is a misinterpretation of Standing Order 91. It is, in fact, a misinterpretation of Standing Order 91. You are referring to some other Standing Order that deals with the laying of documents. Standing Order 91 does not deal with that. I think there is one. If a Minister makes a statement and he is referring to a document, if it is available you can lay it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: That is what we are asking for.

Mr. Speaker: It is not covered by Standing Order 91. Do you have the documents available? Well, lay them on the Table. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I have just begun. I have only read the first paragraph of the statement from First Caribbean; the Member for Siparia is very previous.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You must lay things before.

Hon. C. Imbert: Do not be ridiculous; before I read this out I must give it to you? Do not be ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am reading from the press statement from FirstCaribbean International Bank, which I will happily circulate to this Parliament when I am finished.

“The total financing of US \$375 million raised includes both the cost of construction and furnishing and equipping the 428-room Hyatt Regency Hotel and the two 26-storey towers as highlighted in the FirstCaribbean release issued on May 24, 2007.”

So that was in a release issued yesterday; look at that; “dis ting” was published today?

“The Port of Spain Waterfront Development project...”

This is the bank speaking; they would not have lent the money for the project unless they had satisfied themselves of all this:

“is being executed under a fixed-price contract by Bouygues Batiment who is required to complete construction within specified time and cost parameters. So far as FirstCaribbean is aware, all of these conditions are being fulfilled.”

[*Desk thumping*]

“Take dat!” Is not me saying that, it is the FirstCaribbean International Bank. Let me repeat it:

“The Port of Spain Waterfront Development project is being executed under a fixed-price contract by Bouygues Batiment who is required to complete construction within specified time and cost parameters. So far as FirstCaribbean is aware, all of these conditions are being fulfilled.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Let us talk about Brian Lara.

Mr. Manning: “Relax nuh man”; we are talking about one thing at a time. “Hurry dog eat raw meat.”

Hon. C. Imbert: It continues:

“This financing was facilitated by FirstCaribbean International Banking & Financial Corporation Ltd., a financial institution incorporated in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The *Trinidad Guardian's* efforts to reach FirstCaribbean by telephone and by email, were made at 5.34 p.m. and 5.38 p.m. respectively, after the business day was over, thereby not giving us an opportunity to provide the editor with appropriate clarification and comment.”

Mr. Manning: “Yuh hear it?”

Hon. C. Imbert: I will repeat that:

“The *Trinidad Guardian*'s efforts to reach FirstCaribbean by telephone and by email, were made at 5.34 p.m. and 5.38 p.m. respectively, after the business day was over, thereby not giving us an opportunity to provide the editor with appropriate clarification and comment. [*Crosstalk*]

In all the circumstances...”

“I doh know why all yuh want me to read this out.”

Mr. Manning: Read it!

Hon. C. Imbert: No, “dem”.

“the article and especially its headline, was a complete misrepresentation of the facts and we call upon the editors to duly issue a retraction and apology with equal front page prominence.” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: “And dey getting a lawsuit also; dey getting a lawsuit today!” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Imbert: “Is not me saying this.” I do not know why “all yuh” want me to read this. Why do you want me to read this? “Is you make me read this.”

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. C. Imbert: The contact for those of you who want to find out if this is bona fide, authentic—even though I do not yet have the technology to reproduce the FirstCaribbean logo, I am satisfied that this is authentic—Debra Johnson, Head of Internal & Corporate Communications, FirstCaribbean International Bank, Barbados; telephone: 246 367 2248; fax: 246 421 7148 and email: debra.johnson@firstcaribbeanbank.com. You have it there. [*Crosstalk*] [*Member hands document to Clerk*] You could circulate that.

Mr. Speaker, UDeCott has issued a statement. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Read it!

Hon. C. Imbert: “De whole thing?”

Hon. Members: Read it!

Hon. C. Imbert: Pages you know.

Mr. Manning: Read it; “drop bomb”.

Hon. C. Imbert: It states:

“UDeCott: No cost overruns in Port of Spain International Waterfront Project

‘The Port of Spain International Waterfront project is absolutely on time and within budget’ according to UDeCott’s Chairman, Calder Hart.” [*Desk thumping*]

“All yuh sure all yuh want me to read this?”

Mr. Manning: Read it!

Hon. Members: Yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Imbert: “A bank come out and say dey want an apology; dat is theatre?”

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Hon. C. Imbert: It goes on:

“In responding to the headlines in today’s *Guardian* alleging a TT \$1.8 billion overrun on the Waterfront Project, Mr. Hart categorically dismissed the allegations labelling it as ‘Mischievous, utterly ridiculous and a complete misunderstanding of the principles of project financing.’” [*Crosstalk*]

I think he was talking about the Member for St. Joseph. [*Crosstalk*]

“It is highly unfortunate...” [*Interruption*]

Oh give me a break; you are a former banker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Yetming: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. C. Imbert: I have explained that and since “stick break in yuh ears”, I will explain it again:

“‘that upon announcement of the project financing winning an international award that anyone would have sought to put a negative spin on what is expected to become a Port of Spain landmark.’

Hart noted that interim or short-term financing for the Project in the amount of US \$176M was obtained from FCIB during the period December 2005 to June 2006. This decision to procure financing from FCIB was based on the fact that of all the financing proposals received, FCIB submitted the most competitive and attractive rates coupled with the ability to deliver within the timeframes required and the willingness to fund the deal without a Government Guarantee.”

They would not have agreed to finance this project without a Government guarantee, unless they were absolutely satisfied. I know that the Member for St. Joseph knows this, because I know that he has knowledge of project financing.

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The FirstCaribbean Bank would not have financed the Waterfront project without a Government guarantee until they were absolutely satisfied that a fixed-price contract was in place and that there was no risk whatsoever of cost overruns on the project.

Mr. Manning: Just take “dat”!

Hon. C. Imbert: If they thought that there was a risk of cost overruns they would have demanded a sovereign guarantee. The fact that they financed US \$375 million without a government guarantee means that they did the due diligence, they subjected the project documents to the necessary analysis and concluded that there was an appropriate fixed-price contract in place and that the possibility of cost overruns was nil. The Member for St. Joseph should know that.

Let me move on:

“This strategy of utilizing an interim short-term/bridge financing and replacing same with long-term funding is typically utilized in funding major construction projects.”

Let me repeat that:

“This strategy of utilizing an interim short-term/bridge financing and replacing same with long-term funding is typically utilized in funding major construction projects.”

In fact, the Member would know that typically on these projects you issue interim bonds for the bridge financing, which are then retired when the long-term permanent bonds are put in place. I am ashamed of him. [*Crosstalk*] I am ashamed of you; yes, wicked!

“In this particular project, the long-term financing was placed through Barclays Capital in conjunction with FCIB as financial advisor. The proposal submitted by FCIB and Barclays for financing on the US Private Placement Market, was the most innovative and cost efficient of all proposals received for funding in the domestic and foreign markets.

The Barclays/FCIB proposal, accepted by UDeCott...”

And subsequently accepted by the Government:

“represented a lower all in cost or lower interest rate than what was and is currently available on the domestic market. The financing was arranged for a term of 15.9 years at a fixed interest rate of 6.09 per cent on the US Private Placement Market...the transaction was oversubscribed on the US market and,

had the transaction been undertaken in the domestic market, it would have resulted in a significant interest in interest payments...

“therefore the decision to go to the US market to obtain the funding represented a savings of over 3 % per annum or TT \$70 million per year, increased international and regional interest and participation in the existing development programme...”

That was the decision to go to the US market:

“and the opportunity for UDeCott to access a wider market in the procurement of financing without the requirement of a Government Guarantee.”

The fact that UDeCott was able to get these terms, 16 years, 15.9 years and a 6.09 interest rate fixed over the term, says a lot for the confidence that foreign investors have in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and they did it without a government guarantee. [*Desk thumping*]

“Hart also pointed out that in order to access the US Private Placement Market, an extensive due diligence process was undertaken, with investors and their legal and financial experts examining and satisfying themselves with regard to the financial statements of UDeCott and all aspects of the project including the budget.

It is unfortunate that the reporter alleges that the project has overruns, as he has mistakenly added the cost of the short-term funding to the cost of the long-term funding without recognizing that a portion of the long term financing is always utilized to repay the short term financing.”

I will go back and use my example. Anybody who has gone to a bank to borrow money to build a house will know that you first get bridge financing, which you use to pay your contractor, and when your house is finished and you get your completion certificate, you then go to a mortgage institution to get long-term mortgage financing, which retires and pays off the bridge financing.

It is astonishing that persons do not understand this and it is incredible that the Member for St. Joseph pretended that he did not know this. [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*] I am being reminded that the editor of the *Business Guardian* should really know better. Adding bridge financing and long-term financing—I have never heard of that. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: That was not in the *Business Guardian*; it was in the daily *Guardian*.

Hon. C. Imbert: It is unheard of to add bridge financing and long-term financing to come up with some concocted figure. [*Crosstalk*] We proceed:

“...the long-term financing cost of US \$375 million includes not only the cost of construction but also the outfitting of the Hyatt hotel, VAT, taxes, duties and other relevant legal and regulatory costs...”

“Hart reiterated that the project, which is currently being undertaken on a design-build basis by Bouygues Batiment in conjunction with Home Construction Limited, HYATT Regency and TVS is within the budget and the fixed price contract sum.”

I want to repeat that:

“...the project, which is currently being undertaken on a design-build basis by Bouygues Batiment in conjunction with Home Construction Limited, HYATT Regency and TVS is within budget and the fixed price contract sum.

“...the project is proceeding on schedule. Construction on the twenty-two (22) storey Hyatt hotel is completed and interior fitting out is ongoing. Also the structure of the 1200 capacity car park is completed and work in respect of the first of the two twenty-six (26) storey office towers is currently up to the twenty-second (22) floor.

The second office tower which is targeted for completion in 2008, is currently at the second floor with a floor being completed every ten (10) days.”

"Yuh" see performance, every 10 days they are doing a floor.

“This project when completed will provide much needed parking and office space in the City, the largest conference centre in the English speaking Caribbean and will include:

- “The 22 storey, 428 room Hyatt hotel with a ballroom
- 2 twenty-six storey office towers totalling 900,000 sq ft.
- 55,000 square feet Conference center containing exhibition space
- 30,000 sq ft Retail space
- A seven storey 1200 capacity car park facility
- 50ft wide landscape promenade providing direct access to the waterfront
- The Breakfast shed...”

Already built:

- “with an open terrace providing a vista of the seafront.”

In the circumstances the article and especially its headline, was a complete misrepresentation of the facts and we call upon the editors..."

Again, UDeCott doing this as well:

"to duly issue a retraction and apology with equal front page prominence."

Let me go back to the price. [*Interruption*] [*Hon. C. Imbert hands a copy of the document to the Clerk*] [*Crosstalk*] I do not have any secrets; take it all. "Anything else yuh want?" "Yuh want de cover letter?"

Mr. Singh: [*Inaudible*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Please speak for yourself.

Mr. Manning: Tell us what you want. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Election date. [*Laughter*]

Hon. C. Imbert: It is public knowledge that the fixed-price contract for the construction of the facilities that I have just outlined—the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 428 beds; 22 storeys; two, 26-storey office towers, 900,000 square feet; 55,000 square feet of conference centre facilities, et cetera—is \$1.67 billion. Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Member for St. Joseph, "fixed" means "doh change". [*Laughter*] It is a fixed-price contract.

I repeat: FirstCaribbean would not have financed this project without a government guarantee, unless they had satisfied themselves that a fixed-price contract was robust and contained all the necessary controls and checks and balances to ensure that the project was completed within budget. I go on to give an account of the other elements now, for the third time. I hope I am not accused of repetition. As I said, "stick break in their ears", [*Laughter*] \$100 million for financing cost. The financing cost could never and is never included in the fixed-price construction cost; \$100 million for financing cost charges and fees; \$100 million for furnishing and equipping the hotel. The cost of furnishing a hotel is never included in the cost of constructing a hotel. These are two different things. [*Desk thumping*]

When you buy a house, do you get it with furniture? So \$100 million for furnishing and equipping the hotel; [*Interruption*] and they know that. Three hundred and eight million for value added tax, which is not a cost overrun and is not a cost to the Government, because all the VAT returns to the Treasury. And to think that a former Minister of Finance, a banker, pretending that he does not know that VAT comes back to the Treasury and is not a cost to the Government.

Mr. Manning: Mischievous!

Mr. Narine: Wicked!

Hon. C. Imbert: Project management fees, \$60 million, representing 3 per cent of the project cost, well in line with international norms and actually on the low side. Normally it is between 4 and 5 per cent, sometimes as much as 6 per cent that you pay for project management. In this case, project management fees are in the vicinity of 3 per cent, and then you have UDeCott's recovery for being the client's representative, coordinating the project, doing its own management, reporting to the Ministry of Planning and Development, reporting to the Ministry of Finance and making sure that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago gets value for money, \$50 million.

Let me go back again; I will take it in reverse order: UDeCott's recovering for coordinating the project and representing the client, \$50 million, which is 2 per cent of the budget. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Narine: "He using beads to count."

Hon. C. Imbert: Geneva's project management fee, \$60 million, 3 per cent of the project cost; value added tax, \$308 million, that is not a cost to the Government at all, it comes back to the Treasury; \$100 million for furnishing and equipping the hotel; \$100 million for finance charges and fees; \$30 million for demolition, relocation and reconstruction of the breakfast shed and a fixed-price contract, which remains fixed, \$1.67 billion. [*Desk thumping*] So whether they on that side want to hear or not, I am sure everybody who is watching this live broadcast has heard what the truth is. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Before you take your seat, and I did not want to steal your thunder, but do not forget that we are talking about CEPEP; so if a CEPEP contractor would have passed by this project then you would have become very relevant. [*Laughter*]

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph in debating on CEPEP and in his irrelevant and foolish attempt to paint all of us on this side as wastrels and profligate spenders, went into this project as an example.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that. All I am asking is that you sort of just mention it, en passant, at least to touch on the Motion before us. [*Laughter*]

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to disappoint you; the Waterfront Project is not a CEPEP contract. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the Motion before the House deals with the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme. It has been expanded to include many aspects of Government spending by the hon. Member for St. Joseph. [*Crosstalk*] I had to deal with him; I “cyar” take the misinformation. [*Crosstalk*]

There are some points that are being missed here. I do not think that there is anyone in Trinidad and Tobago who can honestly say that the introduction of CEPEP has not resulted in a cleaner Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Let us get serious here. Even the acidic, acerbic Member for Couva South—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no; it is Private Member's Day, you do not have to abuse the Member like that; you can use better language than that.

Dr. Rowley: Since he is not here we will not “buse” him; when he comes back.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am at your service.

Even the hon. Member for Couva South, the distinguished Member for Couva South—

Mr. Manning: Whom some describe as acerbic and acidic. [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert:—who I have heard is acerbic and acidic, even he has complimented the results of this programme. [*Desk thumping*] There is absolutely no doubt that the introduction of this programme has resulted in a transformation of the environment of Trinidad and Tobago. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

All of them in their private and quiet moments in the corridor and so on, would indicate to us on this side that they have noticed that CEPEP workers generally are hard at work. [*Interruption*] I am coming to that; you have to separate the issues. [*Crosstalk*] I am glad. You see; the hon. Member for Chaguaramas—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: Wonderful Chaguaramas! Get your jurisdiction straight.

Hon. C. Imbert: The hon. Member for Chaguanas has conceded, notwithstanding the fact that we elected him to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: Thank you for giving way. We are concerned about the money being spent by the Government on the contractors. I am on record as saying that we are supposed to increase the workers' salaries and make their conditions better, to improve the human aspect of it. This is about corruption in CEPEP and the contractors.

Dr. Rowley: What about the pigs?

Mr. Singh: They are in the trough with Monteil.

Dr. Rowley: You should know.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. C. Imbert: The hon. Member for Chaguanas cannot tell me what to say about CEPEP. I will say what I want to say. I will say what you on that side will not say. I will repeat; I will emphasize—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Just adjourn the Parliament.

Hon. C. Imbert: I can do that too, you know

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Do it.

Hon. C. Imbert: Do you want me to do that? Can I adjourn while I am on my feet? *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: You have seven more minutes; do you not want to finish?

Hon. C. Imbert: I could start on the next occasion.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. C. Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday 01, June 2007 at 1.30 p.m. on which day we will do the Finance Bill. There will also be a Finance Committee meeting on that morning for another Bill that will come in the following week, a supplementary Appropriation Bill. *[Crosstalk]* The Finance Committee meeting, as far as I am told, will be at approximately 11.30 a.m.

It is the Government's intention to do the Finance Bill on Friday which deals with the measures announced in the budget. In the following week we will be doing a Supplementary Appropriation Bill. Because there is a public holiday during that week I cannot give Members the exact date today, but you will be duly notified. The Finance Committee, as I said, will be at 11.30 a.m. on Friday and that is for the Bill for the following week.

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the question, there are four matters to be raised. Is there an agreement? There is an agreement.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, before you adjourn the House, I take the opportunity to wish each and every one a happy and safe Indian Arrival Day, which takes place prior to the House sitting on June 01. I am sure my colleagues, both on the

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front benches and Government benches will join with me in wishing the Indian community and all of Trinidad and Tobago a happy Indian Arrival Day.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, today is a very special day; it is African Liberation Day. I take the opportunity to congratulate the community. Last night I had the privilege of attending the Emancipation Support Committee's celebrations for African Liberation Day. So on this very auspicious day, I extend to the community in Trinidad and Tobago all the best wishes and congratulations with respect to that.

We will be moving into Indian Arrival Day and, of course, over the weekend and the next several days, all of Trinidad and Tobago will be involved in those celebrations as well. I congratulate that community and wish them well in their celebrations.

If I may just slip in very quietly, happy birthday to my political leader, Basdeo Panday.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the PNM, if I may be so bold, I extend the best wishes of the Members of the House on this side to the East Indian community and, indeed, the entire nation of Trinidad and Tobago, on the celebration of Indian Arrival Day.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly

Adjourned at 4.05 p.m.