

*Leave of Absence*

*Monday, June 30, 2008*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Monday, June 30, 2008*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members requesting leave of absence: Mr. Winston Peters (Mayaro), for the period June 27—July 01; Mr. Stanford Callender (Tobago West), for the period June 30—July 03; Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (Couva South), from today's sitting; and Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (Point Fortin), from today's sitting of the House. The leave which these Members seek is granted.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Annual audited financial statements of Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited for the year ended December 31, 2007.

*[The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert)]*

2. Annual audited financial statements of Seafood Industry Development Company Limited for the period ended September 30, 2007. *[Hon. C. Imbert]*

*Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, the Government is in a position to answer one-third of the questions on the Order Paper. We are in a position to answer questions No. 171 and No. 172 and I ask that the others be deferred for a period of two weeks.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

**Caroni (1975) Limited  
(Readiness of Agricultural Plots)**

152. Could the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources state how many of the 2-acre agricultural plots reserved for the ex-employees of Caroni (1975) Limited are ready for distribution with the necessary infrastructural work, for example, access roads, drainage, irrigation, as at May 12, 2008? *[Dr. H. Rafeeq]*

**Scarborough General Hospital  
(Contract for Completion of)**

**153.** Could the hon. Minister of Health state:

- (a) whether a contract has been awarded for the completion of construction of the new Scarborough Hospital;
- (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, which company has been awarded the contract and at what price; and
- (c) what is the expected date of completion of construction of the hospital? [*Dr. H. Rafeeq*]

**Scarborough General Hospital  
(Arbitration Proceedings)**

**154.** Could the hon. Minister of Health state:

- (a) whether arbitration proceedings between the Government and NH International with respect to the construction of the Scarborough Hospital have been completed; and
- (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, what quantum of money was awarded to NH International by way of settlement of claims, and has the money been paid? [*Dr. H. Rafeeq*]

**M1 Ring Road  
(Flow of Traffic)**

- 170.** (a) Is the hon. Minister of Works and Transport aware that the M1 Ring Road from Manahambre Road, St. Madeline, to Craguish Village, Naparima-Mayaro Road, has a heavy traffic flow?
- (b) Is the Minister also aware that the said road is deteriorating very rapidly?
- (c) Could the Minister state if and when the said road will be rehabilitated? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred*

**Nohar Trace, Tableland  
(Condition of Road)**

**171. Dr. Hamza Rafeeq** (*Caroni Central*) on behalf of Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town North*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

- A. Is the Minister aware that Nohar Trace, Tableland, which leads to the Tableland Anglican School, is in such a deplorable condition that it is almost impassable?
- B. Could the Minister state when the said road will be rehabilitated?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Works and Transport is aware that Nohar Trace is in an unsatisfactory condition.

Rehabilitation of landslips and the roadway has been programmed for this fiscal year under the Programme for Upgrading Road Efficiency (PURE). Works are scheduled to commence during the second half of 2008 at an estimated cost of \$12.2 million.

**Skyship 600 and Aeros 40 SkyDragon  
(Lease/Purchase)**

**172. Dr. Hamza Rafeeq** on behalf of Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town North*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Further to the answer given to questions No. 19 and 112, could the Minister also state:

- (a) the name of the company from which the Skyship 600 was leased/purchased;
- (b) the name of the company to which the Aeros 40 SkyDragon was sold; and
- (c) the person(s) who advised on the sale of the Aeros 40 SkyDragon?

**The Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Hon. Donna Cox):** Mr. Speaker, hon. Members are advised that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago leased and subsequently purchased the Skyship 600 airship from the company Airship Management Services of the United States of America.

The Aeros 40B SkyDragon, the first airship purchased by the Government, was sold to Airship Management Services of the USA.

A Special Anti-Crime Unit technical team comprising members of legal, logistics and operation branches and SAUTT's technical advisor for the project advised on the sale of the Aeros 40B SkyDragon.

**WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION**

*The following question was asked by Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Caroni East):*

**Education Facilities Company Limited  
(Details of)**

- 162.** With respect to the Education Facilities Company Limited, for the period 2006 to date, could the hon. Minister of Education state:
- (a) the development projects undertaken;
  - (b) the cost of each project and the company awarded the contract;
  - (c) the percentage completed, the cost overruns so far, if any and the estimates cost at completion; and
  - (d) the internal audit findings on these projects?

*Vide end of sitting for written reply.*

**PRIVILEGES—HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
(SEN. THE HON. HAZEL MANNING)**

**Mrs. Kamla Persad Bissessar** (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for granting leave to raise a matter concerning the privileges of the House of Representatives against hon. Sen. Hazel Manning, Minister of Local Government, for misleading the House on Friday, June 18, 2008 as set out further.

On Friday, June 18, 2008, in response to a matter on the Motion on the Adjournment raised by me, the hon. Sen. Hazel Manning, Minister of Local Government, stated that, with respect to water trucking funding "for fiscal year 2008, the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation received \$4 million, 40 per cent of the entire allocation". A copy of the *Hansard* was sent to you, hon. Speaker, for reference.

However, I am informed by the Chairman of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation that the corporation did not at any time in fiscal year 2008 to date receive \$4 million for water trucking service as the Minister stated. I have attached for your information the following sworn statement in support of this application by the Chairman of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, which states as follows:

"I, Dr. Allen Sammy, Chairman of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation make oath and say as follows:

1. That the facts and matters set out herein are true and correct and within my own personal knowledge.

2. I am the Chairman of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation.
3. That for Fiscal Year 2008 the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation was allocated the sum of one million dollars for water-trucking service as shown at page 409 of estimates of Expenditure for 2008”—a copy has been forwarded to you, Mr. Speaker—
- “4. That for Fiscal year 2008 to date, the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation has received”—no other monies—“for water-trucking...
6. I listened on the Parliament Channel to the Honourable Senator Hazel Manning, the Minister of Local Government, on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008 and heard her say that for water-trucking ‘For fiscal year 2008, the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation received \$4 million, 40 per cent of the entire allocation’. This statement is incorrect. In fact for the fiscal year 2008 to date, the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation did not receive four million dollars for water trucking as stated by the Minister of Local Governemnt or all but only the sum of one million dollars.”

Further, Mr. Speaker, section 55(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago provides as follows:

“Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and to the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of the Senate and House of Representatives, there shall be freedom of speech in the Senate and House of Representatives.”

By virtue of the said section 55(1), a Member of the House and of the Senate enjoys freedom of speech, but such speech must not breach the rules and Standing Orders regulating the procedure of the House. Under Standing Order 91 of the House, in cases where a matter is not provided for in our Standing Orders, “resort shall be had to the usage and practice of the Commons House of Parliament of Great Britain”.

The relevant practice is that a Member of Parliament who misleads the House of Representatives commits a serious breach of privilege and contempt of Parliament. Erskine May’s *Parliamentary Practice*, 23rd Edition, page 132 states that:

“The Commons may treat the making of a misleading statement as a contempt.”

The footage reference on the said page 132 to C.J. (1962—1963) at page 246 indicates that such conduct, in addition to being a contempt, has been held to be a breach of privilege.

*Privileges—HOR*  
[MRS. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

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In the circumstances, it is my view that there are valid reasons to question whether by her statements the hon. Sen. Hazel Manning has committed a breach of privilege and/or contempt of the House by misleading the House.

Consequently, we request that this matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges of this House to examine the facts and then for the laying of a statement of the evidence before this House and to take appropriate measures to enquire into and to punish the offence in a proper manner.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I acknowledge receipt of the matter referred to me by the hon. Member for Siparia. I will consider it and give my ruling later on.

**ACCREDITATION COUNCIL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (AMDT) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Christine Kangaloo):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, be now read a second time.

The Bill that is before this House seeks to amend the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act by amending section 29 to extend the transitional period under the Act for a further year and by introducing a new section 30 in the Act to allow for provisional registration. In order to place the Bill and these amendments in their proper context, a brief history of the Act must be given.

In July 2004, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act was passed. Section 3 established the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. The council's functions, as set out in section 8(2) of the Act, include the functions of establishing and maintaining of systems of quality for post secondary and tertiary educational institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago and establishing and maintaining a list of accredited awards offered by such institutions.

One of development pillars of this Government's Vision 2020 is the development of an innovative people, which involves, among other initiatives, the provision of quality post secondary and tertiary educational opportunities to citizens. One of the critical roles of the Accreditation Council is to ensure quality assurance and management in the provision to citizens of quality post secondary and tertiary educational opportunities.

To this end, section 26 of the Act provides as follows—and I read section 26(1):

“No institution shall carry on the business of post secondary or tertiary education or use any of the words ‘university’, ‘college’, ‘tertiary college’, ‘polytechnic’, ‘community college’, ‘technical college’, ‘technical institute’ or ‘technical university’ in its name unless registered under this Act and any regulations or rules made under this Act.”

Section 26(2) says:

“A registered institution shall not—

- (a) alter its accredited programmes without prior approval of the Council; or
- (b) misrepresent to the public the recognition gained by it for its programmes or awards.”

Section 26(5) of the Act further provides that:

“An institution which fails to comply with subsection (1) or (2) is guilty of an offence and in addition to any other penalty imposed by this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine of twenty thousand dollars and to a further fine of five hundred dollars for each day that such offence is continued after written notice of the offence has been given by the Council.”

Mr. Speaker, section 29 of the Act authorized institutions, which were lawfully performing their functions at the time of the commencement of the Act, which is July 09, 2004, to continue to do so for a period of two years thereafter. In June 2007, this period was extended for a further two years by Act No. 16 of 2007.

As stated earlier, the Bill before this House seeks to do two things: first to grant those institutions which were lawfully performing their functions at the time of the commencement of the Act a period of a further year within which to be registered with the council; and, second, in the case of institutions which do not fulfil the requirements for registration, to give the council the authority to register provisionally such institutions to operate for a period not exceeding one year if the council believes that the institution will be able to fulfil the relevant requirements within a reasonable period, and to give the council the authority to further extend that period for another period not exceeding one year.

**1.45 p.m.**

As I have said, the Act was passed in 2004. Since the passage of the Act, the infrastructure necessary for the—[*Cellphone rings approximately three times*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, I would imagine the offending Member would now take off his cellphone. Please, do not let it ring again. I am assuming that it is a Member's telephone that is ringing. I hope it is not a member of the press gallery nor the public gallery. On the assumption that it is a Member of the House, may I now ask you to take off your cellphones. Take off means take off, it does not mean put it on vibrate.

**Hon. C. Kangaloo:** As I have said, the Act was passed in 2004. Since the passage of the Act, the infrastructure necessary for the operations of the Accreditation Council has been set up. A board was appointed and an executive director was retained and a recruitment drive embarked upon in relation to general staff. Offices of the council were established and alliances were forged with international agencies. For example, the council is a full member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education and the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education.

The council also hosted several workshops in consultation with stakeholders. In September 2007, for example, international consultant, Dr. John Randall of the United Kingdom facilitated a workshop on Implementing and Internal Quality Management System, which was aimed at providing post secondary and tertiary educational institutions, with guidance on the development of robust internal quality management systems. Handbooks with information on the process of and preparation for registration under the Act have also been published.

It follows that notwithstanding the challenges of transitioning from a previously entirely unregulated, to a highly regulated higher education sector, tremendous work has been done since the Act was proclaimed four years ago. I am pleased to be able to inform this honourable House that with the Accreditation Council, which became fully operational just over two years ago, Trinidad and Tobago now has the most comprehensive quality assurance system for tertiary education in the English-speaking Caribbean.

Underpinning the quality of post secondary and tertiary education offered in Trinidad and Tobago is the system of mandatory registration of all post secondary and tertiary education institutions under the Act. The mandatory system of registration under the Act is as follows: All institutions offering post secondary and tertiary education must register with the council under the Act. This mandatory registration requirement not only applies to local institutions and providers, but also to all foreign or transnational institutions seeking to establish operations in Trinidad and Tobago.



Registration signifies that institutions and providers of tertiary education and training have met minimum quality requirements to operate in Trinidad and Tobago. The council defines these requirements based on international best practices. Registered institutions are required to establish and maintain a documented quality management system, which ensures that they can deliver tertiary education services over the long term at consistently high levels.

The criteria for registration focus on an evaluation of the institution's structure for governance and administration, quality management system, resource management, teacher-learning process and systems for continued review and improvement.

In order to be eligible for registration, the institution or provider must have been established as a legal entity in accordance with the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. The average length of time for an institution to become registered by the Accreditation Council is six to 12 months. This period is dependent on the quality of the application submitted by the institution and the extent to which it provides adequate evidence of institutional capacity to offer high quality post secondary and tertiary education.

Following a comprehensive review of submission, a team of trained professionals visits the institution to review its physical location and operations. An institution is registered for a period up to three years, depending on the strength of its quality management system. Registered institutions are required to submit an annual report and are continually monitored by the Council. Those failing to maintain the required standard are subject to review. In the case of institutions that fail to maintain compliance with the criteria for registration, the registration status will be revoked. It is in this context that this Bill comes before this House.

Since the passage of the Act, some 19 post secondary and tertiary educational institutions have to date been registered with the council under the Act. Together, these institutions have a collective enrolment of approximately 54,504 students. This figure represents the lion share of student enrolment in post secondary and tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago.

Permit me to call out the names of the institutions that have been registered: the University of the Southern Caribbean; OSHA Services LLC; UWI School of Business and Applied Studies Limited, trading as ROYTEC; the School of Business and Computer Science (SBCS); Set Ready and Go Limited; Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business; Caribbean Nazarene College; the University of the West Indies; Professional Institute of Marketing and Business Limited; the

Institute of Medical Education; Purchasing Supply and Management Tuition Services Limited; Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism; SAM Caribbean Limited; Professional School of Accountancy Limited; Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies; SITAL College of Tertiary Education; College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago; the University of Trinidad and Tobago; and the Academy of Tertiary Studies.

Recently updated statistics from the council, however, indicate that there are approximately 75 post secondary and tertiary institutions at present operating in Trinidad and Tobago that have still not been registered. Together, these institutions have a collective enrolment of over 10,000 students. Of these 75 institutions, 20 have applied for and are candidates for registration and the council's research indicates that the processing of these applications will be completed within the next two months. Twenty-eight of the remaining number have not yet been awarded candidacy for registration.

Mr. Speaker, an institution becomes a candidate for registration when its application for registration has been reviewed and it has provided documentary evidence that it meets all of the criteria for registration. In the case of these 28 institutions, the review of their applications has not yet been completed by the Council.

The remaining 27 institutions have not yet submitted any application for registration. Recent stakeholder consultations held by the council with these institutions suggest that some institutions had difficulty collecting the data for registration in a timely manner and consequently were not ready to apply. Some had linkages with international training organizations and had felt that such training programmes did not form part of the post-secondary system and that they were consequently not required to be registered and some institutions did not understand which regulatory body, the National Training Agency or the Accreditation Council, was expected to deal with the registration process. The council continues to work with these institutions to ensure that no student or institution is left behind.

In the result, what has emerged is that notwithstanding the support provided to all institutions in the post secondary and tertiary education sector and the sustained public education campaign undertaken by the council, a significant number has not yet even submitted their applications for registration.

With the looming expiration on July 09 of this year, of the period for registration under the Act, the council has received a flood of applications within the past eight weeks and I am informed that applications continue to come in. The information from

the council is that several of the applications received over the past few weeks, do not yet meet the standard for the institutions to be awarded candidacy status. It is expected that within the next six to eight months all applications will be evaluated.

The council's hope is that during this period, institutions in Trinidad and Tobago will be able to satisfy the criteria for registration and will be able lawfully to continue to operate.

Support of this Bill is being sought from this honourable House so as to ensure that in the area of post secondary and tertiary education, no citizen is left behind.

Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, the Bill also seeks to provide for the council to have power to grant provisional registration, under the Act, to post secondary and tertiary educational institutions. The amendment to allow the council to grant provisional registration to institutions that have not met all the criteria for registration but are likely to do so in the near future, will ensure that the education and training of students of these institutions will not be interrupted, while giving the institution a reasonable opportunity to make the necessary interventions, which would allow them to satisfy all the criteria.

The Accreditation Council has proposed that an institution should be granted provisional registration to allow it a limited period of time within which to satisfy the criteria for registration. It is the council's functional response to institutions that have not met all the requirements to be granted registration.

The council's approach is also consistent with the developmental approach. A similar approach is found in the Higher Education Act in South Africa and a similar amendment was recently sought in the Australian Higher Education Act. [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** How many times?

**Hon. C. Kangaloo:** Additionally, provisional registration will allow new institutions to undertake basic operations such as faculty recruitment, programme development and student enrolment, while being monitored by the council until all criteria are met and full registration can be granted by the Council on the basis of a thorough evaluation of the institutions' entire operations. Provisional registration will therefore be granted to a proposed institution where assessment by the council is based on the institutions' documented plans, policies and procedures, rather than on actual operations.

As we debate this Bill, permit me to remind Members of this honourable House that what this Bill is about is registration and not accreditation. Registration is an entirely different process from accreditation. Registration is

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concerned with evaluating the institutions' resource capability and/or capacity to deliver sustained quality, post- secondary and tertiary education. It is a process designed to check capacity at the initial end of the equation.

Accreditation, on the other hand, is concerned with the quality of the educational outcomes at the other end of the equation. Accreditation criteria go beyond assessing an institution's capacity to deliver quality to include the evaluation of student learning outcomes. Accreditation assesses whether institutions are producing the kinds of graduates that the country needs to achieve its goals in the context of the global economy. Feedback from the employers of graduates is critical to the accreditation process.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the facilitating growth and expanding access to the local higher education sector. This approach is consistent with international best practice, as it supports all institutions, while ensuring that the highest standards are maintained and this country has the human resource capability to meet our national development needs, to ensure global competitiveness and to move our nation steadfastly towards developed country status by the year 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**2.00 p.m.**

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh** (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, education today is one of the cornerstones and fundamental pillars of any civilized society. In fact, health and education are two of the more important fundamental pillars that govern any society. When the structure of this fundamental pillar is weakened, the entire society is at risk of crumbling and falling apart under the weight and pressure of a destructive and fractured education system, as we are witnessing now and which is quite evident in Trinidad and Tobago.

A seamless and transparent education system should be important phenomena in shaping contemporary national, social, economic and even cultural conditions. Although this Accreditation Bill before us today is short in presentation of a now highly questionable post secondary and tertiary education system, this Bill has long, wide and far-reaching social, cultural and economic implications.

The deliberations and debate on this issue must not be skirted, but a thorough analysis and understanding of the real issues involved in registration, accreditation and recognition in post secondary and tertiary education must be undertaken,

discussed fully and ventilated. It is in this context that this debate, hopefully, will inspire, enlighten and evoke from your weak and hapless administration, suitable and relevant tertiary education responses and much needed change.

Mr. Speaker, this debate today requires much needed answers, and would serve as a catalyst to this administration for reorienting its weak education policies, and irregular and worrisome practices in the education system. This is with a view to obviating the adverse economic societal impact from a questionable human resource base that is produced from a questionable post secondary and tertiary education system, arising from non-accreditation but, hopefully, would lay the foundation for the creation of a more equitable and enlightened nation and people in the service of humanity.

I want to go back to the history of this accreditation issue. I think the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, in piloting the Bill in 2004 in the other place, went at length and gave a summary of the issues related to the history of this whole question of accreditation. This matter before us has been in formation for more than 30 years; in fact 38 years.

On January 22, 1970, the then PNM cabinet agreed to the appointment of a committee to report on the recognition in Trinidad and Tobago of qualifications of degrees and similar status offered in foreign countries and universities. At that time, there were returning nationals possessing qualifications—as your parents, your uncles and so on would know—from Canada, the United States of America, Europe and India, and there was need to do something to recognize those degrees. Some of the degrees from Canada were not recognized in the Caribbean under the British system or even worse the United States of America, the degrees were not recognized and more so India, Africa and Nigeria and so on.

In 1971 the then Attorney General was directed to prepare legal instruments for the establishment of a national commission on accreditation. It took the PNM regime eight years later, 1971—1979, to establish a committee under the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST) to assess university degrees. The same thing is repeating itself again today. This Accreditation Council which was supposed to start as early as 2002—it is now 2008—is not functioning, and now this Government is coming to ask us to give them another two more years to allow for registration and so on and not even accreditation. So, 2002—2010, eight more years, whilst the Government is paying millions of dollars to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and the GATE programme. I am going to come to that in a while.

That committee under NIHERST later became known as the Committee on the Recognition of Degrees (CORD). What happened with CORD from then to now is difficult to determine. Imagine 1979 with NIHERST! Even during our administration, 1996—2001, we were unable to determine what was happening with NIHERST. So, from 1957—1986 under a PNM administration, they never took the opportunity to determine, understand and provide some degree of assessment for qualifications from persons returning from abroad, because we did not have any university at that time in Trinidad and Tobago, except the University of the West Indies, which we all know is highly accredited worldwide.

The Education Act of 1979 made no provision for accreditation. Understandably so, the procedures and rules that apply to the regulations of primary and secondary schools were also extended in some way to tertiary level institutions, although the Ministry of Education does not have the legal authority to register tertiary level institutions. They register primary and secondary institutions.

It was the UNC in 1999/2000 which established the National Training Agency as an umbrella body for technical and vocational education and training otherwise known as TVET in Trinidad and Tobago. But the NTA could not have had any legal authority to accredit any programme.

Mr. Speaker, in the United Kingdom, there is a Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education known as (QAAHE), and it is one of several authorized accrediting bodies that establish quality standards for higher education institutions.

In South Africa, it is the Higher Education Council; in Jamaica, it is the University Council of Jamaica. In Jamaica there are 50 registered institutions and 17 are already accredited with 48 accredited programmes up to 2004.

In October 2001, the UNC established a committee to do a few things:

- (1) establish provisional accreditation criteria for the selection of institutions;
- (2) to develop mechanisms by which tertiary level institutions can submit information to identify and implement mechanisms for verifying the information on tertiary level institutions;
- (3) to increase public awareness of quality concerns, because it was beginning to creep into the society;
- (4) to provide reliable and available information, accredited status of institutions by the publication of a list of accredited institutions; and
- (5) to develop linkages with existing programmes.

Mr. Speaker, the committee that was brought together under the UNC submitted their report to this administration on May 09, 2002, six years ago, with a number of recommendations. It recommended that accreditation be a two-stage process: firstly, registration and then accreditation and after and in depth evaluation of programmes offered. That is accreditation after the analysis of the programmes that are offered.

The recommendations of that committee led to the establishment of an accreditation commission. It was known as the Anna Mahase Commission, and there were a number of members. That commission was appointed by the UNC in 2001.

Cabinet in October 2003—from the work of the Anna Mahase committee and another committee—drafted legislation for the Accreditation Council. Mr. Speaker, just before that, at the Caricom Heads of Government meeting in 2000, Caricom agreed to prepare a draft Bill for the establishment of national accreditation bodies in all Caricom member States.

We want to ask this administration and the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education: Was this Caribbean Accreditation Council formed? What other Caribbean countries have their own accrediting bodies in place? This is for us to have an understanding of what is going on in the Caribbean, because Caricom said that all Caricom member States must have an accrediting body. Since the whole CSME was coming on stream with the movement of people, they wanted to have one common accrediting organization for determining accreditation throughout the Caribbean countries.

Mr. Speaker, then came our Dollar for Dollar Programme in 2001. Great vision! We had a vision for universal secondary education; we had the vision for universal tertiary education. The value of a barrel of oil at that time was around \$9 to \$12 per barrel and we still had the vision to bring a Dollar for Dollar Programme to enable students to access tertiary education. [*Desk thumping*] Today, the value of a barrel of oil is about \$142. That is 14 times the value under the UNC, and we were able to bring in the Dollar for Dollar Programme with our vision. We saw the necessity for an important post secondary and tertiary education.

If we analyse what is the degree of participation around the world in post secondary and tertiary education—when we speak about percentages, around the world, the percentages are students between ages 17—24, and in some countries they are between 18—24, for those who participate in post secondary and tertiary education. So, it is not carte blanche participation that figures around the world are quoted. It is in a specific age group or cohort.

Let us take for example South East Asia. At one time, Malaysia, from which this Government stole the idea of 2020 vision, thought that they had one of the highest rate of post secondary and tertiary education enrolment, but it was not so. They were only 11 per cent. Singapore was 34 per cent. Do you know in South East Asia who had the highest enrolment? It is South Korea with 45 per cent. New Zealand was only 12 per cent. Well, we all know that the United States of America and the United Kingdom have about 50 per cent participation. In European countries, it is more than 50 per cent and in Sweden it is about 65 per cent participation.

**Mr. Manning:** How much is Trinidad and Tobago?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I am coming to that now. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** You are reading Minister Imbert's presentation word for word.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** No. That is a well established fact. I heard the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education mentions 54,000 students.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** It is 15 per cent of the relevant age cohort.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The relevant age cohort of 18—24 is 15 per cent. In that as well there is the confusion which I brought up earlier on about a number of students being enrolled in UTT with O levels. Now, that is not post secondary and tertiary education. Everyone knows that UTT has a programme where students with O levels are going first before they could go into the applied science degrees or the associate degrees. So, the number is skewed.

In addition, a lot of these students are not in the cohort age group of 18—24. Even when I was in my 50s, I was at university and, therefore, I could not have been included in that. So, 18—24 is the established cohort group when we talk about enrolment in post secondary and tertiary education.

So, this Government must not come and tell the population that there is a 20 per cent or 25 per cent enrolment in post secondary and tertiary education, and my colleague, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar, has just indicated that it is about 15 per cent of the enrolment.

**2.15 p.m.**

The population between 17 and 24 in Trinidad and Tobago is 170,000 people. So, 10 per cent of that is 17,000; 15 per cent is around 25,000. So, we still give them a high percentage of 25, but I even believe 25,000 is too high for that cohort.



There are a number of questions that we have to ask this regime. What is the integrity of their accreditation committee? When this accreditation committee was given the mandate to do the work from 2004, this Government had to come in 2006 and ask for an extension to allow them to do their work for another two years and they are coming back again, now, to ask for another two years. It is not one year they are asking for but two years.

So, from 2004 to 2008, four years this accreditation committee could not do its work and they are asking for another two years again. They want six years to register the institutions in Trinidad and Tobago, not to even think about accrediting the programmes and the institutions. Six years they want to take to register the institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. We ask about the ability of these individuals on the committee to fulfil the mandate as a body; as a result of that. What have they been doing? Are they incompetent?

**Mr. Dumas:** Careful, careful.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I am just asking. Or are they being misled or are they not getting the resources to do the work? And if they are not getting the resources the Government has to hold its head in shame. The time taken to date, four years and another two years again and another two years again. It is very sorrowful to hear that the hon. Minister said 17 institutions have been registered.

I have a pull out from the *Guardian* newspaper of Thursday, June 19. This is the Accreditation Council now coming out in June of this year when they know that time is running out. They now produce something to fool the population and fool the institutions; not doing anything before but this out in June 2008 when they know that it is expiring in July 2008. And they try to hoodwink the population and they put in beautiful letters "Registered Institutions", and the hon. Minister read out 17 of 75. Only 17 out of 75 are registered.

**Ms. Kangaloo:** Nineteen.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Or 19? Is this not an abysmal shame for four years that this Accreditation Council had and they were given in 2006 another two years, 2004, 2006, 2008, and they want another two years again. Registration is only a little issue. Hear who are registered, Mr. Speaker:

"Caribbean Nazarene College; Set Ready and Go Company Limited"

Who are these? And you call that an institution. What are they producing? Diploma mills? "OSHA Services", I am only speaking about registration, 19 out of 75 registered, no thought about accreditation whatsoever. The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT);

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College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT); Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute and Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, registered by ACTT; big thing. They said:

"The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT), Tourism Institute (TTHTI), Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies and the Academy of Tertiary Studies are the most recent institutions to be registered by ACTT."

Most recent. So that means that it is probably this year. So, in 2004, the accreditation committee was set up, but probably they are now being registered in 2008. It goes on:

"These institutions are among almost seventy higher education institutions and providers that have either been registered or are in the process of being registered by ACTT. Following this initial step, registered institutions become eligible for accreditation."

So, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education speaks about this Bill it is only about registration, what happens to these 75 institutions, which are supposed to be accredited. Students graduating from these 75 institutions, earning diplomas, certificates and degrees and they do not know what accreditation has been given to them; what is going to happen to them. The UTT pull out says:

"While the Act provided a transitional period for established institutions, any institution that opened its doors after July 8th 2004, without first registering with ACTT, is operating illegally."

You know how many institutions have come on beyond 2004, operating and giving degrees, certificates and diplomas and the Accreditation Council is sitting and allowing them to operate illegally. What is happening to those students who are receiving all these certificates and so on? It goes on:

"The current transitional period expires on July 8th 2008 and members of the public should be guided by this when choosing tertiary level programmes."

ACTT now coming out in June 2008, when they know that the thing is expiring in July 2008 and they are now beginning to warn the population that members of the public should be guided by this when choosing tertiary level programmes. Is it not too late, Mr. Speaker? The horse has already bolted; people have gone through with certificates, diplomas and degrees and they are now being warned by the ACTT. What are we in? Is it a quagmire, a mess and a sorrowful disgrace from

a government that is supposed to care for the establishment of a solid education at the highest level in the country, where we would be internationally recognized as the university had been internationally recognized? But they allow a floodgate of private institutions to come through and did nothing about it; who will only benefit themselves; not the students. What the ACTT was saying as well is that:

"Registered institutions must submit annual reports to ACTT and are continuously monitored to ensure that standards are maintained."

How many of these have submitted annual reports? We want to know how many of these 19 have submitted annual reports, and the Minister will have to tell this country. Nineteen registered, none of the 75 accredited and we do not even know how many have submitted annual reports. I continue:

"Institutions must seek re-registration approximately six months prior to the expiration of their registered status."

How many have sought that prior to six months? This whole thing is a sordid mess and for ACTT to come out with a pull out like this at this stage is a shameful disgrace. And on the next page they say:

"Candidates for Registration"

They list a whole heap for registration and they give a number of names:

"Omardeen School of Accountancy Limited;

College of Legal Studies Limited;

West Indies School of Theology;

Advanced Human-Development Associates"

Diploma mills, Mr. Speaker, diploma mills.

"Douglas Associates & Company Limited"

A whole mushrooming of private institutions throughout Trinidad and Tobago going unchecked and tarnishing the name and the reputation of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean as far as tertiary education is concerned, because we have always had the highest level of international recognition as far as the University of the West Indies is concerned. [*Desk thumping*] And now this Government has allowed a floodgate of private institutions to start up in Trinidad, illegal and this Accreditation Council, this Government and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education are doing nothing about it.

**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** Close them down then.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** What criteria have they established—close them down if they are not registered—to assess the local institutions for accreditation? To whom is the funding going? *[Interruption]* I will come to that in a minute. How many institutions have been accredited? They cannot say one. How many training providers are provided by the Technical Vocational Education System (TVET)?

None, we probably feel that none are registered or accredited. What is the cost for the exercise of accreditation? Who are the consultants doing the accreditation? We understand that there is a particular firm in Jamaica that is doing all the consultancy for the accreditation process in Trinidad and Tobago. The Minister will have to tell us. What is the qualification, competence, experience and accreditation of the people on the board and who do the accreditation? What is the ACTT alignment with the regional accreditation body for regional congruence? And is ACTT internationally recognized?

Mr. Speaker, this Government has failed to provide all this information and the answers to these questions for the past four years and they still, up to this date, cannot provide this information. You know what is the danger of this? The fact that this Government's administration deliberate failure to make these institutions account, to have them monitored and to ensure transparency, they are putting the country at the risk of being the Caribbean's capital of the diploma mills industry.

They are putting this country as the centre for an industry of diploma mills in Trinidad and Tobago. And fly by night institutions give people tertiary education degrees without them being qualified and then they go out into the work force and obtain jobs they are not really qualified to do. This was a major problem in the United States about eight years ago and it became a major headache for the government of the United States, because of the fraud and terrorist threats it gave rise to. *[Interruption]* Yes, terrorist threats. In an article in yesterday's *New York Times* dated June 29, I have it for anyone to see here.

"Diploma Mill Concerns Extend Beyond Fraud, by Diana Jean Schemo"

The article talks about the recently concluded trial into diploma mills in the United States and this is how it goes:

"For \$1,277 it did. Within days..."

There was a man who said:

"...he was a retired military officer from Syria, which the American government deems a sponsor of terrorists. He wanted credentials as a chemical engineer, useful for getting a visa to work in the United States. Could James Munroe University help?"

And today, we are seeing all types of universities, Catholic Religious Development Institute, HHSL Safety Systems, Students Accountancy Centre, Advance Solutions, my God, Jesus. So, for \$1,277 that James Monroe University did.

“Within days, he received three undergraduate and advanced degrees in chemistry and environmental engineering, based on his ‘life experience’, according to documents in federal court. Although the degrees looked authentic, Monroe had no faculty or courses...”

How do we know this is not occurring in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Could the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education tell us if there are institutions like that in Trinidad and Tobago and we suspect that there are institutions like that and we are being a diploma mill industry in Trinidad. [*Interruption*]

"Monroe had no faculty or courses—you have to tell us—the ‘advisor’ evaluating ‘life experience’ was a high school dropout.

Monroe was one of more than 120 fictitious universities operated by Dixie and Stephen K. Randock Sr., a couple from Colbert, Wash.,”

**Mr. Manning:** And your point is that, how do you know—

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** No, we will not smear. Hon. Prime Minister, we will not smear. I am sure there are a number of institutions that are worth their salt, and a number of students will go through a number of institutions, but we say that the Accreditation Council should have been doing its job; they should have been monitoring these institutions as soon as they come by; they should be registering them and looking for accreditation in a quick period of time. I am sure you will agree with me.

**Mr. Manning:** I agree.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Because you have graduated from the University of the West Indies as well, and the University of the West Indies started in 1958. [*Interruption*] I will give way. You wanted to say something?

**Mr. Manning:** No.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** So, Munroe was one of the 120 fictitious universities that “sold diplomas for a price”. We hear about Western Pacific selling PhD degrees.

“according to a three-year federal investigation that ended in guilty pleas from the Randocks...”

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...the court documents describe an operation that grew from a trickle to a flood from 1999 to 2005.”

Trinidad and Tobago beware, a similar situation could occur here.

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

“The company became more inventive and bold, with revenues growing from \$5,000 in 1999 to \$1.65 million in 2005, and churning out more than 10,000 diplomas for customers in 131 countries.

The Randocks took in more than \$7 million... They created 121 fictitious universities, and produced counterfeit degrees claiming to be from scores of real universities, the court papers say.”

**2.30 p.m.**

The article continues to say that:

“A 2004 report by the Government Accountability Office, which surveyed only 2 percent of federal employees, found 463 who had bought degrees from three diploma mills, but warned that the true number was probably much higher.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not need to go on to talk about what occurred in the United States anymore, and we have to be careful that such a situation is not occurring or will not occur in the short future because of the lack of ability of this Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago which was put into place in 2004 and which was supposed to have been doing their work for the last four years and begging for more time again, and we are being asked now to give them another two years again. How can we accept that? How can we, Madam Deputy Speaker?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Shame!

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I wonder if these fly-by-night institutions that are not currently being monitored by the accreditation council are really Trinidad and Tobago’s version of that operation of a diploma mill. Who is to say that people coming out with qualifications from these institutions are truly qualified? And it goes beyond Trinidad and Tobago. On the website of the Caricom Single Market and Economy I found this speech dated January 20, 2005 from former Ambassador Jerry Narace, who was then in charge of the CSME. [*Interruption*] Now he is in the frightening position of Minister of Health, and I spoke about that. [*Interruption*] In that speech he delivered at an ECA meeting he said, and I quote:

“There are two aspects of the free movement of persons in the CSME—

- (a) the free movement of skilled persons and service providers; and
- (b) hassle free travel.

With respect to the free movement of skilled persons, all the necessary legislative and administrative structures have been in place since June 2003”—this is what he is saying—“for the free movement of university graduates, media persons, sport persons, artistes and musicians. As you would recall these persons are able to move freely by virtue of a Skills Certificate issued to them by the relevant authorizing agency...”

He went on to say essentially, and blamed the free movement of skills in the appointment of a national and regional accreditation council, and he went on to describe where the Act was assented to, proclaimed and so on.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we want the hon. Minister to tell this House what is the follow up to those board meetings that the Minister spoke about in his discussion with the Employers Consultative Association. They had a board meeting. Do you know what is more frightening? CSME went ahead with the free movement of people. There had been no Caribbean accreditation committee established to determine whether the free movement of people will allow people with equivalent degrees to move from one country to another. We need some clarification on this.

Now we have a mass of workers from other countries in major sectors in Trinidad and Tobago whose qualifications have not been guaranteed by the accreditation council. The accreditation council has not been able to guarantee that their qualifications are valid in facilitating the free movement of people in the Caricom Single Market and Economy. So, why the delay? The fact is, in 2006 the Government brought the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt.) Bill, 2006 which sought to amend the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, No. 16 of 2004 to extend from two years to four years, the transitional period during which the Act deems post secondary and tertiary education institutions that were lawfully performing their functions in at the commencement of the Act to be authorized to continue to perform those functions.

They came to this House and asked for a two-year extension. It was granted, and you asked for one more year, it was granted; now you are asking for two more years.

**Ms. Kangaloo:** One more year.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I will tell you.

**Mr. Imbert:** One year.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** It is not one year. This is what your Bill portends today. It says here on page 4:

“The Act is amended by inserting after section 29 the following section”—  
that is:—

“30.(1) Notwithstanding section 8(2)(c), the Council may provisionally register a post secondary or tertiary institution which does not fulfil the requirements for registration, for a period not exceeding one year, if the Council believes that the post secondary or tertiary institution will be able to fulfil the relevant requirements within a reasonable period.”

What is this type of language that you are putting into law? “If the accreditation council believes that the post secondary or tertiary institution will be able to fulfil the relevant requirements.” What is there that will help this council to believe? We could believe anything, but the fact is that it may not be so. So we are being asked to make law, something that the accreditation council will believe may be fulfilled, and they are asking for an extension of one year. But, hear the other part, subsection (2):

“The Council may extend the period referred to in subsection (1) for a further period not exceeding one year.”

So the council then has the ability to extend it for one more year.

So, it is not one year, it is two years again you are asking for. If you want to say one year, take off the second part of this thing and just leave it for one year, but if you say two years you will leave it in. But you are asking us to agree to something just by the fact that the council believes that the requirements will be fulfilled for registration. What utter dismay?

Nothing could be more suspicious, when you consider that this request for extended periods is coming from a government that in its 50 years of running this country never once thought of establishing universal secondary education much less universal tertiary education. It had been left to the United National Congress to do it least. [*Desk thumping*] You merely continued our policies. You continued our policies of universal secondary education and dollar-for-dollar, and could not even do that effectively. [*Interruption*] It is testament to the PNM incompetence.

When I hear this Government boast about its Vision 2020—by the way, as I said earlier, you stole that title from Malaysia and other countries, hon. Prime Minister.



**Dr. Moonilal:** What are you accusing the Prime Minister of?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** You cannot come up with one original idea. What is the original idea? Vision 2020 is not the original idea. *[Interruption]* When I hear this Government boast of Vision 2020 I have to wonder if you really know what that plan entails. We do not seem to know, the country does not know what 2020 is. The universal Vision 2020—*[Crosstalk]* well, they say that 2020 is you are able to have good vision, Prime Minister. *[Interruption]*

My colleague opposite, is it not 2020, under the snellen test good vision?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Amorphous.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** But anyway, this is a myopic vision here from this Government. It is not 2020 vision, it is myopic vision. *[Interruption]*

That vision of 2020 plan was executed in countries like Malaysia and Dubai, and it focused on a knowledge-based society. And that plan was about developing the human resource base as the main resource of a country, by encouraging a strong education and technology sector. But you on that side like to boast that you have free tertiary education, and that is the embodiment of your Vision 2020, and you really think you are fooling the population. I want to say here this afternoon that the only people who are fooled when you parrot that phrase on a continuous basis is the Members of the PNM Cabinet. *[Desk thumping]* Vision 2020 PNM style is really the blind leading the blind.

My point, is that this PNM Government has based their budget on election campaign and Vision 2020, and you say you are serious about universal tertiary education and look what is happening, but where is the proof that you have proper tertiary education? How can anyone believe you are serious about ensuring free tertiary education for the people when you cannot even get a registration and accreditation council going up and running within the last six years.

First, it was Minister Imbert, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, then it was Minister Abdul-Hamid, who proved to be the most incompetent Minister in this entire sector, because that ministry was not run by him during that period of time. *[Desk thumping]* That ministry was run by Prof. Ken Julien. *[Interruption]* I am very happy to see, Prime Minister—I thought that you had left out the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre altogether. I used to love to be with her in the other place and hear her chat.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What other place? *[Laughter]* Which other place?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** In the other place, upstairs. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*] But I say that you had demoted her, I was not hearing her for a while.

**Mr. Manning:** Sorry, say that again. What are you saying?

**Ms. Kangaloo:** I want to know myself.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Are you going to allow her to be one of your deputy political leaders; a woman deputy political leader?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I support that.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I would support her for one of you women deputy political leaders.

**Mr. Manning:** Tell me where first?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Upstairs. Right in this House, but in the other place. [*Interruption*] I know you have relegated her to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education when she could have been—[*Inaudible*]

**Hon. Member:** Minister of Legal Affairs.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** —the Minister of Legal Affairs.

**Mr. Manning:** You could take that portfolio in the morning. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** No, no, we do not need that. We want to be on your toes. When your time comes for an election we will ensure that we have victory. [*Desk thumping*] We will have victory.

**Mr. Manning:** If you behave yourself I will talk to you. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I do not need handouts, Prime Minister. I do not need handouts.

**Mr. Manning:** Maybe Dr. Moonilal will.

**Dr. Moonilal:** He might need the other place.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I feel you are blight, you know, hon. Prime Minister.

**Mr. Manning:** Me!

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** You put your really distinguished veterans out and the new ones you put are proving to be incompetent.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You fired everybody and you are calling for “Tim” now.

**Mr. Manning:** I want to fire one more man, you.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I feel that you really cannot get anything right except corruption. You think you could get anything right except corruption? *[Interruption]* It is easy to believe that you cannot get this council coming up and running because of your natural incompetence. This regime has natural incompetence.

**Mr. Manning:** I choose to leave you alone this evening.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** All right. Like every other sector in this country you cannot implement any policy that works because you are incapable of doing anything that requires insight and vision. Everybody knows that! *[Desk thumping]* Everybody knows that, but I want to tell this country today that we the population must stop letting the PNM off the hook because of their incompetence. We must stop saying, well, it is the PNM, what do you expect. People have grown accustomed to hearing, “well, this is the PNM what do you expect.” They expect non-performance, they expect corruption, they expect incompetence. You are hopeless! You are inefficient and cannot do anything. We must start reading between the lines because the truth is, when the PNM wants to really do something it takes them a matter of days.

I will give you some examples: The Bombardier deal was sealed in a matter of weeks, the PNM residence and UDeCott projects came through in months. So, we cannot buy that you cannot establish a council in six years. What is happening? There is an ulterior motive, and is it the same ulterior motive that lies behind the thousands of other failed projects? And I believe you all know what the motive is, Members on the other side.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Let them have it, man.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** This Government is the major stakeholder here, and if this accreditation council is the body to ensure Government is getting its money's worth or what we call, a bank for its bucks, getting more out of it, then the failure of the Minister to ensure these steps as in 29(2) of the Bill are adhered to, then they would not care if the accreditation process is of no consequence. Where is your money going? Are we meeting other people's agenda or does the Government have its own agenda?

I want to move to the office of the Auditor General's Report of the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2007.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Caroni East has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**2.45 p.m.**

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, colleagues, on both sides for allowing me to continue this discourse. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education got \$1.654 billion in 2007, what can they show for that? What can the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education show what they have accomplished with \$1.7 billion, except to have 19 institutions registered out of 75, no accreditation and no recognition?

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

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** You know what you are doing. I want to come to the question of GATE. The total expenditure on payment with GATE was \$458,044,422 for 2007; I do not have the figures for 2008 as yet. What has happened to that money? This Government must tell us which institutions have been benefiting from the provision of GATE. Is it only public institutions or public and private institutions? Which private institutions have been benefiting? How many students have been attending and what is the requirement? How are they performing in these institutions?

Madam Deputy Speaker, accreditation is a trust-based, standards-based, evidence-based, judgment-based, peer-based process. It is a wide, wide, wide process, and there is absolutely no evidence to show that this accreditation committee adheres to any process or procedures to undertake this effort.

In the United States, Britain and worldwide, accreditors are accountable to the institutions and programmes they accredit. They are accountable to the public and the government. This Accreditation Council should be accountable to the Government. Is it? Accreditors undertake an organizational self-assessment on a routine basis and are required to undergo a periodic external review. Here none takes place. The Accreditation Council does not take any internal review of itself, nor external review. In the United States, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and the United States Department for Education accredited 7,000 higher education centres. Both the Council for higher Education Accreditation and the United States Department of Education have six recognition standards by which they review for recognition and I name them:

- academic quality assurance;

- accountability and student achievement;

We do not have any idea what has happened to the student achievement. I continue:

- encourage purposeful change and needed improvement;

The Accreditation Council cannot get its act going, far less to recommend purposeful change.

- employ appropriate and fair procedures in decision-making;

And the last and most important point;

- sustain fiscal stability.

I want to speak about that in a bit.

All these things are important to foster public confidence and investment. Therefore, we have the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago committee unable to do all these things, but Trinidad and Tobago, and we on this side, you want us to be confident and to share in your vision that they are doing a good job and we must give them another two years. We do not know how many of these things have been done by the Accreditation Council—academic quality assurance, student achievement and sustained fiscal stability.

In the United States, the United States Department of Education Recognition Standards placed primary emphasis on whether an institutional programme is of sufficient quality to qualify for federal funds for student financial aid. They want to be satisfied that these universities and institutions are capable enough to qualify for financial aid and student financial aid. We do not have that in Trinidad. We are giving away \$450 million to institutions, carte blanche, just in the context of saying that you want increased numbers. You seem to be preoccupied with wanting numbers, \$45,000, \$50,000, but you are forsaking quality for quantity and this is not right in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Do not forsake quality for quantity.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Good point.

**Mr. Manning:** [*Inaudible*] first to all is education, remember that.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** We have no problem, but with the accountability process. It must not be carte blanche. The democratization of the education process must be universal; there must be no discriminatory practices; there must be no affirmative actions; and everything must be fair and equitable across the board. But you cannot throw away money if you do not know what standards are coming out at the end of it.

What standards are required by accreditors to maintain criteria of standards in specific areas? Let us go through them—student achievement. How do we know how many of these students are passing or failing who go into these programmes and the Government is paying for GATE? Who does the analysis of students whether they have gone through year one or year two and they are failing and they are repeating once or twice? Who have assessed the curriculum of these institutions? Who have looked at the faculty members of these institutions? Who have looked at the facilities, including the equipment and supplies? The answer is none. This Accreditation Council has done nothing whatsoever as far as these things are concerned.

- fiscal and administrative capacity;
- student support services;
- recruitment and admission practices;

These are the standards that we talk about.

- measures of the degree;
- objectives of the degrees;
- record of students complaints;

Do we have the Accreditation Council to tell in these institutions how many students complaints there have been?

- record of compliance with programme responsibilities.

Then that US Department of Education makes recommendations to the National Advisory Committee on institutional quality and integrity, an appointed group of educators and public members.

The amount of supervision and accountability that goes on in the United States and, as you all know that accreditation must have a relationship with Government because you are paying money for the students to be in the institutions, especially in relation to funding higher education. It adds value to society through assuring quality, enabling Government to make sound judgments about the use of public funds.

The British system: The British Accreditation Council has for two decades been the principal regulatory body in the ever-growing independent sector of further and higher education. The British Accreditation Council accredited in the United Kingdom, now number 245, providing a wealth of academic programmes,

vocational and professional qualifications, foundation courses for university entry and externally validated entry courses. The British Accreditation Council Inspection Force comprises approximately 70 experienced and well-qualified independent inspectors from a rich variety of educational backgrounds.

If this country is saying and everyday this Government wants to boast about 2020 vision, they have not even taken the first stage in this whole process of going that way that developed countries have been going. You have just heard me speak about the United States and Great Britain, and I do not want to go any further as far as that is concerned.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me just point out the reality of the non-implementation of this accreditation. You are supposed to accredit the smaller tertiary level institutions, as I have mentioned, but more so, it is supposed to accredit the UTT; not only register the UTT, but accredit the UTT. What is the reality of UTT? Billions of dollars and nothing to show for it, except corruption, allegations and court cases. [*Desk thumping*] UTT professors are paid over nearly \$100,000 per month, whereas, University of the West Indies professors are paid close to \$45,000 or \$50,000 per month.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Anybody is a professor there.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Everybody is a professor. You have assistant professor, associate professor, full professor, so everybody is a professor with UTT, and my colleague from Diego Martin Central will tell you and those of us who have been through the University of the West Indies—

**Dr. Moonilal:** The rigours.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** The rigours that you undergo before you become a full professor. [*Crosstalk*] You must publish papers in referred scientific journals; you must have a strong quality of teaching in the academia; you must do other type of administrative work and take part in administrative capabilities in the university before you are made a full professor. From a lecturer level through to a senior lecturer, it takes you about ten years, and from a senior lecturer to a full professor, it takes you another seven to eight years. Sometimes the younger ones can do it faster. [*Crosstalk*] What is happening in UTT? [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** In a month you can become a professor there, man.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to come to an important aspect of this discussion this afternoon. On the formation of UTT which was incorporated on September 14, 2004, particular statements were made to staff

both in academic and corporate areas of the National Energy Skills Company, and the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology. These two institutions were to be used as the initial course structure of UTT and were to be transferred to UTT as an institution.

I am talking about the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT) and the National Energy Skills Company (NESC). These two were absorbed in UTT. Were these two institutions granted registration first, or they have been granted registration under UTT? Has the Accreditation Council investigated the curriculum, the staff and the programmes and the financial stability of NESC and TTIT? Our understanding is that from January 01, 2004 to May 01, 2005, NESC handled all UTT financial transactions. Funds received from the State in trust for UTT were deposited to NESC's bank accounts on a direct basis with disbursements to be approved by UTT President, Ken Julien. One person approving the disbursement.

There was lack of documentation of approval of very significant expenditure during the period January 01, 2004 to May 01, 2005. A review of procurement practices indicated that a sole selective tendering process operated there as well, in UTT, as we found out in UDeCott.

Tamana Park, Wallerfield, that is a campus of UTT. UTT appointed a team to provide services to the project. The initial cost of that project was estimated at a cost of \$602 million, exclusive of academic equipment like electronics, computers, furniture and fixtures.

We are told that there was no signed contract with the consultants at the time between UTT and the consultants. Records indicated that this was a project approved by Professor Julien and no documentation had been submitted to verify this transaction. I am talking about Tamana Park, Wallerfield, \$602 million.

Let us talk about the UTT Maritime Chaguaramas Campus. The construction cost was in excess of \$200 million; while construction was going on, there were no contracts signed with the consultants and their contractors. UTT Maritime Chaguaramas Campus, another \$200 million. e TecK managed the programme. We are having programmes and people are getting diplomas and certificates and so on, and that programme was the Medical Data Transcription Programme (MDTP) on behalf of UTT, commenced in September 2004 at approximate cost of \$5.6 million.

The 2004/2005 budget revealed no such allocation approved by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education for that programme. The Permanent Secretary confirmed that the Ministry was unaware of any allocation of funds for the MDTP. The total budgeted allocation to UTT for 2004/2005 on a



cash basis was \$87,751,529. So, money was transferred from other course sections to create a sector for MDTP. The invoice was approved by the President to pay e Teck in excess of \$5.5 million for the MDTP programme for the period 2004/2005.

The Vice-President, Finance, of UTT was vocal and emphatic with respect to the absence of any transparency and accountability as I have demonstrated in the two previous ones: e Teck, Tamana Park, Wallerfield and the UTT Maritime Chaguaramas Campus; \$600 million for the Tamana Park, Wallerfield; \$200 million for the UTT Maritime Chaguaramas Campus, and then e Teck. Do you know what the Vice-President, Finance said? He was vocal and emphatic with respect to the absence of any transparency and accountability. In fact, his exact expression was—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** What is his name?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I would give you the document if you want it.

**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** I want his name.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I will give you it shortly. I will give you the document. I do not think that it is fair to the gentleman to give his name, but if you want it, I would give you the document.

**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** All we want is his name.

**Hon. Member:** Call the man's position.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Kenneth Fitz-Andrews. Kenneth Fitz-Andrews is the name of the gentleman. His expression was, "I am not prepared to work in a cesspool of corruption in UTT."

**Hon. Members:** Ooh.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** That was his deposition to the court.

**3.00 p.m.**

His expression was, "I am not prepared to work in a cesspool of corruption at the University of Trinidad and Tobago." That was his deposition to the Industrial Court, that the Bank and General Workers' Union was doing. He said that he was not prepared to work in a cesspool of corruption in UTT. That is what we are speaking about. We are asking questions based on what has come to our understanding. Madam Deputy Speaker, \$600 million for the Tamana Park, \$200 million for the other one, e-Teck and so on.

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Hear this other aspect:

“Contracts were effected under Alliance programmes by the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT).”

Do you know what was happening there? They said that they wanted to alliance with Cambridge University; that cost Trinidad and Tobago \$21 million.

"This contract was effected by Prof. Julien...on behalf of UTT."

Again, the same person.

"John Hopkins Alliance cost \$10 million US, (\$63 million TT).”

This contract was effected by Prof. Julien again.

“Furthermore, it became apparent that UTT through Professor Julien had embarked upon a program of negotiating with internationally recognized name relationships like Cambridge and Johns Hopkins University in the Alliance program, rather than internal developmental system of eventually achieving accreditation on its own, having its own standards at the University of Trinidad and Tobago.”

He decided that he must have alliance programmes, and paid almost \$63 million for Johns Hopkins and \$20 million for Cambridge; just to have an alliance.

Do you know what was happening? The UTT was continuously attempting to purchase, at high cost, with state funds, an unearned status of high quality through its alliance programme. They were buying quality with big set up money. [*Crosstalk*] Madam Deputy Speaker, \$63 million with Johns Hopkins, \$20 million with Cambridge.

It goes further. A few weeks ago, the Minister of Finance came here and indicated through the finance portfolio that they wanted \$350-something million more to give the cardiovascular initiative programme, in relation with Johns Hopkins University, at the UTT, and a \$20 million diabetic programme at the UTT. What in God's name is UTT doing in medicine? Do they have a medical faculty? [*Crosstalk*] They want to do everything; they are duplicating things all over.

It took 58 years; from 1948 the University of the West Indies started medicine; the first group was in 1948. It was only in the 1960s that UWI was able to free itself from the University of London and gave its own degree, because of its hard work. [*Crosstalk*] The UTT has not been in existence long; they just registered this year, and they are giving degrees. [*Crosstalk*] Do you know what, Madame Deputy Speaker? They are not only giving degrees by all these things and by buying from Cambridge and Johns Hopkins Universities, they are giving distinguished fellowships. [*Crosstalk*]

They gave it to Brian Lara; John Cupid for culture; Dr. Hollis Liverpool and Ray Funk. They are giving distinguished fellowships. They have not even been in existence for three or four years, they are not even registered for 2008, but they are giving distinguished fellows to members in the Caribbean. What a joke. Do you know the rigours of getting a Ph.D. in a competent university? Dr. Moonilal could tell you what he went through in The Hague.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Very difficult!

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Those of us who have been through the university system could tell you when we supervised students for the postgraduate degrees, the difficulties they had. You are giving distinguished fellows from an institution that has not even been there for three years, not even registered, not even accredited. They gave honorary doctorates to the late John La Rose, and artist Althea McNish. [*Crosstalk*]

Do you know what they are also engaging in? Fashion design, sports studies and performing arts. [*Crosstalk*] This accreditation issue speaks right to the heart of this Government's inability to fulfil its own mandate to take this country to development status. You are unable to develop our human resource base to meet the challenges of a global environment. You are not doing that. Therefore, how can we realize our Vision 2020? Institutions are not accredited and they are being responsible for tertiary education; they are not even registered. With no standards, students in such institutions would not benefit from the excessive amounts of money being poured and pumped into that sector.

I want to just deal with a few other little issues before I close. I want to talk about the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) issue. I spoke about it in the other place when we were discussing the 2006 amendment Bill. The COSTAATT issue we dealt with was to bring it to a community college, which is what the hon. Minister, at that time, said. What has happened to that?

We produced COSTAATT. We brought the John Donaldson Technical Institute and the San Fernando Technical Institute together, and we formed COSTAATT. You have now included the Valsayn Teachers' College and the Corinth Teachers' College in South. You brought COSTAATT and you said that you wanted to make it into a community college. What, in fact, do you really want to do? [*Crosstalk*] You said, at that time, it just was simply an institution stretched too wide and too thin, that it was under-resourced. [*Crosstalk*]

I want to talk a bit about scholarships. I want this Government to tell the country why they have lowered the standards in terms of giving scholarships for

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medical students at the University of Grenada? They are giving scholarships to students to go there because they could play football or cricket, they could sing, or they could play the piano. I want this Government to tell this country.

I did an analysis of students who have received scholarships up to last year. There were 179 students who received scholarships for the University of Grenada. Under the Freedom of Information Act, we will find out who these students are. [*Crosstalk*] There is inequity in the distribution of the scholarships for students going to the Grenada university. [*Desk thumping*]

At one time, the University of the West Indies never wanted to register any of these offshore medical schools, because their standards were low; but UWI has no difficulty with the University of Grenada now. We do not register any one of the offshore medical schools, except the University of Grenada. [*Crosstalk*]

When you are giving scholarships, why can you not look at it in an equitable manner, rather than a discriminatory manner? [*Desk thumping*] We do not know who gives the scholarships in Trinidad and Tobago, where the scholarship committee is, where the advertisements take place or what the criteria are for the scholarships; but you are talking about accreditation and requirements and registration for tertiary level education. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, contemporary society is experiencing a major shift in the focus of production. Information and knowledge now constitute the principal sources of wealth and assets in any nation's economy. Instead of referring to an information society, some commentators are now advancing similar arguments in terms of the information age—we will never reach there—or post-industrial society, or they call it the service economy or the knowledge society.

If it is the wish of this Government to produce a knowledge-based society, they cannot continue the way they are going. You cannot allow a carte blanche approach to post-secondary and tertiary education, with you not knowing what is happening before your eyes. You are spending \$1.6 billion through the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education; you are giving nearly half a billion dollars in the GATE Programme; you do not know where you are allowing your students to go, what degrees, certificates and diplomas they are coming out with. Is it recognized locally; is it recognized internationally? You have not even reached the first stage yet in terms of registering the 75 institutions, far less accrediting them.

So all these students who have gone to the University of Trinidad and Tobago and COSTAATT, where is the international recognition? Could they take these diplomas, certificates and degrees, go outside of Trinidad and Tobago and they

would be recognized? [*Desk thumping*] Give us some sense of what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago. Do not pump that amount of money.

On this side, we really do not see what is happening with the Accreditation Council. I suggest that some mechanism takes place within the next few days, few weeks or a month, where we could have a special select committee of Parliament. Bring this Accreditation Committee of Trinidad and Tobago before it to understand what is going on so that we could get a fair idea of where the money is going and what is happening to the programmes. [*Interruption*]

**Ms. Kangaloo:** Do you want a joint select committee?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Or we could have a special select committee.

Based on what I have said about the massive corruption in UTT, we call for a forensic investigation into all the expenditure of UTT, just like we were calling for with UDeCott. This is another runaway institution. We do not expect very much, because it seems as though the hon. Prime Minister does not want to appoint a chairman for this Commission of Enquiry we spoke about into UDeCott, almost six weeks ago. Obviously, they would have to face the courts. You would have to face the courts to have somebody appointed as Chairman and to get the Commission of Enquiry going.

We want to see a definite forensic enquiry into the operations, management and expenditure of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, because I have just illustrated, from my previous discussion, what has gone on there. We will be calling for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to look into what is happening at UTT, and the Auditor General. Under the Exchequer and Audit Act, the Auditor General has the responsibility to go into that institution and determine what is going on.

We call upon the Auditor General. I will be writing the Auditor General to indicate to her, based on the statements we have given you here in Parliament today, to have an enquiry into the operations and management of UTT. It is another runaway horse like UDeCott, and we want to see something come out of it. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot allow millions and billions of dollars to be spent on an institution which is a private company, not incorporated in Parliament and spending billions of dollars, and the Government is pouring millions of dollars for students to go there without knowing what sort of degree or diploma they would be coming out with.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Deputy Speaker, every time I hear the Member for Caroni East speak on matters relating to education, I am reminded about the leak in the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examination papers. I wonder if a leak occurred at the time the hon. Member was doing his O levels. *[Laughter]* *[Interruption]* I am amazed at the ignorance that we are treated to in this honourable Chamber, the level of ignorance that emanates from the hon. Member.

I wonder whether there was a leak in the examination papers, because that is the only way I could see that the hon. Member for Caroni East could possibly have passed any examination. *[Laughter]* It could not be by dint of study, intelligence or anything like that. *[Interruption]* I am not getting personal; it is factual.

When the Member for Caroni East could get up in this House and beat up and get on—*[Interruption]* *[Dr. Gopeesingh rises]* I am not giving way.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On a point of order! I rise to indicate that the Minister is again imputing improper motives. This is a repetition of what has gone on in the past; I will not allow the Minister to stand there and say to me that there was an O level leak and I benefited. I did not do O levels; I did Cambridge Examinations. *[Laughter]* How could the Minister—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I do not think that the hon. Member was imputing improper motives.

**3.15 p.m.**

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I must insist that in the future, the Member quote the Standing Order that he alleges is being infringed. I have now discovered that the Member for Caroni East never did O'levels. I understand. It came from his mouth. He said so. How did you get into university? How? He never did O'levels. My goodness! I must check the records to see what happened there.

When I hear the inane things that the Member says, for example, that the international cohort for assessing enrollment in tertiary education is the age group of 18 to 24 years—he stands in a pious way and shouts this for everybody to hear as an authority or an expert that the international standard, the cohort for assessing tertiary education is the age group 18 to 24. I have no idea in what country the Member for Caroni East allegedly went to university. For his edification and hon. Members opposite who do not know, in Canada persons enter university at age 17. He does not know that the average age of the first-year university student in

Canada is 17 because they have abolished a section of education called Grade 13. It no longer exists in Canada. In fact, some years ago I remember reading about the effect of having these young people enter university on the university itself and whether they were prepared for university. The average university entrant in Canada is 17. How can the international cohort start at 18? Is it that the order of Canada is backward? This is why when I hear the Member for Caroni East speak, I wonder whether he ever went to school.

He made this other inane statement that everybody in the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) is a professor. The University of Trinidad and Tobago follows the American system. When I was a lecturer at the University of the West Indies (UWI), the grades were assistant lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, reader and professor. That is the British system. The equivalent grades in the American system for lecturer is assistant professor; for senior lecturer it is associate professor and professor, it is professor. At the University of Trinidad and Tobago they follow the American system. They have assistant professors, associate professors and full professors just like the British system with lecturer, senior lecturer and professor. Of course, everybody at the University of Trinidad and Tobago is a “professor” but they are not all full professors.

I would think that the Member for Caroni East had passed through at least one American university in his life or may possibly know somebody who is teaching in an American university and might be aware of the fact that in the United States all teachers in the university system have the name “professor” associated with them, whether they are associate, assistant or full professor. He knows that. He knows that the University of Trinidad and Tobago is following the American system in terms of its nomenclature and terms that it uses to refer to its teaching staff. That is why I worry about him.

He also knows that the persons who enter the University of Trinidad and Tobago system with CXC passes do not go into a bachelor’s degree. They go into an associate degree programme, a two-year programme. UTT is modeled on the American system, a two plus two, a two-year associate degree programme which is equivalent to a diploma and then you graduate to another two years. You go from an associate degree to a full bachelor’s degree. The persons who go into UTT with CXC passes do an associate degree programme which is equivalent to a diploma programme in the British system. They do not go into a full bachelor’s degree programme. He knows that.

In his quest to discredit the fine institution of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, which is one of the best things that this Government has ever done, he comes up with this mumbo jumbo, mix and match terms, chop and change; takes

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a piece from this system; a piece from that system, put it in a pot and comes out with this gibberish. I put this on the record. The students who enter the UTT's system with CXC Grade I passes go on to do an associate degree programme which is equivalent to a diploma in the British system. This is exactly what happens in Great Britain when persons finish their O'levels, some can go to do diplomas or advanced level and then go on to university. It is identical.

The other fallacy that the Member for Caroni East keeps putting in the system is the difference between registration, accreditation and recognition. He mixes them in a pot like a UNC pelau and comes up with mumbo jumbo. I am going to assume on this occasion that the hon. Member for Caroni East does not know. He is ignorant. I would explain the difference between registration, accreditation and recognition. He is ignorant of the facts. [*Interruption*] The hon. Member is stating things that I never said. I never said that he was dumb and ignorant. I merely said that he was ignorant of the facts. Who the cap fits let them wear it. I never said that he was dumb and ignorant.

The fact of the matter is that when the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago examines an institution to see if it meets the requirements for registration, it is ensuring that that institution meets the minimum standards required for tertiary level institutions, that is that they have a proper curriculum and suitable faculties and facilities; and systems in place to review their programmes.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Registration is the first step. Before a programme can be accredited the institution must first be registered. It is completely different in the United States. I heard the Member for Caroni East carrying on about diploma mills in the United States. Again, he was demonstrating his ignorance of this system of tertiary education. In the United States, unlike Trinidad and Tobago, there is no legal requirement for accreditation. In Trinidad and Tobago we have passed a law, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act, Chap. 39:06. In our system it is a legal requirement that organizations and institutions offering tertiary education must be registered. If they are not registered they would be in breach of the law and subject to penalties and all that goes with being in breach of the accreditation law.

In the United States there is no law that requires Munroe College, for example, to submit itself to accreditation to one of the six regional accreditation bodies. Accreditation is voluntary. We are light years ahead of the United States. Out of ignorance the Members opposite say some things that are patently absurd. I



took careful notes of what the Member for Caroni East said, apart from his resentment of the fact that the University of Trinidad and Tobago has decided to get involved with Johns Hopkins University, one of the premier medical educational institutions in the world, because that comes out all the time, in the middle of his contribution he blurted out, “What is UTT doing in medicine?” He cried out; a Freudian slip if there was ever one.

When he was carrying on about Munroe College in the United States he did not understand. In Trinidad and Tobago, because of our recognition of the need for standards and to ensure that institutions that offer tertiary education meet certain requirements and this is what we need to do, we have passed the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Bill. There is no such Act in the United States. When you open your mouth, hon. Member, and paint Trinidad and Tobago in the worst way and say that we are now the capital of diploma mills of the Caribbean and use examples in the United States, you have no idea of what you are doing.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we have established the framework or systems to ensure that we do not become the capital of diploma mills in the Caribbean. In so doing, we are way ahead of endless other countries in the world. He does not know of what he speaks.

If he had read the Act—I heard him bleating about UTT has no system—he would have seen that clause 8 of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, Chap. 39:06, included in the functions of the Council is to establish relationships including joint accreditation exercises with regional and international accrediting and quality assurances bodies and to keep under review their systems of accreditation, procedures and practices. This is the fact as compared to the mythology that the Member for Caroni East has put into this House. The University of Trinidad and Tobago is required by law to keep its practices and procedures under review and to establish relationships with international accrediting bodies.

I could tell you, since you do not know hon. Member, that the Accreditation Council is recognized as a full member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. Do you want me to repeat that for you? The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago is internationally recognized as a full member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. They do not allow you to become a full member of that world organization just like that. Prof. Julien did not fly up and say, “Aye, ah want you all to allow the Accreditation Council to become a full member of your

international body.” Not the way you go about your business. I take serious offence to the untruths, misrepresentations, concoctions, fabrication and mischief that the Member for Caroni East has put into the system today.

The fact of the matter is that ACTT has published all the necessary information. If one were literate; if one could read; if one had, in fact, passed one’s examinations and could understand what is in this brochure, as registration, accreditation, recognition and what is the difference and since I am not sure that everybody on that side can read and understand, I will go into it.

**3.30 p.m.**

Since I am not sure everybody on that side can read and understand, let me go into the difference between registration, accreditation and recognition. I am reading from a brochure published by the Accreditation Council.

Registration is mandatory for all post secondary and tertiary level institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago.

Registration signifies that providers have met the minimum criteria for the delivery of post secondary and tertiary education.

There you have it, if you did not know it before.

The criteria for registration, since you do not know—you spent a whole hour here carrying on about not knowing what the ACTT is set up to do—if they have reviews or internal procedures. You do not know anything. I am going to tell you. I have my suspicions as to why you do not know. You cannot read. That is my view.

The criteria for registration focus on an evaluation of the institution's structure for governance and administration, its quality management system, its resource management, its teaching/learning process and its system for continual review and improvement. Those are the basic criteria for registration of a post secondary and a tertiary institution. Then you move on to accreditation. I am reading:

Across the globe, accreditation is conducted by private, non-governmental organizations or state-funded agencies created for the specific purpose of reviewing higher education institutions and programmes in order to assure academic quality, improve accountability and support improvement.

In many countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, accreditation is a voluntary process. However, institutions and programmes that are not accredited often do not enjoy public confidence or earn an international reputation. Accreditation is both a status and a process. It is a status granted to an educational

institution or programme that has been evaluated and found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. It is also the process used to evaluate the quality of the institution or programme and to assist in institutional or programme development. There are several criteria that must be met by institutions seeking accreditation.

Accreditation explores the institution and its programmes in greater depth than registration. It evaluates the institution's achievement of students' outcomes and there is a host of other criteria that are applied. It is a process. You start with registration where you have demonstrated that you have met the minimum requirements in terms of governance, teaching, quality control and so on. You demonstrate the minimum requirements, you achieve registration, then you present your programmes for much greater scrutiny for accreditation purposes. After you have achieved accreditation, then you look at recognition.

The law provides for qualifications awarded by institutions that are established outside Trinidad and Tobago, so this will also apply to institutions in Trinidad and Tobago which want their degrees to be recognized outside of Trinidad and Tobago.

Universally recognized is viewed as the approval by an authorized agency of the quality and acceptability of a legitimate educational institution and the qualification it awards. In the international context, an institutional programme that is accredited by a legitimate authority is only guaranteed acceptability within the jurisdiction in which it was accredited. Recognition is not guaranteed across national boundaries.

So, even though an institution may be registered and its programmes accredited in Trinidad and Tobago, it still may not be recognized in another country and the University of the West Indies, Faculty of Medical Sciences is a case in point. The Member for Caroni East likes to mislead the public and himself in terms of the recognition given to the medical degree programme at the University of the West Indies.

I state, for the record, that the Greater Medical Council of the United Kingdom has discredited the medical degree at the University of the West Indies. *[Interruption]* I am not giving way to you. *[Interruption]* I am not giving way.

**Mr. Speaker:** There is a Standing Order in which you can intervene.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 36(5).

**Mr. Speaker:** Not 36(5). I think it is 34. Check it. I think you can come back.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will come back to you on that. He is misleading the House.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, I am on my feet. He had his chance to speak.

I came to this Parliament and I changed the law to allow the—*[Interruption]* The Parliament changed the law: the Government with the support of Members opposite. That was one of the few Bills that you supported. We changed the law to allow the medical degree of the University of the West Indies to be recognized and the schedule of degrees to be accepted for persons to be registered as doctors in Trinidad and Tobago.

If the Government had not come to this Parliament—

**Mr. Speaker:** Let me check something.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** If the Minister of Health had not come to this Parliament and changed the law to allow the medical degree from the University of the West Indies to be accepted without it being accepted by the Greater Medical Council, then none of the graduates of the St. Augustine Campus would have been allowed to practise medicine in Trinidad and Tobago. The Member for Caroni East can put any spin he wants on it.

The fact is that the Greater Medical Council of the United Kingdom decided to stop accepting and recognizing the degree with the University of the West Indies. It ties into the point that I just made that even though your institution may be registered in Trinidad and Tobago by the Accreditation Council, its programmes may be accredited, but that does not guarantee automatic recognition of the degree programme across national boundaries.

These are the things the hon. Member has to understand. He keeps fumbling with the whole concept of the difference between recognition, registration and accreditation. I submit that there is grave suspicion as to his educational qualifications.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not think you can question the Member's qualifications. They are well known.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Actually, I do, but I will leave it there. I have explained, for the benefit of the Member for Caroni East, the difference between registration, accreditation and recognition.

The fact that the Accreditation Council has not, in a whimsical fashion, gone and registered all the organizations operating in Trinidad and Tobago that offer tertiary education is proof that the opposite is true in terms of the arguments put forward by the Member for Caroni East. The Member was at pains to nasty the name of Trinidad and Tobago; to paint Trinidad and Tobago as a terrible place

and to tell the international community that in Trinidad and Tobago there are fly-by-night diploma mills just giving degrees. That is half of the course when it comes from the other side. All they do, in every waking minute, is damage the reputation of Trinidad and Tobago. They are unpatriotic. [*Desk thumping*] They do not care about Trinidad and Tobago. In order to achieve their narrow, selfish political agendas, they do not care what they do to the reputation of this country.

The fact is that the Accreditation Council has been examining 75 institutions which are being considered for registration and which purport to be carrying on the business of tertiary education. Out of those 75, the Accreditation Council has registered only 19 and that is the level of rigour of academic scrutiny of the integrity of the system. It is the opposite.

That is why I keep coming back. There is a problem here. There is a literacy problem on the part of the Member for Caroni East. If he cannot see that 75 institutions are presenting themselves as candidates for registration and the Accreditation Council has registered only 19; if he cannot see that as proof of the integrity of the system, then who could—[*Interruption*] You are functionally illiterate as far as I am concerned when it comes to a lot of matters. [*Interruption*] You said it!

**Mr. Speaker:** I am on my feet. You are raising Standing Order 36(4), which says:

“It shall be out of order to use offensive or insulting language about Members of either Chamber of the Legislature.”

What you must be very careful of is the repartee. You have implicated yourself somehow.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** He said he was functionally illiterate. I was just agreeing with him. I do not think I committed any offence. I was helping with the pronunciation of the words "functionally illiterate".

Let me assist the Member for Siparia who did not hear. The Member for Caroni East said that he was functionally illiterate and I agreed with him.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I never said I was functionally illiterate. I have to stop him.

**Mr. Speaker:** Take your seat, please! Member for Diego Martin North/East, proceed and stop calling names!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** To demonstrate the level of ignorance we have to deal with in this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, the Member stated, as if he were some authority figure, that the University of the West Indies has no problem registering the University of Grenada.

In the first place, there is no such thing as a University of Grenada. If he could read—I am struggling with the concept that he cannot read—he would know that it is St. Georges University. There is no University of Grenada. [*Interruption*] He said “University of Grenada” over and over. [*Interruption*] We will deal with you in a little while. I am not sure your degree is accredited.

The Member for Caroni East said that he has no problem registering St. Georges University. This demonstrates the level of ignorance. Do you really think that somebody like the Member for Caroni East would ever be in a position to accredit or register a university in a foreign country? It is a complete misunderstanding of the process. It is not up to you whether St. Georges University has accredited programmes or not. It is entirely up to them and the accrediting bodies from which they seek accreditation.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the St. Georges University will not be seeking accreditation from the hon. Member for Caroni East. I think that the institution has a little more intelligence than that. This just demonstrates the complete confusion in the mind of the Member for Caroni East. It is sad.

He taught you? I think you should send back your degree.

**3.45 p.m.**

The other thing that became so evident from the contribution of the Member for Caroni East, again, is that he does not understand the revolution in tertiary education that has taken place under this PNM administration. He has no understanding of what has happened in this country over the last six and one-half years, no understanding.

When we came into office in December 2001, when President Robinson had the foresight to appoint the hon. Member for San Fernando East as Prime Minister—I remember that day when the President was talking about streams flowing into rivers and rivers flowing into seas. He was talking about the corruption of the UNC at the time. He appointed the hon. Member for San Fernando East as Prime Minister, because of morality. He took a morality position, quite correctly, and appointed the Member for San Fernando East as Prime Minister. When we came into government after that historic decision on the part of former President Robinson, only 11 per cent of school leavers were involved in post secondary or tertiary education, just 11 per cent. Is the figure now over 30 per cent? What is the figure? It is 36 per cent. I am certain that the information will be made available to this Parliament in due course. The fact of the matter is that there were just about 12,000 or 15,000, a small number of persons who left the secondary school system—I cannot remember the number. It was under 10,000 or less than 10,000—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** 10 per cent.

**Hon. C. Imbert:**—persons who exited the secondary school system in Trinidad and Tobago were enrolled in post secondary or tertiary education. That is less than 8 per cent under the UNC. Now, it is 36 per cent and, therefore, that is 30,000 or 40,000 persons who are now enrolled in post-secondary and tertiary education. If the Member for Caroni East does not understand that there is a difference between 10,000 people and 40,000 people, if he does not understand that 40,000 is four times greater than 10,000 and that is a 300 per cent or 400 per cent increase, depending on how you look at it, then I would have to say that he is also enumerate. Enumerate is the parallel to illiterate. He cannot count because if—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** He cannot continue like this.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please take your seat. You cannot use insulting language. The Member is claiming that you are insulting him. Be careful.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, I was not aware that the word “enumerate” was an insulting word. I was not aware of that. I did not know that I could not say that the Member for Caroni East is enumerate, because I believe he is. Let me go back to the figures now. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** No, it all depends on the context in which you are using it, having accused the hon. Member of being illiterate and now you are saying he is enumerate, it is that context.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Very well, Mr. Speaker, I shall abide by your ruling. What I would say, therefore, Mr. Speaker, is that he has no concept of numbers—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—and mental paralysis.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** You must have some kind of mental acuity first before you could have mental paralysis. The fact is that, at the present time, there are approximately 40,000 persons enrolled in tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago. I am told the figure is 36 per cent.

For the benefit of the Member for Siparia, who also has difficulty in dealing with numbers, the cohort that we are speaking about is of the order of 125,000 persons. That is the cohort, 125,000 persons. If you take 36 per cent of 125,000 persons, you will get approximately 40,000. Do I have to go through the calculations with them or are you now satisfied that they are enumerate, “dat dey cyah count”?

The fact is that in a period of six years, the PNM administration of which I am a proud Member, by the work of three Ministers, actually four Ministers of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, because Minister Montano laid the foundation, I developed the institutions, Minister Abdul-Hamid expanded the system and now Minister Kangaloo is taking it to higher heights. I do not know if I have put it in context. Four Ministers of tertiary education all had a part to play in terms of developing this system. That is why we have been able to take the numbers enrolled in tertiary education from 10,000 to 40,000, in a period of six years. There are very few countries in the world that can boast of that kind of explosion in tertiary education. I dare say, not many.

First and foremost, it was all about equity, because under them it was all about inequity. Under the UNC, only the privileged few could get into university. I sensed a certain elitism in the statements coming out from the Member for Caroni East, when he complains about the criteria for entry into the programmes at St. Georges University, which he mistakenly calls University of Grenada. He complains that in determining the persons who should be accepted into St. Georges University to study medicine with partial funding from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, all sorts of extra curricular activities are being assessed, in terms of determining who the beneficiary should be.

I detect a certain elitism in the manner in which the Member for Caroni East puts forward his arguments. If left up to them, only the rich and the privileged few would be able to enter university in this country, because that was the very essence of the Dollar for Dollar Programme. You must have the first dollar before you could get the second dollar. Under the UNC, only people with money, only somebody who had \$10,000, \$20,000 or \$30,000, not the person from John John, the Valley Line in San Fernando, Barrackpore, Enterprise or the depressed areas of the country. They would not have the \$20,000, \$25,000 or \$30,000 in order to qualify for the other dollar from the UNC, in order to go on to university education. Therefore, what was in fact an insidious policy of filtering out people entering the tertiary education system, so that only the privileged few would be able to access tertiary education and, therefore, they would maintain this elitist control on the education system in Trinidad and Tobago. First, that is a wicked and evil approach to education, where you guarantee that only the right and the privileged few could get into university. But we have changed all of that.

When you look at the fundamentals of the GATE programme, there is no income qualification or geographic qualification. Once you are accepted to a tertiary level institution that is recognized by the GATE programme, then you get



free tuition paid for by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, under the caring hands of the PNM administration. That is so different to that insidious Dollar for Dollar Programme which promoted elitism. Facts are stubborn things as the Member for Diego Martin Central said. They do not go away. We have opened up the system. Now, the student from John John and Barrackpore, once they make the grade—of course we have the problem of people leaking the exam papers to try and ensure that a particular category of persons gets into the system, but we would get over that—then like anybody else, they would be able to afford to go on to university education, get their degree and take their rightful place in society. That is the revolution in education that the PNM has brought to this country over the last six years. Therein lies the difference between us and them. We have opened up the system, so that everybody has an equal chance. We have truly leveled the playing field and allowed access for tertiary education for all in this country, everybody who qualifies. That is at the root of the arguments of the Member for Caroni East.

In addition to this insidious mentality that only the right and the privileged few must go to university, they are also opposed to the system of registration of institutions. If we listen to them, they would want us to close down all of these 75 institutions. What would that do? We would go right back to square one, so that only the rich and the privileged few would be able to get into university in this country. We would have none of it.

This is why we have come to the Parliament today and we are of the view that another year is required. There are a number of institutions that have been registered, even the University of the West Indies that he is so fond of, was only—[*Interruption*]

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

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I thank hon. Members for extending my time, especially the Member for Caroni East. Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Caroni East bothered to read the publications of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, he would see in the March edition of its newsletter, brochure or whatever this document is—it is the March issue, *Act Now*, a publication of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago—he would have seen that the University of the

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West Indies was recently registered by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago for a period of three years, March 27 2008—March 26, 2011. If we were to follow the arguments of the Member for Caroni East, then UWI should be discredited. UWI only got registration three months ago. Prior to that—I would read it again, Member for Oropouche East. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** It illegal?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The University of the West Indies was recently registered by the Accreditation Council for the period March 27, 2008—March 26, 2011. There is nothing exactly about it. When the Accreditation Council Act was passed in this Parliament, we had assumed at the time that tertiary level institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago would need a grace period of approximately two years, in order to get their house in order, in order to qualify and meet the requirements for registration. That was subsequently extended for a further period of two years, making it four years. We are now asking for a further extension of one year, to make five years. The point I am making is that if we had not extended the grace period from two years to four years, then the great University of the West Indies would have had to close down and send home all its students. If we follow the gospel according to the Member for Caroni East, that all institutions that are not acting in accordance with the law should be closed down, then UWI should have been closed down two years ago.

**4.00 p.m.**

I do not expect the Member to know that UWI only achieved registration three months ago. I do not expect him to know that. That is why he keeps disputing the fact that UWI is no longer registered with the Greater Medical Council of Great Britain, but it is. He can say what he wants but those are the facts.

The first institution to be registered by the Accreditation Council was not the University of the West Indies. In fact, it was the University of the Southern Caribbean, which is formerly the Seventh Day-Adventist College in Maracas, St. Joseph. This college has now graduated to the level of a university, and it is now called the University of the Southern Caribbean. It was the first institution in Trinidad and Tobago to be registered by the Accreditation Council.

I realize that Members opposite do not read and they do not understand, so I am simply educating them. I am reading now from the November 2007 publication of the Accreditation Council, where it confirms that on Wednesday November, 14, 2007, the Accreditation Council hosted an event to celebrate the achievement of the first institution to have earned the distinction of being registered and placed on the national register of post secondary and tertiary

institutions, and this was the University of the Southern Caribbean. So, the first institution registered was USC, followed by other institutions and then followed by the UWI in March 2008.

Putting aside the propaganda that was uttered by the hon. Member opposite—I know what his problem is. He is afraid of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. I know that. He is afraid that the monopoly that he and his friends have in the medical faculty up at St. Augustine has been broken. [*Desk thumping*] That is why he is so opposed to the St. Georges University. That was the first situation where the stranglehold that the Member for Caroni East and his cronies up at the Medical Faculty at UWI in St. Augustine—that was the first chink in the armour when the Government of Trinidad and Tobago began supporting students who went to the St. Georges University.

I remember, at the beginning, they were trying to describe St. Georges University as a fly by night institution. At the time, as Minister of Health, it fell to me to go to Grenada with the Chief Medical Officer and a team of medical professionals from Trinidad and Tobago to have meetings with the faculty of St. Georges University in Grenada to take a look at their facilities; to look at their laboratories; and to examine their curriculum to determine whether St. Georges University was a suitable institution which the Government of Trinidad and Tobago could partner with in terms of assisting students to get their medical degrees. It fell to me to go to Grenada.

I remember in the discussions with them, the doctors who went with me from the Ministry of Health—the Chief Medical Officer and so forth—were astonished at the quality and level of medical education at St. Georges University. In fact, I remember one of them remarking to me that it was superior to the level of education offered at the Faculty of Medical Sciences in Trinidad, and there is some merit in that argument.

At the St. Georges University in Grenada, as the students go through their courses over their five-year period, they do medical examinations to allow them to practise in the United States of America. I think the Member for Caroni East has some familiarity with the North American medical examinations. By the time a student graduated from St. Georges University, he would have passed the qualifying examinations to allow him to practise in North America.

So, when persons in Trinidad and Tobago discovered that right in Grenada there is a medical school that is as good as, or better than the Faculty of Medical Sciences at St. Augustine, that is why you had this huge demand. It turned from

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being an institution that was “mauvais langued” and described in the worst possible terms by persons such as the Member for Caroni East, into an institution of choice. What other reason could there possibly be? If the Member for Caroni East did not think that the medical degree offered by St. Georges University was of a high qualify, why would he be carrying on as to what are the criteria for entry and obtaining a scholarship and so on? Obviously, the degree programme is of considerable merit.

The other point that I wish to deal with—the Member for Caroni East has the habit of coming in here and beating UTT every time he gets an opportunity. UTT is not a member of this House, so it cannot defend itself. I noticed he made reference to some character who used to work at UTT; the Vice-President, Finance. He called his name, so I am not doing anything different to what he did. He said that the Vice-President of Finance, the former Mr. Fitz-Andrews allegedly made the following statement: “I am not prepared to work in a cesspool of corruption.” These were the words uttered by the hon. Member for Caroni East. Those were the allegations made by the Member, but let us deal with the facts.

Mr. Speaker, I have in front of me a report on the situation that led to the departure of that gentleman from the UTT. The fact of the matter is—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Who prepared it?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Who prepared it? It is the Internal Audit Division of NGC.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Himself to himself!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The Internal Audit Division of NGC was engaged by UTT to conduct investigations to examine matters surrounding settlement of expenses and credit card charges claimed by Kenneth Fitz-Andrews, UTT's Vice-President, Finance and Administration and to provide an opinion and advice based on findings of the investigation.

When you go to the document and you look at the conclusions, they looked at a whole number of things. They looked at claims for relocation expenses; credit card expenses and all sorts of claims made by this gentleman when he was at UTT. The document is scandalous. I am in no position to judge on the truth or otherwise of the information, but if you look at the document the information is scandalous.

Mr. Fitz-Andrews got into a dispute with the UTT because, according to them, he made a number of fraudulent misrepresentations with the intent to receive money from UTT under false pretences. He applied for reimbursement where there was no evidence of expenditure. He used the credit card given to him by UTT to

make personal transactions for himself and his family. When you go through this document, it is a litany of allegations of financial misconduct. [*Interruption*] Do you want it? I am going to give it to you. It is not a problem. It is a litany of allegations of financial misconduct on the part of Mr. Fitz-Andrews.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Just allegations.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Oh yeah! Internal Audit Department allegation! I see.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** He could not handle Ken Julien's corruption.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Let me just read from page 15 of the document. Personal purchases via UTT procurement system, \$61,357; Mr. Fitz-Andrews purchased airline tickets costing \$61,000 for his family through UTT's procurement system when he had no authority or approval to do so. He utilized \$37,000 of UTT's funds to purchase airline tickets for himself and his family before requesting the committee's approval—this is the UTT's committee. He committed UTT and used \$23,000 of its funds to purchase airline tickets for his family after the committee withheld its approval.

**Mr. Manning:** Say that again.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Mr. Andrews purchased airline tickets costing \$61,000 for his family through UTT's procurement system when he had no authority to do so.

**Mr. Manning:** They told him not to do it and he did it.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** He committed UTT and used \$23,000 of its funds to purchase airline tickets for his family after the committee withheld its approval.

**Mr. Manning:** They said no, and he did it.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** They are not allegations. Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to go in—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Could you give us the date of the report, please?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Sure. It is dated June 12, 2006.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Further, since 2006, has any action been taken against this person? You are talking about impropriety, misconduct and fraud. Has any action been taken against him from 2006 to now? As far as I know, Mr. Fitz-Andrews was dismissed and action was taken to recover the money that UTT concluded was due to them.

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The point I am making is that whenever the Member for Caroni East came into this Chamber and uses Mr. Fitz-Andrews as his source of

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alleged corruption in UTT, he never disclosed that there was a dispute between UTT and Mr. Fitz-Andrews involving the alleged misappropriation of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Not once did the Member for Caroni East indicate that!

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Member, would you kindly give way? Are you aware that there is a court matter pending with respect to these very allegations? [Interruption]

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not understand the question. All of these allegations are filed before the court and which are public documents. [Interruption] Madam Deputy Speaker, you see when I have to talk about how I am worried about people and whether they really passed their exams or not, I have to get worried. When the Member for Caroni East can say that an affidavit filed in a court of law in Trinidad and Tobago is not a public document—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is a public document.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** You just said that it is not.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I said it is.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the allegations filed against the gentleman are a matter of public record. There is a dispute between the gentleman and UTT and, therefore, I would pay no credence whatsoever to statements made by the gentleman in question.

The point I am making is the political dishonesty of the Members opposite. They hold up this man as a man of high virtue in order to tarnish the reputation of persons at the UTT, but they never disclosed that they are aware that the individual is accused of gross impropriety. [Desk thumping] That is the problem I have with them. Political dishonesty! You cannot use this individual to make any claims of any substance against the UTT. He has been accused of gross financial impropriety. I hope the Member for Caroni East understands what I am saying. Your allegations hold no water.

In terms of the Bill, in order to answer one of the questions asked by the Member for Caroni East—the Member for Caroni East does not seem to understand the difference between registration and provisional registration.

**4.15 p.m.**

What this Bill seeks to do is to create a category of provisional registration. During his contribution, the Member for Caroni East carried on at length about what is the meaning of provisional registration. He implied that it is something in

the minds of the people at the Accreditation Council, and that there were no criteria in terms of granting the status of provisional registration to institutions.

Again, I would have to accuse the Member for Caroni East of political dishonesty, because he knows that within the medical profession there is a system called provisional registration. Not so, Member for Diego Martin Central? Within the registration of doctors in Trinidad and Tobago there is a system for provisional registration, is that not so?

And the hon. Member for Caroni East, who claims to be a distinguished doctor, and as a doctor in Trinidad and Tobago will know the difference between full registration and provisional registration; and will know the criteria applied to full registration and to provisional registration, and that a person who is granted provisional registration appears on the face of it, *prima facie*, to meet the requirements to obtain registration in due course, but has not yet satisfied the accrediting body or the authority in question, that they do in fact meet the requirements for full registration, and therefore the person is given provisional registration.

I am sure that the distinguished doctor from Caroni East, over the years, would have had to adjudicate from time to time, on applications for provisional registration to be a medical practitioner in Trinidad and Tobago, and he would therefore understand the clear difference between full registration and provisional registration; what are the criteria for provisional and what are the criteria for full. I am sure he knows all of this, but he is coming into this House to try and fool people and ask all of these inane questions, "What does provisional mean?" Provisional means exactly that. It means provisional.

I have been debarred from calling him illiterate, but it boggles the mind that the Member for Caroni East does not understand that provisional means not yet permanent; it means temporary. How else can one describe provisional registration? Clearly, the power is now being given to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago to look at an institution that may have applied for full registration; to determine that the institution is well on the way to meeting the requirements for full registration; it is not a fly-by-night institution; it is not a half-way house; it has most of the requirements already to obtain full registration and therefore they give it provisional registration—like the UNC.

So, if you look at what we are doing very carefully, these institutions that do not qualify for full registration will be given provisional registration for one year in the first instance, and then we are giving the Council, because we know that Trinidad and Tobago is an emerging society; we know that many of these First

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World systems that we are seeking to implement in Trinidad and Tobago will, of necessity, take some considerable time before the institutional memory is acquired in Trinidad and Tobago, and therefore, to be safe, we have allowed for a further period of one year at the discretion of the Accreditation Council and it could only be that way.

It is only the Accreditation Council that has the resources; that has the know—how; that has the technology required to establish whether an institution will eventually meet the requirements of full registration and should therefore be granted provisional; whether having given them provisional registration for a period of one year, they should be allowed to get another three months or six months, as the case may be, when it is apparent that within that additional period they will meet the requirements for full registration. I can use an example as simple as a driver's permit. You get a provisional permit, a learner's permit; you are allowed—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** You said that about 50 times.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Yes, I will say it 1,000 times, so that it would sink into your head.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** 43(1); 43(1).

**Hon. C. Imbert:** In the system of—[*Interruption*] sure—driver's permits in Trinidad and Tobago, there is provision for a provisional licence and when you get a provisional licence you are allowed to do certain things. You can drive on certain roads, at certain times, in the company of somebody who has their full driver's permit and so on; all in the concept of what is the difference between provisional acceptance.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Standing Order 43(1). He does it to us all the time. You are famous—

**Hon. Member:** No, no, that does not apply.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** He is now explaining exactly what he meant by provisional. If it is repetitious I will indicate, but he can go ahead.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker, it will do the Member for Siparia well if she will read 43(1) properly. Standing Order 43(1) does not apply until the Speaker has called the attention of the House to a Member and thereafter, a Member—[*Interruption*] No, it does not apply; there is a prerequisite. In the same way that you have provisional registration there is a provisional requirement in 43(1). [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] The Speaker must first draw the attention of the House to the conduct of the Member, and having done that, in other words, the person would



have been provisionally declared to be repetitious and thereafter, a Member of the House, after the Member has been provisionally warned by the Speaker, can draw it to the attention of the House. That is when 43(1) kicks in. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Carry on. You are provisionally correct.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Therefore, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have clearly elucidated, provisionally and permanently, the difference between provisional and full. [*Laughter*]

You know, I really think with something as important as education, that Members opposite, when you come into this House make some important points.

**Hon. Member:** He is killing some time.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** It is mine to kill. Hon. Members opposite, you should be congratulating the PNM Government for increasing the enrolment of persons in tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago by 400 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] You should be congratulating the PNM Government for introducing the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses programme, which allows everybody's child to enter university. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] Depends on how you calculate it. It is four times; 40 is 4 times 10; it depends on how you calculate it; it depends on what the numerator is and what the denominator is.

Madam Deputy Speaker, do you want me to demonstrate again that they are innumerate? I will have to, you know. [*Interruption*] Yes, yes, yes, and you also have during the fantastic period of this PNM administration, the expansion of the University of the West Indies, from 8,000—16,000. [*Desk thumping*]

It is the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that gave the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies the necessary financial support—

**Mr. Manning:** And the mandate.

**Hon. C. Imbert:**—and the mandate and the policy direction to double the enrolment of students at St. Augustine within a particular period of time. And we congratulate the University of the West Indies for boosting their enrolment from 8,000—16,000, with the assistance of the caring PNM administration. [*Desk thumping*] You should be congratulating the Government for that.

You should be congratulating the PNM Government for passing the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. You should be congratulating the PNM Government for establishing the University of Trinidad and Tobago. It is we that put the systems in place to ensure the integrity and the propriety of the education system in Trinidad and Tobago.

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In fact, where would Trinidad and Tobago be without the People's National Movement? [*Desk thumping*] Where would the Members opposite have acquired their tertiary education? There are some opposite who have degrees of dubious pedigree. [*Laughter*] I still have to ask whether the alleged degrees that the Member for Oropouche East allegedly has, have enjoyed an accreditation of any kind, in any country in the world. I still wonder whether the degrees allegedly obtained by the Member for Oropouche East have any credibility or whether they are like a degree that a quite famous person in this country has from Pacific Western. One of your friends had a degree from Pacific Western. One of your friends does have a degree from Pacific Western and you know who I am talking about.

In this debate what I expected from the Member for Caroni East, is a clinical examination of Chap. 39:06 of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago; a critical review of what the Accreditation Council was set up to do; a clinical examination of the progress made by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago over the last four years. I dare say the Accreditation Council has done quite well. They started from scratch and that is what the hon. Members opposite do not understand. We in Trinidad and Tobago have developed a First World, first class tertiary accreditation institution from scratch and it has now evolved to the level where it is able to register an institution like the University of the West Indies, where it will now move on to accreditation of degree programmes and so on, of various institutions in Trinidad and Tobago, and for that we should be extremely proud. We should all be proud to be citizens Trinidad and Tobago, that we have these kinds of systems and we have these institutions that will ensure the integrity of our education system and the future of our children's education.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar** (*Siparia*): Thank you very much. Madam Deputy Speaker, this amendment to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago Act of 2004, will in effect bring to 300 per cent the amount of time it would have taken this Government to put its act in order. [*Desk thumping*] It was first two years under the parent Act, and we came one year late in 2007; we were here at 3.00 a.m. in the morning debating that—[*Interruption*] Would you please ask the Member; he had 75 minutes; so you would just be quiet; you had 75 minutes!

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Please, hon. Member for Siparia. Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Member is asking for protection so that we can hear her contribution. [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** I have one and a half, thank you. So, we came back in 2007; we were here till 3.00 a.m. in the morning and so on; the Member

for Chaguanas East, I think, was the person who piloted that amendment to take us another two years and today, we are in effect going for one year with an option to renew, six years.

So, when the Member talks about 400 per cent and all kinds of percentages and says we are innumerate, I hope he would appreciate they are proposing six years to do what they should have done in two years. This is an example of what happens with this Government when it comes to implementation. They come in here and they talk the talk, but they will not walk the walk. [*Desk thumping*] When we look at the *Hansard* for the debate on the 2007 amendment, we see the hon. Minister making all the pronouncements, “Look, I have put this in place; one, we have established the Accreditation Council; we brought staff on; we have gone with the international institutions to be recognized by them, by NARIC and many others and now we are full steam ahead to get the registration done.”

It is totally fallacious; it is totally wrong for the Member for Diego Martin North/East to come and talk about us on this side wanting to shut down the universities and shut down the institutions and that UWI because they have now been accredited in 2008, we want them to shut down and so on. Who we want to shut down is that Government, because they have failed. [*Desk thumping*] They have failed to do their jobs in the time frame that they themselves set for themselves.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will come back after the tea break.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the sitting of this House is suspended until 5.00 p.m.

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

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

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I listened very carefully to the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, the Minister, and I did not really hear reasons being given. Before we took the break we were talking about the additional time that is being requested by this amendment for the Accreditation Council to get all the tertiary level institutions, post secondary institutions accredited, according to the law. But I did not really hear the reasons for the delay that we now have to take a further two years, one year in the first instance with an option to renew. I did not really get any reasons for those.

The Minister pointed out the number of institutions that had complied or were in compliance and others who had applied and so on, but I did not really get the reasons that this additional time is being needed to bring the institutions under the

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Act. So, in the winding up, I trust the Minister would provide some of those reasons for this honourable Chamber, because I think it is important in the context, where, on the last occasion when we were here, and if we look at the history of the legislation and the statements made in this honourable House with respect to time and time lines for accrediting institutions, I think it is important for us to know why.

On the last occasion the then Minister who is now the Member for Chaguanas East, had set out what he had done up to that date since being in that ministry and Act 16 of 2004 being passed and the Minister outlined the steps that he had taken. He said:

“In two years, it was contemplated that the Accreditation Council would be fully established and having been established, it would then work with the institutions so that the institutions could be upgraded where necessary to meet the quality standards as determined by the Accreditation Council.”

He then said:

“...what have we done so far?”

and he went on to list those things. Firstly, the board for the council was appointed in September 2004. He then says:

“Five months later, the board having conducted its search, hired an Executive Director, and that was done in February, 2005 and the secretariat was established.”

He then said that there was:

“...a phased recruitment process during the period March to October 2005.”

Further, they had difficulty in recruiting persons in the field because there was a shortage of persons qualified in that field, so that they found it necessary that having recruited persons, to expose the staff to further training.

So, that is four reasons. Then an office was established in July 2005 and, thereafter, they went about dealing with getting themselves recognized and being members of international organizations that deal with accreditation. That was a good step. That is very important.

I think it is also important to point out to the Member for Diego Martin North/East, through your good self, that it is not true, it is incorrect when he made the statement that Trinidad and Tobago has this Accreditation Council and the United States is different and they do not have any. If you want to say what you said, please do.

**Mr. Imbert:** I thank the Member for giving way. What I said—allow me to elucidate—was that in Trinidad and Tobago we have a law that requires registration of tertiary level institutions. That is not the situation in the United States. That is the difference.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Madam Deputy Speaker, my recollection—and I am sure the *Hansard* is there; it will show the record that the hon. Minister attempted to say to the Member for Caroni East in terms of his statement that in the United States, yes he said it was a different situation, but he went on to imply that we could not use them as an example, and their whole accreditation system was so different from ours that we could not depend on them.

I admit that he did say that we have a law and they do not have a law, but that will not change the system of accreditation in terms of standards. So, I want to read from the *Hansard* what the then Minister who is now the Member for Chaguanas East said. He said:

“The US was actually the one that attracted our attention more than the other two. We found there that there were six regions for accreditation...”

And he goes on to list the six associations:

“The largest among these was the North-Central Association of Colleges and Schools. That particular accrediting body had over 100 years experience.”

The Minister then went on to say that using that networking:

“We identified in the North-Central Association of Colleges and Schools in the United States, and we established a relationship with them.”

And the purpose was to get guidance, on the structures and systems that needed to be established.

So, if we are taking from the US system, the guidance, the structures and so on, it would seem to me that we can compare apples with apples, that is to say the system under our law and the system under the US situation. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Apples for one another.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Yes, apples for apples, and we will come back to dealing with apples and oranges in a moment because when you talk about percentages we will have that. I said you agreed that it is voluntary, but because it has such a long history—you know, that is a difference between our jurisdictions where our entire constitutional provisions, they are only conventions in the mother of all Parliaments and in Britain, they are not codified into laws as our

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Constitution, but because they have been built up year after year over such long periods, they have become constitutional conventions.

In the same way with the accreditation systems—NARIC for example—out of this organization they are speaking of, NARIC which is also a very important one for Great Britain, those have been set. They have been there for years; they have been established over time and, therefore, have, in effect the force, if not on statute books, they do have the force of law that people cannot operate without accrediting through these various national bodies that are there. So, I repeat, if you take apples and apples, the system is very much the same, or that contemplated for Trinidad. I should not say it is the same. That contemplated in Act 16 of 2004 is basically based on the words of the then Minister, they had taken guidance on the structures and systems that we need to establish here.

So, I was giving the reasons the Minister outlined for the failure to have everything done within the time frame, within the 2004 law. I gave you four reasons that were listed and I continue to quote:

“Over the last two and a half to three years, we spent considerable time putting in place policies, systems and practices to earn international recognition.”

So that was the fourth reason.

They then went on to say that they developed their own document. After dealing with the institution called NARIC, they had a very comprehensive database and so on. And using also:

“the North-Central Association in the United States and our relation with NARIC and what we have learned from other bodies, we have developed our own document called Policies, Procedures and Processes which would guide the operations of the Accreditation Council...”

When we were here 3 o'clock in the morning debating the 2007—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The 2006.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** No, we did it here in 2007. In fact, it is Act 16 of 2007. It was debated in the Senate in November 2006 and it was debated in this House on June 23, 2007, so it took almost six to eight months more for it to actually to be debated here and thereafter to become law. When we were there on June 23 at 3.00 a.m. in the morning, the Minister really did try to give an assurance: “look, I have been working over the last two years; these are the things we have done; all the processes are now in place because we had to take some

time; this was something new and we are all set to go.” It is like, “on your marks, get set, ready to go”, and they were going to shoot off at that point.

Here we are now, two years later, and we are still at the same point. We are basically at the same point where these institutions have not been brought into compliance, and I made the point before the break that it is not that this side is saying we will shut down these because they have not complied, we are saying you have failed to do your duty according to the law to bring them into compliance. [*Desk thumping*] You need to bring them into compliance. And I quote again from the then Minister—I really do not want to ask the Member for Diego Martin North/East to be quiet again, but, through you, I may have to do so—the *Hansard* record on June 23, 2007 as follows:

“We expect really to complete the process by July 2008—provided this amendment is passed.”

And it was passed. We did not withhold our votes. It was passed, and the Minister continued:

“After July 2008 institutions that are not registered would then be operating illegally and then the Accreditation Council would have to take action to ensure that they do not operate, because the legislation would deem them to be operating illegal after that...date.”

So, if it was anybody who was talking about shutting down, it was the hon. Minister at the time because he gave the assurance that they would put things in place and they would be able to be having all these institutions in compliance with the law. Now, the fact that that has not happened, I think there is a duty on the part of the Minister to present us with the reasons why for two years you had all the systems already set to go but, yet still, we want two more years to make institutions come into compliance.

So, that is the first point, really, that I would like to raise in this debate and when we look at the history of the legislation, as I say, we are here, after 2004—we are in 2008—dealing with this amendment, again, on a kind of brinkmanship level, you know. They operate on the eve of the moment. That is why on the last occasion at 3 o'clock in the morning I was speaking in this Parliament and the Minister, thereafter, did the winding up. We went through that whole night because it was brought right on the brink of the expiration of what was set in the 2004 Act.

Here we are today, on Monday which is not an ordinary Parliament day and I have no difficulty with that, because I am a full-time parliamentarian, so any day

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is a Parliament day. Once in the hands of the Lord, I have no problem being here. But here we have chosen an extraordinary day, an unusual day, once again on the eve of the expiration. It is brinksmanship. Did the Accreditation Council not know or did the Minister not know—and when did they know—that we were going to run out of time, this would expire, and how many institutions are not—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is supposed to be 75.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** It is 75 in and many others out. When did we know? I raise that because it brings me to the whole issue of the ordering of the Order Paper and the priorities that are being given to legislation in this honourable Chamber.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as we know, there are issues of burning concern in this nation. On top of the agenda is the whole issue of crime. Here it is we have received notification, and on the Order Paper we have a matter which is dealing with approval for the person nominated by the Police Service Commission to be Commissioner of Police.

I must say, with due respect to the Member for Diego Martin North/East, that when this issue was raised—I read in the newspaper, if the report is correct—that the Member was saying, “Well, they could have given up their Private Members' Day and we could have done it that Friday”. But it was laid on June 18: you had a whole week, but your answer was, “give up the Private Members' Day”, the one day in the month, when we had Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. So, if you were serious about that, as you are doing with this one—you brought us here on Monday. Lay it on June 18, which was the Friday. Why could we not come on Monday like we are doing here? Because you say, this is going to expire and this is priority. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, the greatest priority in the country right now is the fight against crime [*Desk thumping*] and that should have been given priority. That should have been dealt with in this Chamber. It became even more disgusting and sickening when we know that it is a priority order for us to deal with in this Parliament, when it is that the Police Service Commission goes behind their own reasoning: they select the top man for post of Commissioner of Police and then they go and put the second man to act.

**5.15 p.m.**

If we had debated that matter in Parliament, we would not have had that ludicrous situation. I talked about the ordering of the Order Paper and the priorities of this Government. When I look at the history of the legislation, as I say, we can see several things. I am sure that the Member is looking to see whether I am anticipating the debate. I am not debating the approval. I am talking



about the ordering and priority ordering of himself, as Leader of Government Business, and the Government in this honourable Chamber. What is given priority in this House are not the matters of concern for the citizens out there as priority issues. That is the point I am making.

When I look at today's amendment and the parent legislation, I see matters of serious concern. This Government continues to break the law with impunity. They break the law with impunity, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have seen it on other occasions, but in this particular law, the Government is breaking the law. Again, these are issues that we should have heard from the hon. Minister. Section 22 of Act No. 16 of 2004, which is the parent Act that we are attempting to amend today, states very clearly and mandates as follows:

"22(1) The accounts of the Council"—and the council here refers to the Accreditation Council—"shall be audited annually by the Auditor General or by an auditor authorized by the Auditor General."

Madam Deputy Speaker, since that Council was established on September 2004, in audited accounts have come to this Parliament. So 2004 came and went; 2005 came and went; 2006, came and went; we are in the middle of 2007 and no accountability whatsoever from this Accreditation Council. It is important. Do you know why? Because when we look at the funding arrangements, we would see that millions of dollars have been allocated to and spent by the Accreditation Council. Here it is. In 2004, the Accreditation Council received \$137,000. In 2005, under current transfers and subsidies, the Accreditation Council received \$4.911 million; so it would be almost \$5 million under current transfers and subsidies in 2005. Under the development programme, they received \$400,000—total of \$5.4 million. In 2006, the Accreditation Council received current transfers and subsidies of \$7.5 million and under the development programme, \$1.2 million. So we are looking at \$8.7 million for the Accreditation Council in 2006.

When we come to fiscal 2007, which has come and gone, they were given \$10 million under the current transfers and subsidies and under the development programme 2 million; so \$12 million. So we are looking at about over \$25 million given to this Council for 2005, 2006 and 2007 and yet, not a single report of the Auditor General in terms of auditing their accounts. No accountability, no transparency from this Council. That is a vital issue because when the Council has failed to accredit institutions and has not completed the job that is required according to the law, then we have to ask: What was the money used for? What have you been spending the money on? The Auditor General's Report will tell us

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where the funding has gone and whether it has been done in an appropriate manner in keeping with the public accounts of Trinidad and Tobago.

So why are there no auditor's accounts? Would the Minister be kind enough to tell us why there have been no accounts coming to this Parliament from the Auditor General with respect to moneys spent by the Accreditation Council? It goes further, because the same thing is happening with the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Since it was established around the same time 2004; 2004 has come, it has gone; 2005 has come and gone; 2006 has come and gone; 2007 has come and gone and not a single Auditor General's Report about how the moneys allocated to the University of Trinidad and Tobago has been spent. Nothing. Similarly, we have moneys here. Under UTT in 2004, under current transfers and subsidies, the sum of \$19.91 million—\$10 million; under the development programme, \$30 million. So in 2004, the sum of \$50 million was allocated and spent by the University of Trinidad and Tobago. No Auditor General's accounts.

In 2005, under current transfers and subsidies, \$66.3 million and under the development programme, \$158 million. This is another \$234 million. So \$184 million up to then. In 2006, the current transfers and subsidies were \$93.6 million and when you come to 2007, current transfers and subsidies, \$169 million and under the development programme, \$110 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, does it not worry the Members on the other side, that here you have a czar unto himself as a director or the President of this University of Trinidad and Tobago and up to today, year after year, no audited accounts are coming to the nation? There is a duty under law that these audited accounts come. That is why we have an Auditor General established under the Constitution. That is about accountability and transparency. Why has the UTT failed and what is the Government doing about it?

I recall off the top of my head reading out of the Senate, I believe, sometime ago where the present Minister, and I think the past one had also talked about these audited accounts, recently, they said that it would have been here within a month or two, not here; nowhere, and we have all the allegations of corruption against the University of Trinidad and Tobago. True or false? But the failure to present your accounts and have them audited would seem to give the evidence to the allegations of corruption that are being made there. [*Desk thumping*] It would seem to support the allegations of the corruption.

We come to the issue that was raised by the Member for Diego Martin Central in response to the Member for Caroni East about the gentleman, Mr. Fitz-

Andrews. The Member for Caroni East took a line out of a document that is in fact before the court, and Madam Deputy Speaker, the ruling on sub judice, I am sure that you are well aware of. In fact the Speaker has ruled in this House that no Member of Parliament could get up and talk and influence any judge in any court. You all would recall that with the tea cup matter, if it is sub judice, we cannot influence them. “Dem fellas” very bright and so on and cannot be influenced by any politician. But the point is, there is a pending dispute in the court. I hold no brief for any side on the matter and none of us on this side is holding any brief for any of them. We have no support. It is a dispute.

Here it is allegations are made by this gentleman, Mr. Fitz-Andrews, and the Member for Diego Martin North/East picks up another document which he said is an internal audit which was done about this gentleman since 2006. When I asked what had been done, he said he has been dismissed. If you say he has been in fraud—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** No, no, please, please. He has been dismissed. Madam Deputy Speaker, he has been dismissed. What about all the moneys that you are alleging that have been fraudulent—? But do you know what is worse? I asked: who did this report? You know that they say justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. Here it is you have a report and you tell me it has been done by the internal auditor of what the NGC.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we all know that the chairman of the UTT is the czar of the energy sector, Mr. Ken Julien. We also know that the czar of the energy sector, Mr. Ken Julien—up to early this year, so therefore, at all material times when this issue was going on—was the chairman of something called the steering committee on energy. NGC reports to the steering committee. Further, he was a director of the National Energy Corporation (NEC), and the NEC is a subsidiary of the NGC. You see the interlocking directorates. It is the interlocking doctorates; it is incestuous. It is like incest that the same people are sitting on all these boards and no public accountability coming from them. That is what is called incest in the family world, but certainly, it is incestuous to see the interlocking directorships. I know that the Member for Diego Martin Central is a very decent man. I wonder if it does not trouble him that we do not have the audited accounts where you have all these allegations coming out.

The Member for St. Joseph, Hon. Swaratsingh—they are decent people—does it not trouble you; does it not worry you when millions of dollars are being spent

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and no accountability, nothing is coming forward in the way that it should according to law? If it was for one year you may say, "Okay, well, they were busy", but it was for year after year after year and the same thing is happening. So I am saying that they are breaking the law. They are breaking the law on every occasion, but it does not stop there.

I started off reading section 22(1) which says that they must bring the Auditor General reports. They must bring the accounts to be audited and those should be audited by the Auditor General. When the Auditor General, as you know Madam Deputy Speaker, audits, then it is laid in Parliament.

I remember when this country was really, really disgusted and concerned about the corruption in the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP), that the hon. Deputy Speaker, who was then the minister with oversight for CEPEP, requested an audit of the CEPEP programme. It was the portfolio of the Deputy Speaker, the then minister, and she was so concerned about the allegations of corruption, that she had it audited and a special Auditor General's report was laid in this Parliament which disclosed the extent of the corruption. Here it is we have Members who have no concern that these reports are not being brought. I go further about breaking the law.

Section 22(2) of the parent law says:

"The Council"—and again this means the Accreditation Council—"shall, within six months of the end of each financial year, submit to the Minister an annual report dealing with the activities of the Council and containing such financial statements and such other information relating to the operations and policies of the Council as the Minister may require."

It goes further:

"22(3) The Minister should cause a copy of the audited accounts prepared in accordance with subsection (1) and a copy of the annual report submitted under subsection (2) to be laid before Parliament within three months of receipt by him."

In 2004 the Council was set up; 2004 came and went; 2005 came and went; 2006 came and went; 2007 came and went and not a single report has been laid in this Parliament prepared by the Accreditation Council, as requested and mandated in the law of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Nothing! So if you want to find out—we passed that law to cause all these various reports. Under the UNC's watch we amended the Constitution to mandate that all these various reports be

laid in the Parliament, so that the people of this country would have oversight of the operations of the procedures but most importantly, of the spending of their moneys so that you would have accountability. That is what these things are about. So when they come here and we could pick up those reports and we could see them and say, “Okay, they have been given”—I worked it out. Tim, how many millions spent by their Accreditation Council? Then under the UTT, the millions that have been spent, we would have been able to see where it went and we would have had no quarrel. We would have had nothing further to say. That would have been the end of that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I see that they on the other side continue to break the law with impunity and to give no explanation, none whatsoever to this House and by extension, to the population of this land.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I talked about the ordering of the Order Paper and the priorities. I have spoken about the reasons for the delay and I have gone further to show where the Accreditation Council that we are dealing with has been in breach of the law. Therefore, through them and because of them, the Minister has been in breach of the law because no accounts have been laid and no annual reports have been laid.

I go further now to talk about numbers and enrolment in the tertiary education sector. I spoke earlier about it and you can compare. When you are dealing with percentages, it is very important to know a percentage of what. You must know a percentage of what. When you are comparing those percentages, you must compare oranges with oranges, and apples with apples, but you cannot compare apples with oranges. You cannot.

### **5.30 p.m.**

When you look at the percentages—the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke about 36 per cent enrolment in the tertiary education sector; but 36 per cent of what? Where in black and white could I find that? Where in the documents of the Government of this Republic could I find 36 per cent? Then I may be able to understand 36 per cent of what. It could not be 36 per cent of the national population of Trinidad and Tobago; we could work that out; we could deduce that by logical reason. One-third of the 1.3 million would not be 36 per cent in tertiary education. Can it be 36 per cent of the age grouping? Therefore, which age grouping are we speaking about? What is the 36 per cent referring to? I would not believe that, but I am prepared to ask the Minister to tell us where in the documents of the Republic there is 36 per cent of what. I do not know 36 per cent of what enrolment in the tertiary education sector.

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Madam Deputy Speaker, I should say something about this. I went to the Accreditation Council's website, [httpwww.actt.org.tt](http://www.actt.org.tt). Do you know what happened? I printed the page, because I could not really believe it; I had to take it and read it. I attempted to get on the website of the Accreditation Council and this was what I got:

"Warning, visiting this website may harm your computer."

I tried again. [*Laughter*] I tried three times and on every occasion:

"Warning, visiting this website may harm your computer."

Madam Minister, find out what is happening with this website, please. I could not get any information out of it. My laptop computer has already been harmed, because I cannot use it in the Parliament. [*Laughter*] I had no intention whatsoever of harming my desktop computer. So I could not even go on the website to get the information, and you have not filed your annual report so I could not get it there.

In any event, I was able to find, off the Web, a speech that was made by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago when he was giving remarks at the President's medals presentation on April 22, 2008 at President's House. This was the presentation of medals for students from the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT); great for them.

Contrary to all the views being expressed here, the concept of the UTT is excellent; it is a totally brilliant concept. [*Crosstalk*] It is in the implementation, once again, where the difficulties lie. It is in the corruption at the UTT; that is where the difficulties lie. We have no difficulty with that. We have absolutely no difficulty with the UTT; it is good for this nation. [*Desk thumping*] We need to have qualified persons in the country; I would come to that in a moment. We are talking about tertiary level enrolment.

I quote from His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago:

"In this context, one area of concern is our relatively low participation rate in higher education. The stark reality is that Trinidad and Tobago's tertiary enrolment rate is now in the order of 15 per cent. These figures are well below those of the faster growing, middle income and newly industrialized countries which approach 25 to 30 per cent." [*Crosstalk*]

This was said on April 22, 2008; a couple months ago.

"Some of the more developed countries have achieved or are well on the way towards achieving levels of 50 per cent. It cannot therefore be said that our current level of enrolment is adequate, if we are to regard human development as the most important form of development. It seems to me, however, that our Government has recognized the problem and is taking measures."

They are trying; I know that they are trying.

I know that the enrolment has increased, thanks to the UNC. We started it with the Dollar for Dollar Programme. [*Desk thumping*] When you told me about the numbers, that yours had increased by 400 per cent and all those percentages, I still did not know what you were comparing it to. For an increase by 400 per cent, what was the percentage? Are we comparing oranges and apples, or apples and apples, and grapes and grapes?

You said that you increased it tremendously and that the UNC did not. I want to make it very clear: The UNC started the Dollar for Dollar Programme which allowed many, who could not access tertiary education, to have access. We did it when oil was \$9 a barrel, and we did it on a budget which was one-third of the kinds of budgets you are having now. [*Desk thumping*] We did it with \$13 billion; you have \$39 and \$45 billion in your budgets; be honest. When we started it, that was what the country could have afforded. We had to give priority and so we gave priority to that.

It was wrong; it was misleading for the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East to come here and say that the UNC was elitist. If we were elitist, we would not have given every child a place in a secondary school. [*Desk thumping*] If we were elitist, we would not have put into place that Dollar for Dollar Programme. But the Member was misleading us again.

Under the GATE programme, the Minister said, "Yuh could come from Barrackpore, Toco, Cedros or wherever; anybody; equal access; everybody could get it, regardless of geographic factors or income factors." Wrong; not true. More persons could access it, in the same way more could have had access under the Dollar for Dollar Programme. But the truth of the matter is that if you have a student who is doing the LLB programme—and I have personal knowledge of this—when you sign up under the GATE, in your first year you have to pay \$7,000. So do not fool people that GATE is covering everything; it is not covering everything.

**Mr. Imbert:** At UWI?

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Not at UWI; you cannot do it there. We are talking about GATE at tertiary level institutions. Ask the children in the Beckles law school; ask the children in the Narinesingh law school or whichever law school they are doing the LLB. The same is happening at these other institutions; they have to pay \$7,000. [*Crosstalk*] No, it does not matter which programme. Madam, it does not matter which programme.

When the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke, he would have us believe that every single child, that every single cent, in every single tertiary level institution accessing GATE did not have to pay anything. I am saying that it was not true. You said, “You could come from Barrackpore, you could come from anywhere, you could be how poor, you could be how rich, you are going to get it.” But you still have to pay.

**Mr. Imbert:** Not tuition.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** If you cannot afford more, that is your problem, because with a \$45 billion budget the students should not have to pay, in this day and age, one single cent. They should not have to pay a single cent. They should not be paying any money. Cut some of those megalomaniac projects you have, take the money and transfer the wealth of this country to those who need it. There are students who come to me; they asked me, and I have written letters trying to get the additional \$7,000 that they have to pay. Poor people cannot get that \$7,000 extra. Pay all the money for them.

You have the vision. [*Interruption*] [*Desk thumping*] You have the vision that we must increase the tertiary level. That was our vision too; that is my vision as well, [*Desk thumping*] that we must raise tertiary level education; long before you were there. You followed through; that is not a problem. Nothing is wrong with that. I am very happy. The more we increase tertiary level enrolment, I am happy. We are all happy for that, because the human resource capital of this nation is what would take us forward in this century.

There is nothing else now; knowledge base is the only intellectual property that is of the highest value. At one time it was mineral property, it used to be creativity or whatever; the greatest value now in the economies of the world is the knowledge base of the nation. That is the only thing; knowledge and technology. From the knowledge, it transfers into technology; no problem.

To tell us that then, is misleading. It is misleading to give the impression that you are funding this thing entirely, when there are students who are not getting all of it. It is misleading to say that the UNC is elitist, when it is very clear that you



are following the path that was blazed by the UNC to put every child in school. [Desk thumping] You have more money and, therefore, you could do more.

So we are talking about enrolment in the tertiary education sector. When the Member said that they have increased it by 400 per cent, I would be very happy to know 400 per cent of what? What was it and how was it computed? What were the numerator and the denominator? Are you telling me that the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago was telling an untruth? Was the President of Trinidad and Tobago on April 22, 2008, when he said that the tertiary enrolment was 15 per cent, lying or telling an untruth? [Crosstalk] [Interruption] Stand and say that he did not know what he was talking about. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. S. Panday:** Say it!

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** I am giving way; stand and say that he did not know. [Crosstalk]

**Hon. Members:** Say it!

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** No, you would sit there and mumble.

Therefore, we need to hear what the number is and tell us where to find it in the documents; not in your head. Where is that report? Is it anywhere in the statistics of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. We agree that we must increase tertiary level enrolment.

I want to take a moment to say that after all the Government has done, let us take a situational analysis of where we are in tertiary level education; all the nice programmes the Minister spoke about, and improving tertiary education. I have already said that the President of the Republic has given me the statistics: 15 per cent enrolment in tertiary. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Imbert:** That is wrong!

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** If the Member wants to tell this nation that the President is wrong, let him stand and say so. [Crosstalk] I will take the 15 per cent as coming from the President to be a true reflection, until they could show otherwise, that he has perpetrated a falsehood. In the common language you would call it a lie; tell us.

**Mr. Dumas:** His researchers gave him wrong figures.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** I am taking his information until I hear from the Members on the other side where it is coming from.

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Secondly, let us do a situational analysis, because we must know where we are to know where we are going. When we look at the UNESCO research, in its report, "Grounding a Regional Higher Education Research Agenda in Real Challenges, July 19—20, 2007" Port of Spain, Trinidad, the author is A. Ashton in this UNESCO forum. This is what he had to say in that forum:

"It is widely recognized that one of the characteristics of the higher education systems in Trinidad and Tobago, is the laissez-faire approach to Important areas such as admission requirements, courses and programme structures including required units for credits for completion..."

I am quoting from page 05 of the document. He continued:

"absence of clarity as to what constitutes full and part-time study; weak coordination of the sector as well as lack of consensus in the use of terminology. Tertiary higher education in Trinidad and Tobago and the region, the tertiary education system is still in evolving form with developmental challenges particular to this stage."

Those challenges would be greater, given the boost to increasing the tertiary enrolment numbers. We ask, for example: What is being done to address these needs; what is being done to address the laissez-faire approach to areas as admission, courses, credits and so on; what is being done with respect to absence of clarity as to what constitutes full and part-time; what is being done with respect to weak coordination of the sector; what is being done with respect to lack of consensus in the use of terminology; what is being done about these developmental challenges? That is what we must address and get some answers to.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Siparia has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** What is the Accreditation Council doing about these challenges? In accrediting these institutions, these are the issues that I would expect would be looked at to, in some way, ameliorate the difficulties being put forward in this UNESCO document.

We go further. In the situation analysis, where are we, after all this money has been pumped into the sector and after all the energy and time spent in this sector? Years later, where are we?

When we go to the World Economic Forum, they published a global information technology report each year. Time did not permit me, on this occasion, to go backwards, as I would normally do to show how we are going or what. What is interesting is that in their 2007/2008 report, Trinidad and Tobago was ranked way down below; we ranked 12.14.

**5.45 p.m.**

We are trying to get to developed country status. The highest ranking is 91.69. We are above 12 per cent. How far we are away from the developed countries. This is not enrolment. This is everything to do within the sector. The United States has a score of 82.72 per cent. Jamaica, which is in the region if we want to compare it with our region, is not there. [*Interruption*] This is from the World Economic Forum. You know the Member for Diego Martin North/East said that the President is lying. He says the World Economic Forum is lying.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Member is imputing improper motives, Standing Order 36(5). I said no such thing about the distinguished President of the Republic. I ask her to withdraw that statement.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Siparia, the words you used were that the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East said that the President is lying. I do not think that is what he said.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** I am guided. That is the local parlance. In this parliamentary Chamber we have coined in the lexicon of the Parliament, the words “false lie”. So, he is saying that it is a false lie. That has been accepted in the dictionary of the Parliament.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I am asking the Member to withdraw that statement.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** As it relates to the statement that the President is lying, I ask that that be withdrawn.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** I withdraw that but I would say that the Member is telling us it is not true.

The World Economic Forum is saying—the Minister is saying put it in the dustbin.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I said no such thing. I ask the Member to withdraw that as well. I never ascribed truth or untruth to the President.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** The World Economic Forum is not an internal audit from the NGC. It is ranking us way down below. [*Interruption*] The Member is saying that this is a bogus document. I believe them. His statement is what is bogus. I believe the World Economic Forum.

Trinidad and Tobago is at 12.14. Other countries are better ranking. We know that Trinidad and Tobago is in a better position than some of our Caricom partners in this regard. We acknowledge and accept that. If we want to get to developed country status we have much catching up to do.

Further, some time ago I spoke about a document put out by UNESCO on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) put out by the World Bank for 2006—2007. Again, the technology index of this includes tertiary level enrollment as a component in ranking the countries. About two weeks ago I had gone through the GCI here to show how since 2001 we have fallen. An important component of the GCI is tertiary level enrolment. Here we are ranking at 58. That is the situation analysis in terms of the global arena. We continue to try but it is important to understand where we are after all the money and time spent in this sector.

We come to the shortage of workers in our country which is related to tertiary level education. When we look at the statistics we would see that we have this movement of our people when they become qualified outside—emigration of our skilled people. This is very serious for us. In the emigration rate of tertiary educated persons, Trinidad and Tobago has the highest rate in the region, 78.4 per cent. This source comes from Migration and Remittances Fact Book of the World Bank. I have the document if you want to see a copy.

**Miss Le Gendre:** Guyana is higher.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Well, maybe Guyana is also high. I will not doubt you, Madam. Trinidad and Tobago is high with 78.4. It is higher than St. Kitts and Nevis at 71; Grenada which is 66.7; Barbados which is 61; Dominica which is 58; St. Vincent and the Grenadines at 56. Nothing is wrong with that. Our people look for better opportunities. They go out there. If it is 78 per cent, you are looking at seven out of 10 qualified persons. We are spending the money in the sector and educating in the tertiary levels, but our people are leaving. We ask: Why? Is it because of crime? This is from the Migration Remittances Fact Book, World Bank. This is emigration of skilled labour.

This was downloaded from the Internet yesterday. I have that printed copy for you. Emigration of skilled workers has been a problem for us. We know that. It is not the first time that it is happening. At this time we believe that given the

dreadful crime situation more and more of those skilled persons are leaving. It is happening in two sectors, the entrepreneurial sector where we need people and the professional class with the skilled and educated.

How do we stem that? We cannot stop people from wanting to live abroad. Recently, I was speaking to someone—I am not the only one. I am sure you know families that have been divided and split up because they have sent away their children because they are so terrified of the kidnapping and crime in the country. Everyone here, I am sure, knows somebody. We are becoming divided families because the parents are remaining but the children are going because they are afraid. That is something that we have to deal with but that is for another debate on the crime issue.

The Government has not developed a policy to entice educated and trained persons to remain on the island. What do we do to keep them here? In recent years there has been an exodus of nurses from the government health service to international destinations, particularly to the United States. The Government brought in people from Cuba, Nigeria and the Phillipines. We have construction workers from China. We try to fill the gap with that. We need to address it. This is serious. Dr. Gopeesingh may be able to tell us how much is spent to educate one person for three years at the UWI and the University of Trinidad and Tobago. It is thousands and thousands of dollars. Think for yourself.

I know the hon. Member for Port of Spain South recently completed the MBA at the same institution I did. That is a very great institution, the University of the West Indies. We were both there recently doing the MBA as the Minister of Finance. How much did it cost the Government for us and all the others to go through there? It is thousands of dollars. We are staying but there are many others who are completing this and leaving. How are we going to address it? Perhaps, the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development can give us some ideas, but we must stem the tide. We must stem the haemorrhaging. We must be able to keep our qualified personnel here or else we would never reach developed country status. We need to look at the causes and ways and incentives to keep them here.

I know that in addition to crime it is about money. When they go to the United States their pay is so much higher. In addition to safety concerns there are issues of incentives and compensation packages. We need to deal with this haemorrhaging of our qualified personnel after the Government and people of the Republic would have spent so much money in training and education of those persons. Because of that and we are developing at a fast rate—I grant you that, the Government has

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put a great emphasis on developmental factors to push the nation forward. At times I feel that it is too fast; we are overheating; we are speeding and we are going to crash. That is happening. In that context, the qualified, skilled and educated persons are even more vital if that growth is to be carried forward and the momentum is to be kept.

When we look at the policy perspective of Trinidad and Tobago, the IDB Report published in 2007, we would see that there is a gap between demand for skills and the tertiary institutions. When the National Training Agency did a survey in December 2005, they revealed that based on a sample of 10 per cent of registered establishments throughout 14 sectors, there were 540 job vacancies. If we transpose that data on to the population, we are talking about 5,400 vacancies if we take it to the 100 per cent of skilled and needed persons. However, some of the graduates of the tertiary level institutions are still unemployed. There is this disconnect, this gap and those that we are training in the tertiary institutions in the areas and skills that are most needed now. Maybe, that is why we have to bring construction workers from China and doctors and nurses from Cuba. In those areas that are so vital we do not have qualified persons. We are spending money in areas where they are still unemployed because they are doing what is not in great demand in the country.

In the IDB Report on page 238, it was revealed that education and training, particularly at the tertiary level, have not kept pace with labour market demand in various sectors. It found that some of the sectors required IT capabilities, data processing and software and pointed to difficulties in recruitment.

The Minister admitted in this accreditation arena the shortage of skilled persons. There is a serious disconnect among university and technical and vocational institutions and private sector demand for skills. Seldom can we find private sector involvement in these institutions. That is where the concept of the University of Trinidad and Tobago was good in that you have private sector organizations involved and they have been assisting in the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

Finally, as time comes to a close, there is a backlogging of reforms for tertiary education. If we look at the IDB Report on Policy Perspective published in 2007, page 223 talks about key reforms, for example, telecommunications, liberalization or tertiary education which are backlogged. Hear by what:

“By continuous reshuffling of government ministries. Few reforms are set up as top priorities and adequately address reshuffling.

The country has more than 30 line ministries. Cabinet reshuffling is more the norm than the exception.” [*Interruption*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am sure the *Hansard* reporter is getting some difficulty in hearing the hon. Member. Could we please allow her to make her contribution?

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. On page 223 of *The Policy Perspectives of Trinidad and Tobago*. [*Interruption*] At least I what? Passed all my exams. Well, I did more than pass as you know. I am sure that my colleague for Caroni East also passed all his with distinctions. Can we continue, please?

Cabinet reshuffling is more the norm than the exception. [*Interruption*] Give me a chance please.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** If you will like the opportunity to have any private discussion, I think that the Parliament is big enough. Please, for the purposes of in here, could we allow the hon. Member to complete her contribution?

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Thank you very much. If they want to compare the degrees and the accreditation at universities, I know for a fact that the Member for Caroni East has passed his exams. Secondly, they are from accredited universities. I cannot say the same for the Member for Diego Martin East. I do not know. He is trying to get personal. I hate to do this, but I would do it because you become too personal. “Dr. Gopeesingh never build wall that fall down. I don’t know where you qualify as an engineer. Stadium or whatever.” Let us not go there; that is not important. This is more important in terms of our people and development.

I am saying the reshuffling. Maybe, he does not want to hear about reshuffling because he might be the next Member getting reshuffled very soon.

They are saying this is a problem because when you reshuffle and programmes change, core functions are said to stop priorities and they are not adequately addressed. Many programmes are backlogged and they lack continuity. This is one of the problems. I believe that the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education has been shuffled back and forward. Perhaps that is one of the difficulties in moving as fast as they should be moving. I am speaking about that backlogging of reforms for that sector.

As I come to a close, I am very disconcerted and upset about the strangulation of the University of the West Indies. Great! Go ahead with UTT! Do not strangle the University of the West Indies as a result.

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**6.00 p.m.**

Let me quote, and tell me if these are lies. I am quoting from the annual report 2004/2005, at page 41.

“It must, however, be noted that while the dollar amount of Government funding has increased in the last few years...”

—that is why I am saying that it is important that the absolute numbers are not sufficient. When you have a GDF of X dollars and a budget of \$45 billion compared to \$13 billion, the absolute is not sufficient. You need to give both.

“...as a proportion of income from all sources, Government funding through the CGC has actually declined.”

In 2004/2005, Government’s contribution represented 50 per cent of the campus's total income as compared to 53 per cent in 2001/2002. Increases in Government funding over the last five years has also decreased in percentage terms.

[*Interruption*] This is the annual report of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, page 41. [*Interruption*] They are talking about the contribution from Trinidad and Tobago. Will you please listen? They are talking about funding having actually declined; our funding to them. They are not talking about what anybody else gives. [*Interruption*] This is lying too in your view. This is the annual report of the university published on its website. I quote again:

“Increases in Government funding over the last five years has also decreased in percentage terms. Government funding between the period 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 increased by 22.8 per cent.”—That was under the UNC.—“Whereas over the four-year period 2001/2002, right down to 2004/2005, there has been an aggregate 9 per cent in Government funding, to \$274,576.”

That is 2004/2005. I read from 2006/2007. This is at page 50 of the annual report of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. [*Interruption*] Everything is bogus for the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East. I quote:

“It should be noted that the proportion of annual income attributable to government remittances continue to fall. It has declined from 54 per cent in 2004 to 46 per cent in the year under review.”

The remittances continue to fall. This is what they continue to say. If there is an explanation, I will welcome it. I am quoting the documents I can find. If you have further information, please provide it. I will be very happy to listen. This is what I have. I did not find it in the estimates of expenditure. I found it for the



University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), but not for the University of the West Indies (UWI). It seems to be under a different Head. *[Interruption]* I cannot find it anywhere. I looked under Head 54.

**Mr. Imbert:** That does not have it.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar:** If it is under a different Head, tell me item number and I will be happy. I saw a transfer for UWI Music Programme. I saw a transfer for UWI Institute of Business, but I did not see UWI. If it is there, I am happy to hear it.

Even if the numbers are there, whatever the allocations were, it is falling. *[Interruption]* The Member for Diego Martin North/East says nothing is accurate. Nobody is correct in this view. He is the only person who is right. I cannot believe the whole world is wrong and only the Member for Diego Martin North/East is correct. I totally disbelieve him. I believe the reports of the University until such time that the Minister or Ministers can provide different accounts and tell the campus that they are not speaking the truth and they are giving a wrong indicator when they say the amounts have fallen. If they have fallen, give us an idea why. You may have a very good reason why, but that is what I am getting on the website.

As we on this side close the debate—we do not have any other speakers for today—the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East talked about the UNC not being patriotic. He made that point in general at the end of his ranting and raving. I want to make it very clear that I am very patriotic that is why I am still living in Trinidad and Tobago. I came back to this country and I am not leaving unless they run me out. I cannot help it if people run me out. My entire family, including my parents, lives outside this country. I am the only child of my parents living in this country. I took that decision and I do not regret it. I believe that those who benefitted from PNM education—yes, I went to school in those days, but I also want to tell you that I benefitted from my own hard labour too.

I went abroad to study. I had no GATE; no scholarship. I worked in cafeterias. I worked in clerical shops in London and I did my studies. So hard work plus help equals getting your qualifications. I was not elitist at all. To say that we are not patriotic is to distort the truth. I believe every Member who is sitting here is a totally patriotic citizen. That is why they are here and serving in their own way. We are all trying to do our best. When we raise these concerns, it is not to be unpatriotic, but for the ordinary man and woman in the street whose concerns they are too. They want to know what you are doing with the millions of dollars; what the UTT and the Accreditation Council did with the money, but they cannot find out because they are breaking the law and not filing their returns.

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They want to know why you have spent all these billions of dollars and our people are leaving the country. They want to know what you are doing about it. They want to know why, with all the money, we cannot accredit all the institutions. What are the reasons for the delay? They want to know why our enrolment rate, as said by the President of the University, is 15 per cent. Why can we not bring it up?

It is no answer to say you did not do it. That does not take us anywhere. I admit we did not have it at 15 per cent. The point is that you are there; you have the money, so why can we not take it further. If we will do it, what are the time lines? Tell us your plans and programmes.

I was a little disappointed with the contribution of the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education because I did not get the real reason or any substantive reason for the delay. I would have been happy to have heard from her. She is a bright attorney-at-law. I worked in the court beside her many moons ago in our different incarnations as attorneys. She is very bright, very committed and I would like her, in winding up, to give an overview of the tertiary sector because this is where this country rests its hope and its future.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid):** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to stand and make a contribution on this amendment to the Accreditation Act.

We had two contributions from the other side and I must take the opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for Siparia on the quality of her contribution. She was understanding in some senses and attempted to reach out and understand what is happening in the sector. I thought she was mature in her contribution. I commend her for that.

On the other hand, I thought that the contribution from the hon. Member for Caroni East was particularly atrocious. In fact, so bad it was that at least on two occasions, the Member for Siparia had cause to withdraw on his behalf, two positions that he took. He had called for the closing down of the private institutions, a position the hon. Member for Siparia wisely withdrew.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under section 33(4), the hon. Minister is telling things I never said. I never said anything about closing any institution.

**Mr. Imbert:** There is no 33(4)

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** There is a 33(4). Hon. Member for Chaguanas East, the hon. Member for Caroni East is saying that he did not talk about closing any institutions. Maybe you can clarify.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the record of the *Hansard* will show—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Was that today?

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** That was today. The record of the *Hansard* will show what the hon. Member said when it is being replayed. Hon. Members and members of the wider public will see and hear exactly what he said.

I commend the hon. Member for Siparia again. Whereas UTT has been the object and subject of very vicious attacks, particularly from the hon. Member for Caroni East, for the first time a former deputy political leader and senior member of the UNC has finally arrived at a position where they are able to understand the value of UTT and perhaps to concede that UTT will be of tremendous benefit to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Both positions were adopted by the hon. Member for Siparia withdrawing positions initially taken by the Member for Caroni East. I have been in the Senate with the hon. Member before and we have had to endure this single contribution; this batch of points he keeps making. He has been surviving on that single speech for four years. It has been burdensome and painful to listen to that. We continue to have to do so and I am hoping that over the next four or five years he will create some new points and compose a second speech. It is a most stubborn and mulish approach to the delivery of any speech in this House.

I really want to start where the hon. Member for Siparia asked for an overview of what is taking place in the tertiary education sector. We are able to do that. As you would recall, the hon. Member for Caroni East said that the country does not know about Vision 2020, particularly as it relates to education. So it is with great pride, comfort and ease that we articulate our position as it relates to education and Vision 2020.

Vision 2020 will naturally depend on the availability of expertise in variation fields if we are to have a working sector, a judicial system, a construction sector, infrastructure development, a functioning health sector, functioning at the standards of international best practice and functioning consistent with the standards normally associated with developed countries. We are, in fact, going to have expertise available to us in this country.

**6.15 p.m.**

For proper infrastructure development, we would need engineers, masons, carpenters and a number of other individuals and professions associated with infrastructure development. For education, we need teachers, researchers and guidance counsellors. For an efficient and effective First World judicial system, we would need lawyers, computer-aided transcription reporters, judges and a number of other persons who operate within that judicial system. For an efficient and effective developed country health care system, we need doctors, nurses, radiographers and a number of other skills within the health care sector.

In each sector, the expertise we would require must be in significant quantities and we would have to ensure that we have the available quality. It is only in that way, when we have the quantity and quality of the expertise, that each sector would be able to operate at a standard consistent with international best practice and a standard consistent with developed country status. That is not an easy task. Because we would like all of our sectors and systems operating at that standard, we need the human resource capacity. That was a point alluded to by the Member for Siparia as well. That is not an easy task.

In the United States and the United Kingdom, which are countries that we normally considered to be developed countries, we see their struggle in trying to ensure that they have the human resources that they need. They have a number of factors which have worked to their advantage over many centuries. They have, for example, a large population pool. The size of your population pool is important, because it is from that population pool you would have emerging the talent that is required for you to grow your expertise, as it were.

In the United Kingdom, there are 65 million people. That is a large population pool; certainly larger than ours. It is from that population pool you must get your doctors, nurses, electricians, masons, carpenters and so on. They also have a mature education system. I call it a mature education system because they have had the British education system for centuries. Over many centuries, they have had the opportunity to review their system to make a determination as how well their system is working and whether their system is meeting the needs of their particular country.

They have had many opportunities to make adjustments that are necessary. In addition to the large population pool and a mature education system, they also have a strong currency. The value of a strong currency is that a strong currency allows you to retain a lot of the expertise that you produce. It allows you to retain the expertise that comes out of your education system. Very seldom do we hear

British citizens leaving their country to work in another country where the currency may be weaker, because when they measure against what they could possibly earn at home, it is always inferior to what they would earn outside. The strength of the currency is a critical factor in helping to minimize brain drain.

Even if we compare it with the United States, another large population pool, just over 300 million, they also have a more mature education system than ours. They have been independent since 1776. They have developed an education system very different from the British and it has its own merits and they are quite comfortable and confident that it is in fact serving their needs.

They have had over 200 years to review the system to make sure that it is working in their favour. They also have a currency stronger than ours. The important point to take note of here is that these two countries, with their large population pools, mature education system and their strong currency, still have to import nurses from the Philippines. They still import teachers from the Caribbean. They still import doctors from India. They still import a number of professionals and engineers from Africa. They are struggling to ensure that they have the expertise that they require to deliver their services to their population and respective citizenry at the standards that they have established for themselves, the international standards of best practice; the standards that allow them to declare themselves developed countries. That is not an easy task for any country. This Government has recognized the challenge.

We are a population of 1.3 million. It is out of that 1.3 million that we are going to have to find all the expertise that we need. We have been independent for a relatively short period of time. We have inherited a system of education from the British; a system with which we are working and trying to improve and ensure that it in fact meeting our needs. We have been making adjustments and reviewing our curricula over the years. We have also been looking at what is happening in other parts of the world, with a view to having some of those valuable aspects of other cultures and systems integrated into our system to derive maximum benefit. We are working. It continues to be a work in progress.

Even so, this Government recognizes that as a particular challenge; that is why, for many years, we have established education as priority number one and for many years we have continued to work hard to make sure that our country is able to derive the benefit from the best possible education system.

If there is one Government that has been known, famous even, for its contribution to education, it must be clearly seen to be the Government of the People's National Movement over the last four decades.

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We have a number of issues/challenges that are before us. First of all, we must look at capacity, a point that was raised by the Member for Caroni East when he said that the PNM never once thought of establishing universal secondary education. Let me remind him.

Over the last few years, if you were to take the top 4,200 best performances at A level throughout the Caribbean, from Jamaica right down to Guyana, including all the Caricom islands in between, 3,500 of them came from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. If you were to take the top 9,000 people who sat and passed the A level examinations every single year, throughout the Caribbean from Jamaica to Guyana, 6,000 of them came from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Two out of every three persons who passed A level examination in the Caribbean came from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. That is as a consequence of our investment in education as we began back in 1956 right up to 2008; a credit to this Government and many governments that have come before, all of them being governments of the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

I have said it before in the public space; my grandmother could spell only two words. She died at age 92 and throughout her entire life she could have spelt only two words. She was a very successful lady at the same time. She was a market vendor. She could have counted, because she had to count money, but— [*Interruption*] She was numerate. She had one up on the Member for Caroni East; she was numerate. She could count, but she was illiterate. She could have spelt only two words “bat” and “cat”. Those were her two words, because she did not have an opportunity for education. She was born in 1911 and at that time, there were no education opportunities available for her.

My mother was born in 1948. The year she was in standard five, there were no schools available for her, so she was sure that at the end of primary school she was going home and there would be no opportunity for her. However, in that very year, Dr. Williams and the People’s National Movement built a school in Diego Martin called the Diego Martin Government Secondary School, on a plot of land where previously there were cow pens and animals grazed there. On that plot of land, my mother, where she did not expect it, was able to get a secondary education. As a consequence of the intervention of the government, in 1959, 1960 and 1961, my mother was able to access a secondary education.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, being the grandson of a market vendor, it would hardly be contemplated that the grandson would move on, not only to get a secondary

education but a tertiary education. Madam Deputy—Mr. Speaker, I am almost tempted to make an excuse for myself. In three short generations, we were able to see a single family, like many thousands of other families in this country, move from being completely illiterate to a secondary education; literacy and numeracy and moving on to tertiary education. That is clearly as a consequence of interventions that have been made by governments past wearing the balisier tie, criticized as we were, but being proud Members of the People's National Movement, establishing education as priority number one, consistently. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, there are many of them who sit on the other side—today they have come just short of confessing—who have been the proud beneficiaries of a PNM education. Many of them know that throughout those decades, when the PNM was in office, there was equality of opportunity.

Any political organization that intends to suppress or discriminate against any people, the first thing they do is deprive them of education. If there is one thing that this Government can be proud of, it is that equality and the availability of opportunities. That has always been the hallmark of this Government. Today we are very proud that throughout this country, we are persons of every creed, race and walk of life, market vendors, children of market vendors who can become, within the education system, doctors, lawyers, engineers, politicians and even Ministers. That is something that stands prominently as a major part of our experience and our history.

We have a number of challenges before us in the context of Vision 2020. We must ensure adequate capacity in the tertiary education sector. We have established that we are going to take the existing institutions and expand them as necessary, to ensure that we have the capacity we require, so that we can produce the numbers that we need. As I have said, we are putting all of this in the context of Vision 2020 and I have outlined exactly what we need.

There is a number of professionals and expertise that we need, so we have to develop that expertise. We need, first of all, capacity. When we came into office in late 2001, the existing capacity or enrolment at the University of the West Indies was 1,000 or just under 8,000. Only 8,000 of our citizens were able to aspire to and get a place at UWI. That is total capacity for years one, two, three and post graduate, which means we really were talking about just over 2,000 citizens who were able to access a place in any single year—very, very limited capacity.

We have been able, over the last five or six years, to grow that number, working with UWI, and today we are very proud. By 2006, the University of the

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West Indies was able to double its capacity. Today the capacity of the University of the West Indies stands at 16,000. [*Desk thumping*] There are 8,000 more citizens' children of this country, young people, accessing opportunities at the University of the West Indies where they could not have accessed those opportunities before.

More than that, we have established the University of Trinidad and Tobago, which we would talk about a little later in some detail. The University of Trinidad and Tobago is a multi-campus institution, as we have mentioned before. We are projecting, when fully established, that UTT would accommodate somewhere in the vicinity of 19,000—20,000 students. It is an expanding and growing institution. As we move along, that number may increase even further. It is a multi-campus. I would come to that when I make the second point about accessibility.

With respect to the community college that we have been speaking about, Cabinet has already agreed to three campuses, one in North Trinidad, one in South Trinidad and one in Tobago; each campus in Trinidad having a capacity in the vicinity of 10,000 and the one in Tobago, a capacity of 2,500, adding new places, new spaces and new opportunities to the tertiary education landscape, capacity being a significant factor.

**6.30 p.m.**

What we have also done is to integrate into our system the private institutions. Whereas previously private institutions were not recognized—they were not even looked upon or considered for any benefit whatsoever, we have embraced private institutions recognizing that they are offering valuable opportunities to our citizens. In so doing, we have included them and today we have approximately 15,000 citizens of Trinidad and Tobago making use of education opportunities at private institutions.

We have also established technology centres. Technology centres are the institutions that would give us many of the skills that we need—higher education skills and advanced skills—at the technician level and above at the level of the master craftsman and journeyman. All of these skills are important in any education landscape. We are creating capacity at one and the same time which we must do.

Mr. Speaker, accessibility is another factor. People must have proper access to institutions. When we say “access”, there are two variables that we look at: geographic distribution of the institutions—the institutions must be within the communities and within physical reach of our citizens. That is why when we talk about UTT being a multi-campus institution—we know there are campuses in



Northwest Trinidad and our main campus is in East Trinidad. We have a campus in Mayaro; we have a campus in Point Lisas and we have campuses spread all across Trinidad and Tobago, ensuring our citizens—it does not matter where they live—that they have access to education opportunities.

Accessibility also speaks to the point of matriculation requirements. In order to get into an institution you have to qualify. Previously, in order to access the University of the West Indies you had to have A levels. So, if there were a limited number of A level places, you are going to find that it is going to make it difficult—if A level is the criterion established it would put a severe limit on the number of persons that can access tertiary education. We have been working with institutions to create, for example, the National Engineering Technicians Diploma (NETD) which is being accessed through tertiary education by an alternate route. We are also looking at the Associate Degree which is something we have borrowed from the United States of America and a number of other options.

In fact, the hon. Member for Caroni East criticized the UTT for accepting students with O levels, when he knows very well, as was explained before, that they are entering into a pre-university programme. May I advise him that is something that has been done at the University of the West Indies for many years. That is the same University of the West Indies of which he is so proud.

In fact, there was something called a pre-agricultural programme where you could have entered the university and pursued a programme at the Faculty of Agriculture with O level qualifications and then move on to the BSc in agriculture. That has been long and well established.

At a meeting of the Council of the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, a very elaborate presentation was undertaken, and Prof. Sankat who is now the campus principal, led a team evaluating the projections of the university over the next few years. The UWI has established a target where it would like to get its population up to 22,000. That is the St. Augustine Campus. They have recognized that they have to create programmes that would allow admissions with O levels. They are simply following what is taking place in some of the best universities in the world. They are recognizing that if they do not do that they are going to find themselves left behind. That is the same UWI of which he speaks so proudly.

Mr. Speaker, affordability is another factor. We are talking here about Vision 2020. They ask what is Vision 2020, and we are identifying for them and for their benefit what is Vision 2020 and I am hoping we would not get that same speech again. I am hoping in my contribution this evening to put an end to that single speech that we have heard for the last four years.

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With respect to the affordability factor, when we came into office—they have spoken about the Dollar for Dollar Programme, and I do have something to say about the Dollar for Dollar Programme. Now, there has been some criticisms about the Dollar for Dollar Programme, and the criticisms have been significantly, importantly and, perhaps accurately that it was discriminatory—not discriminatory in terms of race, but discriminatory in terms of class and wealth.

In order to access the Dollar for Dollar Programme, as was explained, you had to have the first dollar. So, if your fees were \$10,000 then you had to pay \$5,000. So, it discriminated against anyone who did not have access to that first \$5,000. It is in that sense one can reasonably deem that the Dollar for Dollar Programme was discriminatory.

Quite apart from that characteristic of the programme, it was more shout than substance, like many of their programmes. It was more advertising, pomp and ceremony. In many ways, one can describe that programme as I have said before as a pipsqueak of a programme when standing next to the GATE, and I am going to tell you why. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Dollar for Dollar Programme was announced—I remember it very well—at a political meeting and the entire breadth of the stage was a banner “Dollar for Dollar”. It was very good marketing. Do you know what the truth of the matter is? It was made available to students only at public institutions. So already we have come down only to the University of the West Indies and COSTAATT and maybe one or two other institutions. It was made available only to students at public institutions. Do you know what the worst was? It was made available to students only in first year. So in 2001, if you were in second year, you had no hope of accessing or getting any assistance and in third year you had no hope. It was only those students who were coming in for the first time had any hope of benefiting and, even so, to a limited extent.

Mr. Speaker, as a consequence of that, 3,000 citizens were able to benefit from the Dollar for Dollar Programme at a cost \$24 million when it was first introduced. Let me compare that to the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE).

We announced GATE; free tertiary education for all. It meant first year, second year and third year. Every year all our citizens can enrol to pursue undergraduate programmes and they have access to the GATE; free tuition for all those citizens.

Secondly, it applied not only to students at public institutions, but also to students at private institutions. When they were in office, some of them begged them—some of them were their friends, colleagues and supporters—to include

them in the Dollar for Dollar Programme and they refused. It took a PNM Government to take recognition of the contribution being made by private institutions and, today, there are 15,000 students being paid for at private institutions in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Unheard of! [*Desk thumping*] That is unheard of anywhere else in the world. There is nowhere else in the world where a citizen can attend a private institution and expect the Government to pay his or her tuition fees.

The hon. Member for Siparia said that GATE does not pay everything. GATE is intended to pay tuition fees. We understand that the tuition fees are likely to be the largest portion of fees, but there are other fees associated with pursuing tertiary education. You have to buy books; you may have to pay for other course materials and there may be a registration fee, and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, so sensitive and so caring is this Government that we introduced a second programme which is the Higher Education Loan Programme. This is a programme we have designed where we provide loans to our citizens enrolled at tertiary education. If they are pursuing a tertiary education programme in Trinidad and Tobago, we lend them up to \$25,000, and if they are pursuing it anywhere in the Caribbean, up to \$75,000. They would pay no interest while they are at schools. They would not be required to make any payments whilst they are students and studying.

More than that, the interest would not be growing on their heads, as it were, while they are studying. The Government is subsidizing the loan by paying the interest while they are pursuing their studies. Once they have graduated, they have a six-month moratorium, at the end of which the loans become payable. Even then, we give them a 4 per cent discounted interest rate. All of that is intended to ensure that all our citizens are able to access tertiary education. That is the character and characteristics of a caring Government. This is not something they would have even contemplated, but it is something that has to be borne out of the Government that sits on this side in this honourable House, and the population understands that. The population understood that November last year, and we are sure that the population will continue to understand that as we move forward. [*Desk thumping*] We understand that tuition costs are significant and we pay that for them. We give them considerable help with other aspects of education. So, we have dealt with the affordability factor, but there is also the factor of relevance.

Mr. Speaker, when they ask what is Vision 2020, I am obliged to answer. The population now has a question and the Government must provide the answer. I would appreciate if they would be patient and listen. Relevance is an important

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factor. The degree programmes and education programmes must be specifically relevant to the national development objectives.

We have proceeded, understanding our needs of the industry, to design specific programmes that are in demand in the industry. For example, for the first time, the UTT has introduced a degree programme in manufacturing, understanding that the country has a need for persons trained in skills associated with the manufacturing sector.

We also have developed a number of different programmes in maritime exploration. There are a number of other institutions that we have established which are all consistent with our specific national development needs.

With respect to the last factor, we have spoken about capacity, accessibility affordability, relevance and excellence. That is what we are discussing here today—the establishment of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago—to ensure that all institutions; both public and private, are meeting international standards of excellence.

We have explained very carefully that this institution was not established in a vacuum, but it was established in the context of an international system of accreditation, where we have established relationships with a number of institutions worldwide. We have built and designed our system from the ground up, ensuring that we respect the highest standards associated with accreditation practices.

Mr. Speaker, I would really like to take the opportunity as well, to respond to a number of other things that would have been said before. Now, I think I did hear that oil was \$9 a barrel, and hon. Members opposite could not have granted free tertiary education. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if I heard right, because they asked us to cut down some of the megalomaniac projects in favour of paying for tuition fees, but we are doing both. We are engaged in the infrastructure development of the country and, at the same time, we are paying the tuition fees for our citizens and ensuring that the social development takes place while, at the same time, we are in a position to ensure that the infrastructure development takes place at the same pace. Mr. Speaker, that is not so with them. An airport that was supposed to cost \$600 million ended up costing \$1.5 billion. I dare say to you that \$900 million could have educated all the citizens of our country for just over six years. [*Desk thumping*] Understand that!

In fact, what was done was that the students were deprived of their education; deprived of the Government being in a position to pay on an account of misappropriation and mismanagement of the funding available at the time. The

money was available. It had nothing to do with oil being \$9 a barrel—the money was there—but it had to do with how you use the money and how you allocate the money. I dare say, at that point in time, their interest was not in the allocation and utilization of the funds in the interest of the people, but rather in a single project which we know clearly from the courts, who were specifically the beneficiaries of that particular project.

**6.45 p.m.**

The question of alliances with UTT, another point raised by the hon. Member for Caroni East. We are very, very proud of the alliances we have had. You see, the Member for Caroni East does not understand what it requires to establish a university in 2004 or 2006. He is still set back in 1948 and he kept constantly referring to 1948 because that is the only model he has in his mind, because he has not read, not educated himself, not moved forward understanding the age in which we live.

If you live in 2004, and if you hope to establish a university, you do not have to build that university from scratch as you had all by yourself, as it were, as was might have been the case back in 1948. We live in a globalized environment, there are a number of institutions available all over the world and it is common practice for institutions to establish partnerships with each other.

What is spectacular about the University of Trinidad and Tobago is that we have selected the best universities in the world with which to partner, and that partnership does not come free. Those institutions, it is quality expertise that they are sharing, and because they are sharing such quality expertise, we enter into partnership and we buy their service. We buy the expertise and the service that they have available. We are partner with the University of Cambridge, out of the United Kingdom; that is one of our first partners. With Johns Hopkins University out of the United States, which is second only to Harvard in the world, when it comes to medical sciences. We also have the Danish Technical University, which is one of the foremost universities in Europe, with special expertise in processing. We all will be familiar with Tata InfoTech of India and their expertise in information technology. We have partnered with the University of Texas at Austin and their petroleum engineering. It would comfort all hon. Members and the wider population to note that they have been rated No. 1 in the United States in petroleum engineering over the 12 years. [*Desk thumping*]

That is how we are dealing with the issue of quality with UTT. We are partnering with the best; we are working with them in the design of our own programme. So, as we design UTT programmes we are ensuring that we are

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benefiting from the most advanced research and the world's best minds. It might surprise the hon. Member for Caroni East to note that one of our early partners as well, was the same University of the West Indies (UWI). So, while he is cursing and criticizing UTT in favour of UWI, UTT and UWI are busy building their own partnerships.

**Ms. Kangaloo:** Without him.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Without him, I might add. Universities all over the world are engaged in partnerships; it is quite common; it is in fact, a very popular and progressive trend and it is something for which we must all be very proud.

A few unpleasantries generated as a consequence of the contribution of the hon. Member for Caroni East. He did in fact, make reference to an affidavit that was presented before the court. I recall there was a series in the newspaper, *Sunday Express*, sometime in 2006, I think it was. Three consecutive Sundays there were newspaper articles heavily criticizing the University of Trinidad and Tobago and making all kinds of wild accusations and allegations. That series of articles was written by a journalist by the name of Camini Marajh.

The very last article in the series she revealed her source. Her source she revealed to be Mr. Kenneth Fitz-Andrews, I think it was. Around that time the same gentleman had been dismissed from the University of Trinidad and Tobago for whatever reason—as you know that matter had gone to the Industrial Court. But the hon. Member should point out that this was the affidavit of a disgruntled employee and that has to be understood in the context of what is being said.

I want to connect that to something else he said, where he criticized the University of Trinidad and Tobago for awarding honorary degrees to Mr. Brian Lara and the Mighty Chalkdust, two persons of unquestionable achievement. Do you know what the irony is, Mr. Speaker? Around the same time when Mr. Brian Lara and the Mighty Chalkdust were getting their honorary doctorates, the University of the West Indies awarded an honorary doctorate to Miss Camini Marajh. Could you believe that? And some of us argued that it was because she conveniently did a hatchet job on the University of Trinidad and Tobago in her series of articles. Who has the standards here?

Look at the comparison between the calibre of persons who might be receiving an award from the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the calibre of persons receiving the award from the University of the West Indies. There are some, even among journalists, who have expressed their own reservations, but it is not for me to make a determination as to who is entitled or qualified to receive

an honorary doctorate, nor who should award it. It is only for me to draw to the public's attention which university is awarding and to whom and ask the population to come to their own conclusions.

The hon. Member also spoke about the rigours of becoming a professor. May I remind him, all that rigour will go to waste if lecturers do not attend their classes. There is a requirement for your presence and it is only in your presence that that rigours will have any positive impact on the students of our nation. He did in fact, raise a point about COSTAATT and I think he said we had closed down something they had established. I really want to explain that.

What they did was assemble a number of institutions together, John Donaldson Technical Institute, San Fernando Technical, MIC, Joint Services, Staff College, NIHERST and within NIHERST there were a number of schools, School of Languages, School of Nursing and a number of other schools in there. And they brought all of that together and established one institution called the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT).

Mr. Speaker, the problem with that institution as conceptualized, it was indeed poorly conceptualized. They had that wide range of disciplines and a wide range of levels within the same institution. What do I mean? I mean you had one institution on the one hand offering degrees in nursing, journalism, computer and that same institution that is offering degrees was at one and the same time offering courses, Introduction to Air-Condition Repair and Introduction to Carpentry.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and thanks to the hon. Members of the House. The problem when you have an institution trying to offer degrees and introductory courses, especially courses introductory in skills, is that the institution is not sure what it is, and you had to dedicate and conceptualize the institution quite differently. So, what we did was that we separated all the skills training and migrated the skills training to Metal Industries Company, an institution purpose built, designed for skills training, and we took a number of engineering type programmes and migrated them across to the University of Trinidad and Tobago. And we took what COSTAATT was and we

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ensured emphasis on nursing, languages and a number of areas that was specifically relevant. When I say nursing, skills necessary for the health sector, radiography and a number of other skills associated with the health sector.

We took a range of education programmes and we developed a concept of a pure community college. That is what we did; we ensured that we arranged the institutions and the programmes in a logical, reasonable and sensible way. So, once we had done that, we were quite certain that success of the institution will be assured. It is just crazy to ask an institution that is doing degree programmes, one at the same time, to do a programme in introduction to welding. It is difficult to manage such an institution; that is what they had conceptualized in their own chaotic minds and that is something we had to repair.

I was appalled to hear the hon. Member for Caroni East, who should be terrified to say the three letters NTA—the National Training Agency. He boasted it is something that they established. When the PNM left office in 1995, a multi-disciplinary team had done considerable work in the design of an institution that would replace the Board of Industrial Training with an institution to be known as the National Training Agency. Considerable work had been done and they really designed a proper institution. There was a lot of work, a multi-disciplinary committee; I read the work and I thought it was very impressive.

What they did instead, when they came into office, by 1998—and that conceptualized institution, the NTA had the responsibility to ensure adequate manpower for the development purposes. So, they had the responsibility to be evaluating education institutions and evaluating what was taking place in the industry and projecting into the future what our manpower needs were going to be, and assisting institutions to design programmes so as to ensure we were able to meet our needs as they relate to the required manpower.

What they instead did, was that they established the National Training Agency, which in their minds and as a consequence of their effort was a minor fraction of what the original NTA has conceptualized by the multi-disciplinary committee was. Do you know what they did to make matters worse? Do you know how they interpreted this task of ensuring adequate manpower for development purposes, which is an enormous task? They expressed it in terms of labour market surveys.

When we came into office, you know what they presented to this Government? There is a need for the chef in Charlotteville. There is a need for two persons to work in a hotel somewhere in Port of Spain. One here, one there, that is how they interpreted the staff. There was no proper analysis of the



requirement and projection into the future what is required for industry. Do you know whom they gave responsibility to do this particular labour market survey? Just to demonstrate how they politicize everything. The one man responsible for all the labour market survey, at one and the same time, was also the chairman of the UNC Couva North constituency. And do you know who was the CEO of the NTA? That is why they should shudder to mention the word NTA. The CEO of the NTA was none other than Mr. Faisal Karim, the then general secretary of United National Congress. That is how they bastardize every single thing that they touch and they dare say incestuous.

What is more incestuous than the chairman of Couva North and the general secretary of the UNC working and governing an institution that is the NTA, and come here to tell me today, about the National Training Agency. I know what they did. And we all know and the country knows what took place in the offices of the NTA. We know it was an engine room and an engine room for what. They come here shamelessly.

We could boast of equality and equity in the way we deliver our education programme. [*Desk thumping*] We can boast of that, because they established the TTIT in Point Lisas and we have no objections whatsoever, and we could talk about quality at TTIT anytime you want. If you want to compare institutions to institutions, we could compare TTIT and UTT any time you want, but there are some things there that we have resisted saying, for fear of impacting adverse to the students who would have attended at that time, but we have since corrected those.

They established TTIT and they got, through the NESC—And do you know who chaired the board of the NESC? None other than Mr. Finbar Gangar. A sitting Minister of Energy, sitting on a board and chairing the board.

### **7.00 p.m.**

They criticized us today for having appointed Mr. Ken Julien, but they appointed Mr. Finbar Ganga, the then sitting Minister of Energy and Energy Resources, and he was privileged to invite other Members to attend the meetings. Do you know of all the people in Trinidad and Tobago, of all the 1.3 million people, who he would select to invite whenever he had a meeting? None other than Mr. Sadiq Baksh—

**Mr. Imbert:** No! No!

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:**—the former Minister of Works and Transport, and then they made arguments about being incestuous—and they are no masters of the

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concord. They are not easy, you know. [*Laughter*] We are not upset that money was spent and invested, and people got an opportunity for an education at an institution in Couva. We are very happy, and we have continued the institution. We have built it, grown it and developed it further, but at the same time they starved John Donaldson Technical Institute for funds.

When I went into John Donaldson Technical Institute as Minister of State some years ago when I was brand new and green, there were cracks all over the building. In the building there was evidence of complete neglect. It was the same thing in San Fernando Technical Institute. Why do you favour one and not the other? And that is the problem we have had, and we have had now to make major investments in those institutions to make sure they are all on par. We have done so quite comfortably and proud, ensuring that all the citizens of our country continue to have access to education opportunities, just so long as we occupy the benches on the side of the honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, on the accreditation matter, now, much has been said to make the distinction between registration accreditation and there is another concept of recognition, But the hon. Member must know that in order for an institution to be accredited, quite apart from registration, you must have had a few cohorts of graduates. Because it is the assessment of the graduates and their performance in the workplace that allows an accrediting body to conduct a proper accreditation exercise. You have to have a cohort or cohorts to assess them. And while they boast about the Institute of Business—and we too are quite proud, but they must remember that IOB operated for nine long years before any international organization was prepared to take a look at them.

With the IOB, like all institutions, accreditation can be retroactive. So, an accrediting body can come and grant accreditation going back to their date of establishment, as the case might be, or going back to a date with which the accredited body is satisfied. The IOB is something that they are proud about but they omit to mention that for nine years, IOB—and there is a reason that they do not mention that, you know. There is a reason, because that is an institution they see as being close to them, politically, perhaps, because some of the people associated at that time were also associated with them, politically. It is no secret that Dr. Bhoewarrie was indeed the main player at the IOB. And likewise the University of Trinidad and Tobago—the University of the West Indies. So popular, the UTT is becoming in my mind. When I think university, I only think UTT, but I have to fix that.

Mr. Speaker, the University of the West Indies, they are accredited; their engineering programme is accredited by the IIE, the Institute of International

Engineers, I think that is the proper name; IIE is the acronym. That is the same institution that recently awarded accreditation status to the UTT's degree programmes, but I am not aware that the sociology programme of the University of the West Indies is accredited by IIE or their degree programmes in Economics or Government and so on. These are programmes that are well respected and accepted within our environment. So industry accepts them, and it is on the basis of the acceptance of industry, but there is no formal accreditation of which I am aware that might be associated with all of these programmes, that an institution has been awarded accreditation status. So, all these institutions out there are busy competing for acceptance, recognition and accreditation, and they will achieve that once they have been able to produce their respective cohorts of graduates.

On the question of the admission criteria for medicine, even here, recently, the University of the West Indies, Faculty of Medical Sciences, St. Augustine, had to change their admission criteria because it was too narrow. They were accepting persons on the basis of A level performance only and that has been severely criticized the world over by the best universities. Even Mona, same university, a different campus, was using a different admission criteria, and the accreditation body responsible for medical sciences came to the University of the West Indies and instructed them that they needed to change from what they were doing at St. Augustine and follow the pattern of what was being done at Mona.

Contrary to what the Member for Caroni East was saying, at Mona, there is ample opportunity for you to gain points on the basis of extra curricular activities. They have at Mona—the same UWI—been able to recognize that there was value. In some US universities—you know, in Trinidad we had been giving great credit if you had Physics and Maths, as the case might be. In the universities in the United States, you can have a degree in Philosophy, a degree in Spanish, a degree in French, a degree in History, and you can be admitted to their school of medicine. They look for a mature student, rather than somebody who has a very specific technical competence, and so there are different schools of thought. So, when St. Georges in Grenada had established its own admission criteria, who is the Member for Caroni East to tell them they do not know what they are doing? Who is he? So, they are standing on very soft ground when they declare some of these positions.

A lot of these criticisms they have levelled against this Government— as I come to a close, I just want to talk about the brain drain issue that the Member for Siparia mentioned. What we have done, recognizing that we are producing more graduates—and this question of brain drain, sometime ago at Mona, the deputy principal of Mona complained that too many of Mona graduates found themselves

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unemployable. The reason for that had to do with the kinds of graduates that they were producing. So, there is a role here for the institution too. What sense is there that you are producing 1,000 sociologists when there is need for engineers and we need only 50, as the case might be. So, institutions have to do an analysis of the industry themselves and ensure that they are in a position to offer education opportunities to students, opportunities which are valid, valuable and are directly relevant to the industry into which the student will graduate.

There are three variables that must be aligned. The needs of industry, the places available at the institution and the demands that students make, and the institutions have a responsibility to shape the demand such that when students participate in their programme they will graduate into existing jobs. At Mona, they were complaining only because they were producing a number of persons who were completely irrelevant to the Jamaican labour market. That is why, in particular, we have been very careful with UTT to ensure that we work closely in collaboration with industry as we design our programmes to ensure that our programmes are specifically relevant to the national development objectives and specifically relevant to the labour market as they exist.

As we do that, we have also introduced a very useful clause in our agreement with students as it relates to the GATE programme. What we have done, we have asked students, once you are the beneficiary of GATE to a certain amount of money, you are required to work in Trinidad and Tobago for a particular period. If you get between zero and \$50,000, you are required to work for one year; between \$50,000 just above and \$100,000 for two years, and so it goes with \$50,000 increments. What we are aiming to achieve with that—and we are not asking people to work for the Government; we are asking people to work in Trinidad and Tobago for any public sector institution or private sector. It is an attempt to ensure that we are able to retain some of the resources that we would have developed in our education system.

There is no question of the strangulation of the University of the West Indies. If it is one Government that has expanded consistently its contribution to the University of the West Indies, it is this Government since 2001—[*Desk thumping*] The last figure, I recall received by the University of the West Indies I think it was in 2000 or 2001, when the hon. Members opposite were in Government—was \$199 million. Our first year that grew to \$295 million, it then jumped to somewhere in the vicinity of \$375 million. By 2006/2007, we were contributing just over \$600 million to the University of the West Indies. [*Desk thumping*]

There is a standard ratio. There is a relationship between the number of students. There is an approved formula that we use. We entered into discussions

with the university and the university knows, and they are very happy for the contributions we have made over the many years. We have been dedicated to all our institutions. We have been loyal to all and we have recognized that all our institutions are, indeed, making a tremendous contribution to our education sector, to our education landscape, and assisting this country and this Government in taking this country forward towards Vision 2020, developed country status, of which I hope the hon. Members opposite will have a clearer view and a firmer grasp.

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

**The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Christine Kangaloo):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me thank all of those who have contributed to the debate today, but I really must express my gratitude to my two colleagues, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East and the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East, [*Desk thumping*] because they have really made what I have to do much simpler. I am grateful to them, especially to the Member for Diego Martin North/East who went into a lot of detail about the issues of registration and accreditation.

I thought when I introduced the Bill, I made it my business to point out that the Bill was about registration of the post secondary and tertiary institutions and not accreditation, and at that stage I also, in introducing the Bill, set out what was the difference between registration and accreditation. The Member for Caroni East was there, you know. He sat, he listened, and then the very first thing he says when he gets up, he talks about accreditation.

**Mr. Manning:** He does not know what he is saying. He does not understand. He went to a wrong school.

**Hon. C. Kangaloo:** Mr. Speaker, I therefore have to address—[*Interruption*] Even though most of the issues that have been raised by both the Member for Caroni East and the Member for Siparia have been addressed by the previous speakers, I really have to put on record my absolute distress, horror, and I have to go a little stronger and say, disgust, at some of the things that the Member for Caroni East had to say about the accreditation system and the Accreditation Council.

As the Member for Chaguanas East has said, the Accreditation Council was set up because this Government has placed its priority on education; this Government sees education as the way of transforming the lives of our citizens and this Government has said that along with what we are doing, all of the initiatives that we are placing in the education sector, they must all be underpinned by

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excellence. [*Desk thumping*] That is why the Act was passed and that is why the Accreditation Council was set up, and the Member for Caroni East, at the very outset, cast aspersions on the work of the Accreditation Council.

The very first thing I want to say, I want to say to Dr. Ruby Alleyne who is the Executive Director of the Accreditation Council and the members of the board of the Accreditation Council, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago are very grateful for all that the Accreditation Council has achieved since 2004 when it was established. [*Desk thumping*] And, of course, the Member for Caroni East started off by saying that the UNC had the vision for universal tertiary education; they had the great vision to set up the Dollar for Dollar Programme, and I just want to remind the Member for Caroni East that it is this administration—it is this administration, Mr. Speaker—that has had the vision and that has set up the Accreditation Council to produce excellence in the education sector. [*Desk thumping*]

They can dream as much as they want, the reality is that it is we on this side that took the steps to set up the legislation and the Council.

**7.15 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Siparia said that I did not advance reasons why we were here today and I thought that I had. I thought that I had gone into some detail about what had happened since the Accreditation Council Act was passed in 2004 and I am not going to go over what I said. Time was taken for the infrastructure to be put in place and the Accreditation Council did a lot of stakeholder consultations. All of that was being done. What I should point out is that it is clear that a lot of work had to be done with the institutions themselves, to bring them up to the stage when they could have been registered by the Accreditation Council.

I remember when the Act was initially passed, I remember sitting in the Senate and hearing some of the Members of the Opposition talking about how they hoped that the Accreditation Council would not operate with a big stick and close down all of the existing institutions. I remember that. The Member for Diego Martin North/East was the one who piloted the Bill at that time to set up the Accreditation Council. The Accreditation Council has been working with the institutions to assist them in building their capacity, so that they could have been registered.

The Member for Caroni East asked about the accrediting agency in the Caribbean, and I want to tell him that there is a Caribbean Community Accreditation Agency for Education and Training, and the inter-governmental agreement establishing that agency has already been signed. He asked about other countries

in the Caribbean, whether they had national accreditation bodies, Jamaica has; Barbados has set up its own national accreditation agency in 2004, after Trinidad and Tobago had passed its legislation; Guyana also set it up in 2004; St. Kitts and Nevis also in around 2004/2005; so that is to answer your question.

Mr. Speaker, a lot was said about the University of Trinidad and Tobago and it was basically answered by both speakers on this side, but once again, may I say that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is extremely proud of the record that the University of Trinidad and Tobago has already set [*Desk thumping*] for education in this country. We consider the University of Trinidad and Tobago to be one of the success stories of this administration.

I am not sure if anyone addressed the issue of accreditation of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. I think the Member for Diego Martin North/East pointed out how accreditation is voluntary and already two of the programmes of the University of Trinidad and Tobago have received accreditation from the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) of the United Kingdom: the Bachelor of Applied Engineering and Electrical Engineering Technology, and the Bachelor of Applied Engineering in Mechanical Engineering Technology.

Mr. Speaker, instead of the Member for Caroni East listening at this stage—because really and truly, everyone went into what accreditation is about, and now he is asking me about which programmes. The University of Trinidad and Tobago was established in 2004 and we have said that you need to have graduates of a programme before you can get the accreditation. Do you know he is still asking me how many programmes? Anyway, let me not be distracted. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

I could say to you as well, Mr. Speaker, that the University of Trinidad and Tobago over the past few months has held discussions with the International Engineering Accreditation bodies in the United Kingdom and the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining in the USA, which is the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology, and in Canada, with the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board, as well as with the German Accreditation bodies, because the University of Trinidad and Tobago is attempting to select the most appropriate bodies to accredit their various programmes. So the University of Trinidad and Tobago is not running away from seeking to have its programmes accredited.

I should point out as well that already since registration, three institutions have applied in Trinidad and Tobago to be accredited and that is ongoing now. The work towards the accreditation of these institutions is being undertaken by

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the Accreditation Council. The Member for Caroni East raised the issue about the integrity of the Accreditation Committee, and I want to tell him that the independent evaluators, those who evaluate the particular institutions will then make a recommendation to the board, so that there is a division and there is no sort of compromising of the integrity when it comes to assessing the institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I really have to say once again with respect to the Member for Caroni East, his absolute callous attitude towards students, the students of the private tertiary institutions, those who are seeking their educational opportunities in the private tertiary institutions. He says that he did not say to close them down. He says that he did not say that, so I will not go into that, but he said everything. He expressed contempt for the institutions. As a leader and someone who should be leading his constituency, the persons whom he represents, to try to put that fear and sort of insecurity in the students at those institutions, was callous and he should be reprimanded for it. I just want to tell him that we on this side frown on that attitude. [*Desk thumping*]

It was an effort on his part. It seemed as if it was an effort on his part to bring into disrepute, all of the private tertiary institutions that have their student enrolment, and it really was unfortunate that he chose to attack those institutions in the way that he did. But as we have said, we on this side are committed to the development of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and all institutions that offer relevant, sound educational opportunities to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago will receive the support of the Accreditation Council of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Siparia talked about the strangulation of the University of the West Indies and—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** [*Laughter*] I heard you.

**Mr. Manning:** The money going [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. C. Kangaloo:**—she read from some reports. Mr. Speaker, if I may be allowed to read from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus Annual Report 2006/2007, at page 50 of the report it says:

“The Income and Expenditure Statement records a surplus of TT\$43,627,502 for the year...”

Strangulation, Mr. Speaker?



**Mr. Imbert:** Surplus.

**Hon. C. Kangaloo:** “The funds spent on capital expenditure to upgrade facilities and to increase the stock of library books, have been excluded from the statement. The actual income received has been reported without any adjustments for the capital aspects of additional property, plant and equipment, thus giving rise to the surplus.”

It then goes on to say in the next paragraph on the same page 50:

“The monthly contributions from government for recurrent expenditure have been received in a timely manner and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago continues to demonstrate its commitment to The University by increasing its remittances, thereby reducing its share of the outstanding balance of the arrears due.”

Strangulation, Mr. Speaker?

I want to point out to you as well, that I attended the University Grants Committee meeting in Mona. The Member for Caroni East should know about that, although I do not know if he was ever able to represent the university at that level, but the Government’s contribution to the budget estimates for the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus for 2008/2009, was in the sum of \$427,519,950, which is approximately 25 per cent more than its contribution in the 2007/2008 budget. [*Desk thumping*]

Strangulation, Mr. Speaker?

I want to point out as well, that earlier this year, Cabinet approved a revised estimated cost of some \$152,908,718 for the Capital Development Programme of the University of the West Indies. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is funding the construction of the lecture theatre auditorium; the extension of the Milner Hall residence; and the construction of a teaching and learning complex. Initially, it was to cost approximately \$89 million which the Government had agreed that it would pay, but now the revised costs have come up to \$152,908,718. The Government did not say to the University of the West Indies:—which the Member for Siparia is saying, the Government is strangling—“Listen, we agreed to this, the cost has gone up, you bear that.” The Government had said, “We will fund whatever the revised costs are.” [*Desk thumping*] So, that is the strangulation of which the Member for Siparia speaks.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think therefore, there is much for me to add at this stage, everything that was relevant to the debate has been addressed. It was raised about the reports of the Accreditation Council, and I am informed, that all the reports up

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to the year 2007 have been done by KPMG and reviewed by the Auditor General, so that very soon we will have to bring the reports in the normal fashion.

I hope that we have answered all of the questions that have been raised. I ask at this stage that the remaining Members of the Opposition will support the Bill, so that the Accreditation Council would get the extension of time to allow the institutions that have not been registered, the time and opportunity to be registered, and to continue to lawfully conduct their business. All of this is being done so that no institution and no citizen would be left behind.

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

**7.30 p.m.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

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

*House in committee.*

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

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

*House resumed.*

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

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday 04 July, at 1.30 p.m. On that day, we will debate the Notice sent by the President with respect to the nomination for the appointment of a police commissioner, and the Treasury Bonds Bill and the Motion to increase the borrowing limit under the Development Loans Act.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Which one will you be doing first, the notification on the Commissioner of Police?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Correct.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I put the question on the adjournment, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, on her maiden contribution in this House. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

May I enquire also of the Minister of Public Utilities, is it also your maiden contribution?

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**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** As a Member of this House, Sir. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** May I also offer my congratulations to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East, on his maiden contribution. [*Desk thumping*] It is always nice in this House when we have Senators come here as Members. [*Laughter*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 7.33 p.m.*

**WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION**

*The following question was asked by Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Caroni East):*

**Education Facilities Company Limited  
(Details of)**

**162.** With respect to the Education Facilities Company Limited, for the period 2006 to date, could the hon. Minister of Education state:

- (a) the development projects undertaken;
- (b) the cost of each project and the company awarded the contract;
- (c) the percentage completed, the cost overruns so far, if any and the estimates cost at completion; and
- (d) the internal audit findings on these projects?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Esther Le Gendre):** The reply for the Question No. 162 (a) is:

For the period January 2006 to date, the Education Facilities Company Limited has undertaken seventy (70) development projects. These projects are listed in Appendix I and Appendix II:

- Appendix I- lists those developmental projects for which contracts have been awarded. They are categorized as follows:
  - ✓ Early Childhood Care and Education Centres
  - ✓ Government Primary Schools
  - ✓ Government Secondary Schools

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- Appendix II- are those developmental projects which are in varying stages of the tender process and in respect of which contracts have not yet been awarded.

The reply for the Question No. 162 (b) is:

The cost of each project and the name of the company awarded the contract are shown in the relevant columns of Appendix I entitled 'Contract Sum' and 'Contractor'.

The reply for the Question No. 162 (c) is:

The status of works or percentage completed is shown in Appendix I and this represents the stage of completion as at June 16, 2008. Cost increases where they have occurred for the period under review are accordingly identified in Appendix I. The cost increases were generally related to scope changes post commencement of works, for example lay-byes to be constructed and expansion to recreational areas.

The reply for the Question No. 162 (d) is:

An external audit review for 2006/2007 has been completed and the Education Facilities Company Limited is awaiting the Audit Report. In accordance with the Bye-Laws and Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee, the resultant audit findings will be presented to the Audit Committee. Finally, the audit findings will be incorporated into the annual Auditors' Report to be undertaken by duly approved external Auditors. With respect to the internal audits, the Company has only recently employed an Internal Auditor and an internal audit Report is currently being completed.

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**EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION CENTRES**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>NAME OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT</b>	<b>CONTRACT SUM VAT INCLUSIVE (\$)</b>	<b>CONTRACTOR</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE COMPLETED (%)</b>	<b>COST INCREASES (\$)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST OF COMPLETION (\$)</b>
1	CHINAPOO	2,745,921.53	DOUBLE H CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES LIMITED	95		2,745,921.53
2	EL SOCORRO NORTH	2,160,758.00	CROWN J'S LTD	100	5,333.89	2,166,091.89
3	EL SOCORRO SOUTH	2,374,505.91	AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING SERVICES LIMITED	100		2,374,505.91
4	LA PUERTA	2,373,920.85	CROWN J'S LTD	100		2,373,920.85
5	LA ROMAINE	2,464,224.60	AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING SERVICES LIMITED	100		2,464,224.60
6	LITTLE GEMS PENTECOSTAL	2,010,387.45	UNITED SUPPLIES AND SERVICES LIMITED	88	118,735.66	2,129,123.11
7	LOPINOT/LA PASTORA	2,937,703.82	R2K ENGINEERING COMPANY LIMITED	78		2,937,703.82
8	MAYARO	2,079,612.85	GEOSERVICES CONTRACTORS COMPANY LIMITED	100	49,382.50	2,128,995.35

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<b>NO.</b>	<b>NAME OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT</b>	<b>CONTRACT SUM VAT INCLUSIVE (\$)</b>	<b>CONTRACTOR</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE COMPLETED (%)</b>	<b>COST INCREASES (\$)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST OF COMPLETION (\$)</b>
<b>9</b>	NORTH TRACE	5,021,347.12	ASHANA CIVIL MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS	90		5,021,347.12
<b>10</b>	ORTOIRE VILLAGE ROMAN CATHOLIC	1,667,862.60	SKYLON CONSTRUCTION LIMITED	94		1,667,862.60
<b>11</b>	PETIT VALLEY	2,407,037.40	S L LTD	100		2,407,037.40
<b>12</b>	SALYBIA	4,394,306.40	AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING SERVICES LIMITED	100		4,394,306.40
<b>13</b>	SAN PEDRO	2,609,421.30	AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING SERVICES LIMITED	100		2,609,421.30
<b>14</b>	SANGRE GRANDE	2,022,301.75	TRIPPLE BIQUE COMPANY LIMITED	100	795,999.38	2,818,301.13
<b>15</b>	SANTA FLORA	4,915,895.80	ASHANA CIVIL MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS	100		4,915,895.80
<b>16</b>	SANTA ROSA	1,955,000.00	UNITED SUPPLIES AND SERVICES LIMITED	100	113,361.50	2,068,361.50

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<b>NO.</b>	<b>NAME OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT</b>	<b>CONTRACT SUM VAT INCLUSIVE (\$)</b>	<b>CONTRACTOR</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE COMPLETED (%)</b>	<b>COST INCREASES (\$)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST OF COMPLETION (\$)</b>
17	ST AUGUSTINE SOUTH	2,537,100.00	RAGBIR AND DEONARINE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED	100	244,475.52	2,781,575.52
18	ST SYLVAN ANGLICAN	2,463,482.85	DOUBLE H CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES LIMITED	100		2,463,482.85
19	STRANGE VILLAGE	5,006,396.20	ASHANA CIVIL MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS	100		5,006,396.20
20	TACARIGUA	2,244,955.02	TRIPPLE BIQUE COMPANY LIMITED	100	293,608.58	2,538,563.60
21	VALSAYN	1,820,576.27	BOWAIN CONTRACTING LIMITED	100	52,520.00	1,873,096.27
22	IERE	7,656,472.20	SHAROZ ENTERPRISES LIMITED			7,656,472.20
23	MODEL NURSERY	4,812,753.45	MOOTILAL RAMHIT AND SONS			4,812,753.45
24	MONROE ROAD	4,932,868.65	MOOTILAL RAMHIT AND SONS			4,932,868.65

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**APPENDIX I****PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>NAME OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT</b>	<b>CONTRACT SUM VAT INCLUSIVE (\$)</b>	<b>CONTRACTOR</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE COMPLETED (%)</b>	<b>COST INCREASES (\$)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST OF COMPLETION (\$)</b>
25	ARIMA WEST GOVERNMENT	39,716,848.29	MOOSAI DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION CARIBBEAN LTD	37		39,716,848.29
26	ICACOS GOVERNMENT	19,131,340.26	CHINA JIANGSU INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LIMITED	100		19,131,340.26
27	ST MARY'S GOVERNMENT	39,092,530.98	SHAROZ ENTERPRISES LIMITED	16		39,092,530.98
28	TRANQUILLITY GOVERNMENT	38,667,230.28	UNIFORM BUILDING CONTRACTOR LIMITED	22		38,667,230.28
29	ARIMA NEW GOVERNMENT	32,522,758.30	MOOSAI DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION CARIBBEAN LTD			32,522,758.30
		<u>169,130,708.11</u>	-	-	<u>0.00</u>	<u>169,130,708.11</u>



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**APPENDIX I****SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>NAME OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT</b>	<b>CONTRACT SUM VAT INCLUSIVE (\$)</b>	<b>CONTRACTOR</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE COMPLETED (%)</b>	<b>COST INCREASES (\$)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST OF COMPLETION (\$)</b>
<b>30</b>	ARANGUEZ GOVERNMENT SECONDARY	149,934,970.02	BEIJING LIUJIAN CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION	10		149,934,970.02
<b>31</b>	BARATARIA JUNIOR SECONDARY	171,712,630.19	BROADWAY PROPERTIES LTD	9		171,712,630.19
<b>32</b>	CARAPICHAIMA JUNIOR SECONDARY	182,791,464.61	CHINA JIANGSU INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LIMITED	7		182,791,464.61
<b>33</b>	CHAGUANAS SENIOR COMPREHENSIVE - BLOCK K	21,281,467.53	MOOSAI DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION CARIBBEAN LTD	99		21,281,467.53
<b>34</b>	COUVA JUNIOR SECONDARY	198,736,602.32	BROADWAY PROPERTIES LTD	18		198,736,602.32
<b>35</b>	CUREPE JUNIOR SECONDARY	159,636,430.05	CHINA BUILDING TECHNIQUE GROUP TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LIMITED	7		159,636,430.05

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NO.	NAME OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT	CONTRACT SUM VAT INCLUSIVE (\$)	CONTRACTOR	PERCENTAGE COMPLETED (%)	COST INCREASES (\$)	ESTIMATED COST OF COMPLETION (\$)
36	FIVE RIVERS JUNIOR SECONDARY	152,545,027.90	BEIJING LIUJIAN CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION	9		152,545,027.90
37	MARABELLA JUNIOR SECONDARY	145,322,391.58	CHINA JIANGSU INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LIMITED	55		145,322,391.58
38	MT HOPE JUNIOR SECONDARY	166,364,433.75	ENVIROTEC LIMITED	16		166,364,433.75
		<u>1,348,325,417.95</u>	-	-	<u>0.00</u>	<u>1,348,325,417.95</u>

**APPENDIX I****SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

NO.	NAME OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT	CONTRACT SUM VAT INCLUSIVE (\$)	CONTRACTOR	PERCENTAGE COMPLETED (%)	COST INCREASES (\$)	ESTIMATED COST OF COMPLETION (\$)
39	PLEASANTVILLE SENIOR COMPREHENSIVE	125,988,718.82	BROADWAY PROPERTIES LTD	6		125,988,718.82

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NO.	NAME OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT	CONTRACT SUM VAT INCLUSIVE (\$)	CONTRACTOR	PERCENTAGE COMPLETED (%)	COST INCREASES (\$)	ESTIMATED COST OF COMPLETION (\$)
40	PRINCES TOWN JUNIOR SECONDARY	174,000,000.00	CHINA ZHEJIANG NINGBO CONSTRUCTION GROUP COMPANY LIMITED	9		174,000,000.00
41	SIPARIA JUNIOR SECONDARY	176,000,000.00	CHINA ZHEJIANG NINGBO CONSTRUCTION GROUP COMPANY LIMITED	23		176,000,000.00
42	ST AUGUSTINE SENIOR COMPREHENSIVE	204,837,312.50	KEE CHANONA LIMITED	1		204,837,312.50
43	TUNAPUNA GOVERNMENT SECONDARY	114,631,207.75	HAFEEZ KARAMATH			114,631,207.75
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<u>2,388,528,177.15</u>			<u>1,673,417.03</u>	<u>2,390,201,594.18</u>

**APPENDIX II****PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN WHICH ARE AT VARYING STAGES OF THE TENDER PROCESS****EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION CENTRES**

44	FANNY VILLAGE
45	MILTON
46	RETRENCH
47	UNION HALL
48	JACOB'S HILL, WALLERFIELD
49	OROPUNE GARDENS
50	CARLSEN FIELD
51	MARAVAL, MORNE COCO ROAD
52	CAURA ROYAL ROAD
53	EDINBURGH SOUTH
54	EDINBURGH 500
55	MALABAR
56	MARAVAL, PARAMIN
57	PLEASANTVILLE
58	BUEN INTENTO
59	HARMONY HALL
60	CORINTH

***PRIMARY SCHOOLS***

61	FANNY VILLAGE GOVERNMENT
62	CAP-DE-VILLE GOVERNMENT

**SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

- 63** WILLIAMSVILLE JUNIOR SECONDARY
- 64** DIEGO MARTIN JUNIOR SECONDARY
- 65** DIEGO MARTIN GOVERNMENT SECONDARY
- 66** MARABELLA SENIOR COMPREHENSIVE
- 67** SAN FERNANDO EAST JUNIOR SECONDARY
- 68** SAN JUAN SECONDARY COMPREHENSIVE
- 69** SIPARIA SENIOR COMPREHENSIVE

**EDUCATION DISTRICT OFFICES**

- 70** VICTORIA EDUCATION DISTRICT OFFICE