

*Congratulations*

*Friday, September 12, 2008*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, September 12, 2008*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**CONGRATULATIONS**

**(ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received two items of correspondence which I will want to read into the record. One is from Dr. William Shija, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The letter is addressed to me and the subject: The occasion of the 46th anniversary of the independence of Trinidad and Tobago. The letter reads as follows:

“I wish to sincerely congratulate you, hon. Speaker, as well as the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the Parliamentary leaders of Trinidad and Tobago for this auspicious and memorable event. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend, on behalf of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, our most sincere wishes for continued good health and prosperity to you and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.”

It is signed, as I said, by Dr. William Shija, the Secretary General of the CPA.

The second item of correspondence is from the Speaker of the Senate in Canada and also the Speaker of the House of Commons in Canada. This letter is addressed to Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano, President of the Senate and myself. It reads as follows:

“Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Senate and the House of Commons, may we extend our very best wishes to you and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as you celebrate your national day. The close association of our two countries is a matter of great importance to all Canadian Parliamentarians. We strongly value this relationship and look forward to the continued strengthening of our Parliamentary ties.

Again, on this significant occasion, we offer the sincere congratulations of the Parliament of Canada.”

As I said, it is signed by the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

*Paper Laid*

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**PAPER LAID**

Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1999. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Karen Nunez-Tesheira)*]

*Referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, having answered a plethora of questions last week, the Government is in a position to answer Question No. 178 today and we would ask for a deferral of two weeks for the others.

**Mr. Speaker:** I know there are several questions on the Order Paper and I also note that in my absence several questions were answered. If, perhaps, I need to go on a holiday again, please let me know.

**Rio Claro/Mayaro  
(Details of Housing Units)**

**178. Mr. Winston Peters (Mayaro)** asked the hon. Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) the number of persons who have applied for housing units in the Rio Claro/Mayaro region;
- (b) how many of these applicants are residents of Rio Claro/Mayaro; and
- (c) how many of them have been successful in obtaining housing units?

**The Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Emily Dick-Forde):** Mr. Speaker, a total of 2,440 households have applied for housing in the Mayaro/Rio Claro area. Of the 2,440 households that have selected Mayaro/Rio Claro as their first, second or third choice, 1,031 are residents of the area.

With respect to Part (c), the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment does not collect data in this manner and, therefore, the information is not available.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

**Mayaro/Rio Claro Housing Projects  
(Details of Expenditure and Contract Services to)**

- 179.** Could the hon. Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment state:
- (a) the estimated costs attached to each housing project in the Rio Claro/Mayaro region;
  - (b) the actual expenditure to date;
  - (c) whether there have been cost overruns;
  - (d) if the answer to (c) is yes, what were the reasons for such overruns?
  - (e) the names of all contractors and sub-contractors attached to each HDC project in the Rio Claro/Mayaro region;
  - (f) the services provided by each; and
  - (g) the actual sums paid to them to date? [*Mr. W. Peters*]

**National Social Development Programme  
(Details of)**

- 180.** With respect to the National Social Development Programme, could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities state:
- (a) how much moneys have been spent on this programme to date;
  - (b) the disbursement of funding of projects by region;
  - (c) if this programme is currently being restructured; and
  - (d) if the answer to (c) is in the affirmative, what is the restructuring process and the criteria/requisites for persons accessing this programme? [*Mr. W. Peters*]

**The Performing Arts Centre  
(Approval for Construction and Expenditure)**

- 186.** With respect to the Performing Arts Centre, could the hon. Minister of Finance state:
- (a) did the Ministry of Finance give approval in relation to the budget for the construction of the centre; and
  - (b) what was the amount approved for expenditure for the centre? [*Mr. J. Warner*]

**St. Vincent and the Grenadines**  
**(Details of Airport Construction)**

- 187.** With respect to this country's provision of \$78 million to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the construction of an airport in that country, could the hon. Minister of Finance state:
- (a) what are the terms under which the funding is provided and whether the sum is to be repaid;
  - (b) whether any specific request was made for this funding, and if so, what are the details of the request;
  - (c) under what Head of Expenditure was funding sourced; and
  - (d) is the funding associated with a special fund and what is the justification for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago accessing this special fund for this purpose? [*Mr. J. Warner*]

**St. Vincent and the Grenadines**  
**(Details of Special Terms of Financing and other Benefits)**

- 188.** With respect to this country's provision of \$78 million to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the construction of an airport in that country, could the hon. Minister of Finance state:
- (a) are any special terms attached to this financing such as preference for local contractors and suppliers of goods and services, and if not, why; and
  - (b) what economic and other benefits does the Government envisage will come from this expenditure? [*Mr. J. Warner*]

**Local Government Reform Report**  
**(Status of)**

- 210.** Could the hon. Minister of Local Government state:
- (a) whether the Government has received the consultant's report on Local Government Reform;
  - (b) if the answer to (a) is yes, why has the report not been laid in the Parliament; and
  - (c) if the answer to (a) is yes, when will the report be laid in the Parliament? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

**Special Purpose State Companies  
(Details of Contracts Awarded)**

- 211.** Could the hon. Minister of Local Government list:
- (a) the contractors who have been awarded contracts from the Government Special Purpose State Companies during 2007 and 2008;
  - (b) the date each contract was awarded;
  - (c) the nature and content of each contract; and
  - (d) the location where the work was carried out? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

**Princes Town North Constituency  
(Lack of Pipelines)**

- 212.** A. Is the hon. Minister of Public Utilities aware that no pipelines have yet been laid at Nohar Trace, Tableland and Dharamdass Trace, Brothers Settlement, Dyers Village and Rebecca Richmond Road off the Guaracara Tabaquite Road all in the Princes Town North Constituency?
- B. Is the Minister aware that estimates have been submitted more than once for the laying of pipelines along those roads?
- C. Could the Minister state when water lines will be laid along the roads? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

**Existence of Police Service Special Unit  
(Details of)**

- 213.** Could the hon. Minister of National Security state:
- (a) whether there now exists in the Police Service a Special Unit to detect and prosecute praedial larceny;
  - (b) if so, what is the name of this Unit, the date it was established and its detection and conviction statistics; and
  - (c) if there is no special unit, what machinery exists for the detection and prosecution of praedial larceny and what are the statistics for detection and conviction of praedial larceny from 2006 to present time? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC*]

**Praedial Larceny**  
**(Existing Law to Detect and Prevent)**

- 214.** A. Is the hon. Minister of National Security satisfied with the existing law to detect and prevent praedial larceny?
- B. If not, could he state whether he intends to have the existing law amended, to make it more effective to detect and convict praedial larceny offences?
- C. If he so intends, could he give the particulars of the proposed amendments and the time frame for the implementation of such reforms? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC*]

**Criminal Injuries Compensation Act**  
**(Details of Compensation to Victims)**

- 215.** A. Could the hon. Minister of Social Development state whether any victims of crimes have received any of the statutory benefits under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act of 1999?
- B. If so, could the Minister give details of same?
- C. If the answer is negative, could the Minister give the reasons why not? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION**

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

**Tourism Development Projects**  
**(2006 to date)**

- 169.** With regard to the Tourism Development Company Limited, for the period 2006 to date, could the hon. Minister of Tourism 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 estimated cost at completion; and
- (d) the internal audit findings on these projects.

*Vide end of sitting for written reply.*

*Budget Day 2008*

*Friday, September 12, 2008*

**BUDGET DAY 2008**

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Karen Nunez-Tesheira):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise this honourable House and, by extension, the national community, that the 2009 budget will be presented in this honourable House on Monday, September 22, 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

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

**NO CONFIDENCE  
(PRIME MINISTER)**

**Mr. Ramesh Lawrance Maharaj SC (Tabaquite):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Be it resolved* that the House of Representatives declare that it has no confidence in the Prime Minister.

This Motion is very wide in its terms, but as far as I am concerned, my contribution would concentrate mainly on the untruthfulness of the Prime Minister both in this House, in the Senate and to the national community; his comments relating to the commission of enquiry into UDeCott in which when he made the statement, both in the Senate and in this House, he said he did not know of a single serious substantial allegation of corruption as it relates to UDeCott. That is not true. As a matter of fact, I would show that in 2003, Minister Rowley spoke to the Prime Minister, told him of specific allegations of corruption relating to Mr. Calder Hart, and in a letter written to Mr. Calder Hart, which the Prime Minister is aware of and which is not evidence contradicted or can be contradicted, the Prime Minister knew that Calder Hart was not performing honestly in UDeCott.

Notwithstanding that, the Prime Minister encouraged, supported, protected and defended Calder Hart. As a matter of fact, after 2003, he gave Calder Hart additional responsibilities. I would show that Minister Camille Robinson-Regis wrote a letter to Calder Hart, carbon copied to the Prime Minister, in which the Prime Minister knew that Calder Hart was obstructing the Parliament in providing answers to questions asked in the Parliament, but instead of disciplining and dealing with Calder Hart, he protected him.

What the evidence would show, which I would produce, is that every time anyone complained about Calder Hart to the Prime Minister, he fired that person. He even fired a lawyer, John Meyer, who was on the board of UDeCott who said that a quantity surveyor should not be present in UDeCott because he facilitates the corruption. What did the Prime Minister do? He fired him from the board.

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And what did he do with Calder Hart? He embraced him. As a matter of fact, at the convention of the PNM, he moved PNM people to give Calder Hart a front seat.

**Hon. Members:** Nonsense! [*Interruption*]

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** My position is that such a Member of Parliament is unfit to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and no amount of crowd in Woodford Square is a defence to the Prime Minister being unfit to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please!

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Mr. Speaker, when a leader accepts the position of Prime Minister, he must be committed to moral and spiritual values and he must not use his office in order to protect corruption and promote corruption. As a matter of fact, when I am finished with what I would say this evening, it would show that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is very hypocritical in his talk about democracy.

I want to, through you, thank the hon. Prime Minister for providing the welcome in the square. I passed at his constituency office this morning and I saw five long buses and I said that Mr. Jerry Narace is a phantom, a superman, that last night he contracted all these buses—five buses last night. He reminds me of what happened with Bokassa and what is happening with Mugabe, because that is how they operate.

If you want to know how many people support you, Mr. Prime Minister, hold a referendum! Do not call a demonstration in Woodford Square! [*Desk thumping*] But you said you do not believe in referendum. The informed may think that this Motion is not likely to succeed in this House, therefore what is the purpose, and it is an exercise in futility. That response is taking a very narrow and simplistic view of this Motion and I want to spend a few minutes showing that motions of no confidence like this have been filed in this House not necessarily for Members of the Government to support them, but mainly for the country to know what kind of Prime Minister they have.

As a matter of fact, in 1988, the Member for San Fernando East filed a motion of no confidence against the then Prime Minister Robinson and the grounds of that motion were very limited. He said Prime Minister Robinson was undermining the office of the President. He said Prime Minister Robinson had broken a contract with the people. At that time there were 33/3 in this House, so there was no way that Prime Minister Robinson could have been defeated unless his Members voted against him.



The purpose of that crowd outside there is not for us, you know. The Prime Minister knows he is guilty and he is afraid that some of his Members would stand up and talk against him and support this Motion. So what he has done, he has brought the crowd to intimidate the Members.

Before I go into the evidence, may I say that apart from the issue of official and political corruption which I would show is linked to the Prime Minister and that he has provided no leadership in the fight against corruption, I would also deal with his failed leadership on the issue of crime and also the failed leadership on issues of good governance. I would demonstrate that he has no respect for the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago and for the fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution.

He is not committed to transparency and accountability. As a matter of fact, it may be that this Government is probably the worst in the history of Trinidad and Tobago when it comes to accountability. I am not saying that the Motion is limited to these matters, but those are the matters which I intend to deal with specifically, but I am sure other Members would speak on other issues.

**1.45 p.m.**

Anyone going around Trinidad and Tobago, if they talk with the man in the street, the intelligent people, the objective people, would hear different grounds why Prime Minister Manning should not be in office. I tried to go around the country and I spoke to some people trying to find out what they think. One gentleman told me that the Prime Minister disregarded the advice of the Central Bank, which is responsible for high food prices and the high cost of living and high inflation. The gentleman told me, if you look in the newspapers, you will see that Prime Minister Manning and the Minister of Works and Transport stated that they are not going to stop the spending.

Another gentleman told me that it was flooding and dengue and there is the Minister saying that climate change caused that. Another said it was a stationary cloud that caused it. Yet another said that the people caused it. And the Minister of Health said that there is no dengue in Trinidad and Tobago. His own Ministry said he was lying and then the Minister said yes, there is dengue.

The Prime Minister allows people to lie to mislead the population. He is the head of the Government; he is responsible; he can remove Ministers; the buck stops with him.

Mr. Speaker, another one told me that while the people were suffering as a result of flooding and dengue, the Prime Minister is in a plane going from country to country in the Caribbean. He did not know that there were faxes and telephones. He

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said he was going to speak to Prime Ministers to have integration, while there is isolation in Trinidad and Tobago and he is spending a lot of money. That shows he is not concerned with the flooding. Any Prime Minister must provide leadership in times of disaster.

Yesterday, in America, we had Obama and McCain, who took off their political caps and went and dealt with the national issue even for a day and after that they are Democrats and Republicans again. In Trinidad and Tobago, as far as our Prime Minister is concerned, the Government belongs to him, the Parliament belongs to him, the Chief Justice and the courts belong to him and every institution belongs to him. [*Desk thumping*]

As a matter of fact, he goes to a national convention of the party in the midst of all the problems of Trinidad and Tobago. What did he talk about? He talked about a draft Constitution. What is that constitution? It is a constitution which some of the African states had to give up in order to have democracy in Africa. Some of those constitutions produce one-party states. This is the kind of Prime Minister we have in Trinidad and Tobago—a Prime Minister who, in his manifesto, said that a breaking of a contract can be the basis of a motion of no confidence. He has put in his manifesto for the election that there will be participatory democracy. The people will be given the opportunity to participate in decisions.

What does he do? He agreed to the EPA without consultation. He decided what is in the draft constitution without the input of the people; he decided on regional integration without the consultation of the people. The Prime Minister knows that the Minister of National Security has failed. Everyday people are being killed and the Prime Minister does not fire him. The Minister of National Security said that the Prime Minister cannot fire him because he accommodated the Prime Minister for a party election.

You have the Minister of National Security, another failed leader who cannot provide leadership on crime and issues that affect the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If you had devoted the energies on crime that you devoted to mobilize the people in Woodford Square, you may have saved some lives. You are not concerned about people. He is living in a different world.

We are dealing with a gentleman, I have to call him so, who is the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and if you look at his history, Dr. Eric Williams, the Father of the Nation, kept him as Parliamentary Secretary for years. When he became Prime Minister, he wanted to be the Father of the Nation. As a matter of fact, he dubbed himself Father of the Nation. We are dealing with a Prime Minister who got leadership of the PNM by default during the 33:3 period. We are dealing with a Prime Minister who believes in obeah and voodoo.

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The first thing the Prime Minister did in 1991 when he won the election was to send the Minister of Works and Transport, in the middle of the night, to change the weather vane because he said if you do not move that, voodoo and obeah would destroy you. That Diplomatic Centre is the voodoo and obeah centre in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Laughter*]

That is the person we are dealing with. We are dealing with a Prime Minister who is obsessed with power, self-aggrandizement and ego. He does not need the draft Constitution to take away the powers of the President. He did that already. He built a palace for himself, but he has the President living in the slums. As a matter of fact, while he was doing that, he took the crest from the President. Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a Prime Minister who has a psychotic fixation that he is the emperor of Trinidad and Tobago. He wants to be like Bokassa and Mugabe.

I want to put that on record, because we are having two international conferences here next year and I do not want, as far as my contribution is concerned, to deal with anything in Woodford Square. We will have a public enquiry conducted by an international human rights organization to coincide with the two international meetings because they deal with principles of good governance and we want the delegates to know that the Prime Minister they are coming to does not respect those principles. We are going to bring the evidence in public.

I have in my possession the instructions—I will not give it to you today—given by the party how to mobilize the people. I went this morning to see for myself that those instructions were followed to the letter. I congratulate you for the mobilization. I wish you had the same energy and expertise to fight crime.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with the concept of motions of no confidence and how they are being dealt with in other countries.

**Mr. Manning:** We know that.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** You want to talk for me? You want to take over the Opposition too? I am not talking to you only. I am talking to other persons who would have to read this.

Mr. Speaker, an intelligent, ethical, law-abiding Parliament cannot sit idly by and allow some of these issues I have mentioned not to be acted upon. That is the reason for having motions of no confidence in the Standing Orders and why we are moving this motion of no confidence against the Prime Minister.

Ironically, in the First World politics, where the ethical standing of MPs is such that they can challenge their leadership for wrongdoing, it is not reflected in

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the weak party structure of the current PNM Government. You would see in this Motion the support from the Government for the Prime Minister notwithstanding whatever he does. We would not be surprised, therefore, if we receive no support from the Government. The Government is on trial and the people are the jury in this matter. We hope we will be proven wrong when this Motion is voted upon. What is more ironic is that countries which have used the motion to remove incompetent and perceived corrupt Prime Ministers are all developed countries in the Commonwealth—Canada, United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Mr. Speaker, how many Members of Parliament and their families live in these countries? But the citizens here fail to stand up for good governance in their own country when the opportunity so presents itself. As a matter of fact, the sister of the leading Member of this Government works for Transparency International in Canada and my friend, one of the Members of Parliament sitting on the other side, has had a long history of working at the ground level as a minister of religion to promote honesty and decency. You cannot serve two gods at the same time. History will record their weaknesses of ethical stance as a cause for propelling Trinidad and Tobago down the road of a failed state if this Motion does not succeed. We in the Opposition will stand tall and fight for our country despite it all.

One has to look at the draft Constitution which has been put forward and if time permits I would read a passage from an analysis done by a great historian with respect to the kind of draft constitution put forward by the Prime Minister. That draft Constitution is a recipe for dictatorship.

Corruption is defined by Transparency International, the foremost agency in the global fight against corruption in governance, as the abuse of public office and elected power for personal gain. This reflects directly with family and indirectly with friends and party supporters. When a Prime Minister supports a chairman of a major board regardless of the wrongdoing of which he is accused and found guilty, that offence is defined as political corruption according to Transparency International.

The definition also highlights nepotism. Mrs. Manning is a very nice lady who has not faced the electorate, no fault of hers; yet she holds a senior ministerial position in her husband's government. Even in the powerful democracies of the world, in the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States of America and Canada, their leaders cannot nominate their wives and families to office. It is morally and ethically wrong to do so. As we see with Mrs. Clinton, she had to face the polls to a standing in the Congress. The cronyism gives the friends and supporters of the Government, names such as Julien, Monteil, Lok Jack, Calder Hart and others too numerous to miss, government favours; whose friendly connection with the Prime

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Minister of the day ensures that they win favourable contracts, who deal secure in the secrecy of Cabinet and even can cause Ministers of Government to be fired.

Mr. Speaker, I wish at this time to go into the major issue on which this Motion is filed. In respect of UDeCott, I want to draw the nation's attention to what happened. In the Senate speech of May 13, 2008—I would not read from the *Hansard*, but the record is there—the Prime Minister specifically said that his attention was not drawn by anyone to any single serious substantial allegation of corruption in UDeCott.

**2.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, in the House of Representatives on May 23, 2008 he said:

“For the first time somebody in this Parliament got up and made a clear and specific allegation...”—of corruption in UDeCott—“As a consequence of that, I am authorized by the Government to announce the establishment of a commission of enquiry into the construction sector.”

Well, that is not correct and I am going to show to the national community that that was a deliberate lie. The question which arises: Why would a Prime Minister, if he has this information, tell an untruth to the nation and to the Parliament?

Let me take it where it started. From 2002 onwards, the business community had meetings with the Prime Minister; visited the Prime Minister; told the Prime Minister that they were totally dissatisfied with state corporations and in particular UDeCott. They believed that there was corruption in UDeCott in the tendering procedures; they believed that there was bid rigging and manipulation of the tenders; they wanted an enquiry; the Prime Minister took the position that he is going to amend the law and put good procurement laws in place. The Minister of Planning and Development—under whose portfolio UDeCott fell, and at the time he was the hon. Dr. Keith Rowley—met with the board of directors of UDeCott.

He informed them of the allegations—and this information which was not challenged by the Government—in which the board was involved in favouritism, manipulation and conflict of interest, among other things. The members of the board did not dissent; they did not disagree. He hoped that the board would act and would correct its ways.

Based on representation again from the Ministry and UDeCott, the Minister decided to have an enquiry done by the Permanent Secretary and other public officials. The enquiry was conducted and it was found that there was bid rigging, manipulation of tender and Calder Hart was at the centre of it. The Minister took

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steps, the bid process was decided to be flawed, and it was reopened. The Minister considered that this was such a serious matter that he decided to inform the Prime Minister. He met with the Prime Minister; talked with the Prime Minister, he also wrote a letter to Mr. Calder Hart, and he said that he sent it to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, what you would have expected that a Prime Minister would have done in those circumstances? The Prime Minister would have either accepted the word of his Minister or he would have had some form of discussion with the Minister and Calder Hart—nothing like that occurred. As a matter of fact, what then occurred was that the Minister who raised these matters and intervened to protect the public interest, was removed to another ministry. So, he was removed from dealing with any such irregularity. But what also happened? There is a very distinguished lawyer who was on the board, John Meyer, who took the position that the quantity surveyor, Mr. Derek Outridge, was facilitating the bid rigging manipulation of the tender.

He took the position and he stated that Mr. Outridge was awarding unearned points; Mr. Outridge was denying valuable earned points, and that Mr. Outridge's opinion was inconsistent with established practice. Mr. John Meyer raised with the board that this Mr. Outridge should not at all, at any time, be employed with UDeCott again to do any project. Notwithstanding that, Mr. Calder Hart had Mr. Outridge employed. As a matter of fact, he was involved in the multi-billion campus project and the Minister of Legal Affairs project.

So, you have a gentleman who was found to be facilitating corruption, but yet he was put in other projects, billions of dollars, even though the board of UDeCott said he should not be there. The Prime Minister knows all about this. He knew that Calder Hart was caught in bid manipulation and bid rigging. He knew that from his Minister; he knew that from the letter written to Calder Hart; he knew also about Mr. Outridge. Not only did he fire Mr. Meyer from the board and he transferred Dr. Rowley to another Ministry, the Prime Minister permitted the status quo to continue.

So, it is fair to say that at the time when the country was calling for a commission of enquiry and the Prime Minister was saying no commission of enquiry, the Prime Minister knew of these irregularities and corrupt acts. Mr. Speaker, I know you are a lawyer and as you know, if one does not commit the act, but another person knows of it and condones it, he is an accessory after the fact.

Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer, I know that you know that where a public officer like a Prime Minister is exercising a public trust and he acts recklessly not to

protect the public interest, or he wilfully neglects to perform his duty to protect the public interest, that is considered to be misfeasance in public office.

We are not there at this stage, we are here as to whether a Prime Minister on a political basis—what kind of leadership can a Prime Minister give to a country; to the young people in the schools to say their Prime Minister knew of corruption; he did not do anything about it; but what did he do; he got rid of the Minister. What did he do? He kept Mr. Outridge. What did he do? He got rid of Mr. Meyer.

So, what the Prime Minister is doing as a leader, is rewarding people who are involved in gross wrongdoing. That is not right; that is not the kind of leadership this country needs. It does not end there and I have decided to deal with this Motion in a very clinical way, in which nobody can say responsibly, that I got up here and made any statement about these matters which are untrue. This information has been checked, verified and as a matter of fact, supported by sworn evidence.

It does not end there. There was a Minister of Planning and Development, Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis. She was removed from Parliament by the Prime Minister in the sense that she was not put back as a candidate. What was the wrong she did? She told Mr. Calder Hart that he was obstructing the Parliament. She told Mr. Calder Hart that he was not cooperating to give answers to questions which were before the Parliament. She told Mr. Calder Hart that he was, in effect, frustrating the new laws on procurement, which were to be brought to Parliament. She told Mr. Calder Hart that she wanted vital information as the Minister and the Cabinet would have to give it as the Cabinet has to oversee it and must have an oversight of what is happening by Mr. Calder Hart.

I have a copy of that letter she wrote to Calder Hart dated November 13, 2006, and I am pressed for time I would not read the whole letter, but she said:

"I wish to express my utter dissatisfaction and disappointment with the inordinate delays by UDeCott in providing information requested by the Ministries of Planning and Development and Sport and Youth Affairs... In some cases the information has been outstanding for several months, and this despite several reminders, including reminders sent by me personally...

The situation is not only disrespectful, but has also occasioned great embarrassment to the Minister of Planning and Development and to the Government in general. Clearly, this state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue."

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Then she put a deadline for answers. One was a “Review of proposed responses to questions”; two, was “Status reports on the following projects”, and she named the projects. It stated:

“The report should indicate:”—there are projects—

- i. the process under which contractor/consultants were selected
- ii. rationale and authorization for variation of any Cabinet decision
- Review of the White Paper on the Reform of the Public Sector Procurement Regime”

Mr. Speaker, what happened with that White Paper? The Cabinet agreed on the White Paper. After the Cabinet agreed on it, obviously the law had to be drafted. The Prime Minister, notwithstanding the agreement of Cabinet, decided to send it to the real Prime Minister for his comment, Mr. Calder Hart, and Mr. Calder Hart has kept it and has kept it. There is another Minister who had a getaway with that, and the poor chap is not here today too.

I want to tell my colleagues on the other side, make sure you do not get away with Calder Hart, because you are going to lose your ministry. You cannot tell him anything; he is the tsar; he is the real emperor and he is the real Prime Minister.

It asked for status reports and what happened is that you had a situation in which Calder Hart was obstructing the Minister from taking to Cabinet matters which the Cabinet should know about, and obstructing the Parliament. As far as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago was concerned, that did not deserve condemnation of Calder Hart; the wrongdoer was Minister Camille Robinson-Regis.

That is not the only thing which has been happening. I would show to this House that what was happening is that the projects, which were being given to Mr. Calder Hart, were not even approved by Cabinet before. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister talked to Mr. Calder Hart and they agreed on a project; action was taken and then in the middle of the project the Government would know about it.

Let us take two examples. I am referring to public statements that the former Minister of Planning and Development, Dr. Keith Rowley, made and these statements were made public. The statement is reported on June 13, 2008 in the *Newsday*. It says:

*“In a heated presentation lasting over an hour, Dr. Rowley was highly critical of the leadership of Prime Minister, Patrick Manning.*

*Dr. Rowley continued allegations against UDeCott...”*



And it gave some details. Then he said:

“And you know what? After I did that, I was then shown from the Internet, a newsletter of a foreign company working here in Trinidad and Tobago.

And in Malaysia, this company was already announcing that it had a hotel to build in Trinidad. Something that did not even yet have Cabinet approval. We didn't know that there was to be a hotel tower of 50 presidential suites at the Hilton, but some men knew. So they could put it on their website in Malaysia. And when I raised that with my Prime Minister, out of procedure, I get myself in trouble and have my character impugned, publicly and internationally.

And we are the PNM. We are the PNM. Pointing fingers at every other political party in the country. How did we come to this? When did this start? Who is leading us into this?”

**2.15 p.m.**

Then the Minister quite courageously continued to state:

“Are they in place, when a member of the Opposition goes to Parliament and says to you the people, that a state enterprise has awarded a \$368 million contract to a company that was formed three weeks before the award was made, and that same company up to this day has not been able to give a public response, and a Minister of Government comes out and tells you the reason why the company has not been able to respond as yet is because they are waiting to hear from the foreign construction company from Malaysia, what the board meeting says and what the board in Malaysia says and then they would know what to tell you? They think that you are born fools.”

So, you have a situation here in which the former Minister said two things: That he as the Minister of Planning and Development was not aware that this project was approved, and even in Malaysia that was known. One of the basic principles of prime ministerial government under the Westminster system is that the Prime Minister must not get involved in negotiating contracts. The reason for that is that when he does that he disregards Cabinet, he disregards the line Minister and he subverts the Constitution of the country.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the end of the matter. As a matter of fact, on June 09, the same former Minister made a public statement and it had to do with another project. It had to do with eTeck. I am reading from June 09, 2008 from the *Newsday*:

“Rowley said at the end of January he returned from a Caricom meeting in Guyana to be told by his Permanent Secretary of a ‘problem with Eteck’ requiring his attention.

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As Minister of Trade and Industry he had responsibility for Eteck. Rowley cited section 85 of the Constitution to support that as Minister he had ‘general direction and control’ over the department he was assigned.

‘Eteck was my department and I had a constitutional responsibility for it yet my Permanent Secretary comes to me and tells me there is a problem at Eteck. UDeCott has gone to Eteck with a view of having Eteck, on UDeCott's behalf, commence a \$240 million project at Trinidad Hilton.’

Rowley said he contacted the ‘head of Eteck’ on the phone and confirmed what the PS had said.

He also advised Rowley that UDeCott’s chairman Calder Hart had stated the project was to be completed in time for the Heads of Government Conference to take place in Trinidad next year.

Rowley said the Tarouba project immediately came to mind.”

And if you remember, Mr. Speaker, some of those projects did not even have approval of some of the state agencies and there is a major editorial written by the *Express* “Lawlessness in Trinidad and Tobago”, in which they itemized some of the projects which went ahead without the approval of some of the state agencies. He said Tarouba project came to my mind.

“‘I was told that Eteck was told by UDeCott that his was to be done on the Prime Minister's instruction.’ Rowley cited a letter received by Eteck indicating this. ‘The Prime Minister does not talk to the Minister, I come to the country to be told of this by my PS who is told about this by the CEO of Eteck. But Calder Hart is ready to begin construction.’

Rowley said he spoke to Manning during a tea break in Parliament and enquired about the project, indicating that it had not come to Cabinet. ‘The Prime Minister became hostile and he said to me, well, we are just talking about it.’—and—“The PM got into a rage and threatened to lose his cool with me.”

That is the Prime Minister we are dealing with. That is the Prime Minister—*[Interruption]* Get up and say it is not true. Get up and say, Dr. Rowley is talking untruth. *[Interruption]* Do you want to get up and say Dr. Rowley is talking untruth? Are you saying that Dr. Rowley is talking untruth?

**Mr. Ramnath:** “Why don't you shut up.”

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, please! *[Interruption]* No, no, but you cannot sit there and say, “Why don't you shut up.” No, you cannot do that.

**Mr. Ramnath:** How do I say it?

**Mr. Speaker:** Do not say it at all! Please continue. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Ramnath:** He has no respect for his colleague.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Mr. Speaker, what former Minister Dr. Rowley was talking about earlier on when he talked about this company which was formed was a family company I recalled in this House, I specifically stated that the brothers-in-law of Calder Hart formed a company, they could not have pre-qualified, because there was a ministerial order for them to prequalify long in advance. But notwithstanding that, that family company of Calder Hart was awarded the contract—that was the CH Development contract—and on the same night the company was sold to Sunway and the contract was awarded to CH Development although it was a \$67 million higher bid than the other bidder or the last bidder.

Since then it was very significant, all that UDeCott had to say is whether it was true that these two people—I have the names, I am not going to talk Chinese again—were not the brothers-in-law and produce evidence of that. I have evidence that they are the brothers-in-law.

**Mr. Imbert:** Where? Where?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** I would not tell you.

**Mr. Imbert:** Where?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** You get up and talk.

**Mr. Imbert:** Where?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** You get up; you would have your chance. But hear what the Ministers are saying, both Minister Imbert and hon. Minister Dr. Dick-Forde have repeatedly said that the allegations against Calder Hart awarding a contract from UDeCott to his family at a premium of \$67 million above the lowest pre-qualified tenderer and \$21 million above the second tenderer, a pre-qualified international contractor, Johnson's International would shortly be issued. Both have said that they have seen the alleged response and report made in the Parliament by the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite and that UDeCott would send it out shortly, well several months have elapsed and no response has been issued.

Since that day the chairman of UDeCott has gone silent and as UDeCott itself, after the statements made in Parliament about that corrupt award to CH Development. Statements were promised by UDeCott, but none has been forthcoming since this event for some four and a half months ago and now the line Minister is saying, she cannot instruct UDeCott as what to do.

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What we have, however, is that since 2003 when the Prime Minister got to know of the corrupt dealings at UDeCott which could have implicated Mr. Calder Hart, the Prime Minister knew then in 2003 that Calder Hart was involved in questionable activity. But how does the Prime Minister react? Mr. Speaker, do you know what he did? He gave Mr. Calder Hart additional important portfolios. As a matter of fact, he appointed him Chairman of the National Insurance Board, he then appointed him Chairman of Nipdec, and then added to him the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company as well. So we see a man who is accused by two of his senior Cabinet Ministers of gross wrongdoing and on undeniable facts, have been given major state positions to deal with billions of dollars, I think if I am correct—I am subject to correction—that Mr. Calder Hart has the second largest sum of moneys available to him more than any Minister except the Minister of Finance. *[Interruption]*

It does not end there, as a matter of fact, we knew and the Government must know that there was a connection between Calder Hart and Sunway. What happened? Government, last year, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to give Sunway, a Malaysian company, a contract, to give it complete access to a local quarry in Trinidad and Tobago. The contract is valued over \$1 billion.

**Hon. Member:** “Ooh.”

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** But, Mr. Speaker, what is the background to this? The background to this was in October 2006, Minister Saith, Prof. Julien and Mr. Calder Hart went to China. They left China in separate ways, but they ended up in Malaysia together. *[Laughter]* And in Malaysia they had discussions with Sunway. Then what happened, on July 18, 2007 the Prime Minister received the officials of Sunway, and in one meeting this Prime Minister who is an expert in construction—as a matter of fact, I do not know, it seems to me that he thinks he is an expert in everything. He immediately said, “Sunway is the best in the world.” He attacked the local contractors. He said, “Sunway is God gift to Trinidad and Tobago”, and what happened, a few months later the Memorandum of Understanding was signed to give Sunway this project. *[Interruption]*

No opportunity was given, so the Prime Minister was involved. No opportunity was given—

**Mr. Imbert:** For what?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:**—to local people—

**Mr. Imbert:** You lie.

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**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:**—to be able—answer, “nah”. When you get up answer.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no, please!

**Mr. Ramnath:** He could get away with it.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no; he cannot. You cannot do that. I mean—*[Interruption]* well yes, do the right thing.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, I deeply apologize for using that word to describe the Member opposite.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Mr. Speaker, I accept the apology. *[Laughter]* Look what happened! I am glad my brothers and sisters who I love in the square are seeing this debate. I love them, because I want to say those same people would turn against you. *[Desk thumping]* His own people would turn against him. As a matter of fact, in April 1995, when we moved a Motion of No confidence against Prime Minister Manning, we told him that in a few months his Government would collapse, and his Government did collapse in November 1995. We are telling you again, *[Interruption]* I am giving you the advice that within six months your Government will collapse again. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, coming back to Sunway, it would surprise anyone to know that in order to facilitate Sunway, quickly, overnight, the environmental law in this country was changed. As a matter of fact, they did it by Order. They went to the Senate just on the eve of the election and they passed an Order, the Certificate of Environmental Clearance Designated Activity (Amdt.) Order, 2007, and what happened, they said that you would not need the amendment, the amendment was to say that if you had an activity with gravel or other metallic minerals of areas 150 acres or more, then and only then you would need an environmental impact assessment and a certificate of environmental clearance which will need an environmental impact assessment for Sunway. *[Interruption]*

So, Mr. Speaker, my position on this is that in respect of those matters alone in which the conduct of the Prime Minister shows that he has supported corrupt activities, I have no evidence that he is involved, so I cannot say that he is involved, he has supported corrupt activities; he has turned a blind eye too, but on circumstantial evidence, the inferences can be drawn as to whether he has an interest to serve with it, because any reasonable Prime Minister who loves Trinidad and Tobago would not do that. As a matter of fact you should resign.

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Before I complete this aspect of my presentation, what is very significant is that the Prime Minister was not happy with having the Minister disciplined and removed from his ministry, and I am saying this because one sees what a Prime Minister can do when he wants to exercise raw political power on state institutions that are not strong. What did he do?

**2.30 p.m.**

Suddenly, a complaint was before the Integrity Commission and the only person who has the power to manipulate—it should not be so—is the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister owes a duty to this House to get up and say who lodged that complaint against Minister Dr. Rowley, in which he had to spend moneys to defend himself, in order to get the court to exonerate him.

Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of the Integrity Commission then was Mr. Gordon Deane and the Attorney General then was Mr. John Jeremie, and questions arise as to the possible parts played by these individuals in trying to punish the Minister for standing up against the Prime Minister's condonation of the corruption. So I am saying that based on corruption—and I want to put on the record that in Trinidad and Tobago Transparency International in its assessment of corruption throughout the world has showed that official corruption has increased in Trinidad and Tobago over the years.

As a matter of fact in 2002, it was ranking 31; in 2004, it was 51; in 2005, it was 59; in 2006, it was 79; and in 2007, it was 79. So, the Prime Minister went to the election and said they were going to take us to a higher level. Nobody thought then he wanted an aeroplane to take him to a higher level. What we do know, we have a higher level of corruption, flooding, crime, and of all the social injustices in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the higher level you have taken us to.

I want to deal in a short way with the question of crime and I want to be able to do this in a way which is very simple; simple, so that ordinary people can understand it. Mr. Speaker, can I get your guidance on how many minutes I have again.

**Mr. Speaker:** 2:51 minutes.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** 2:51 minutes. Thank you. Any Prime Minister who cannot control crime in his country and who has spent the sum of money this Government has spent and it has not worked, had a duty to either tell the country, "Listen, I have had a failed Minister and I am going to try to do something about it", and to show that the Prime Minister is serious about dealing with the crime problem.

The Prime Minister does not even accept that there is a problem of crime in this country. The Prime Minister has not even expressed sympathy for any victim

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of crime in this country. The Prime Minister believes that crime causes collateral damage and every time there is a rise of crime, it is gang-related. He does not understand that we are under the doctrine of representatives and responsible government, and the Prime Minister has to take the blame, to account and to respond. The Minister of National Security says, "Not me, blame the Commissioner of Police." But when you look at the statistics as at the end of June 2008 for the fight against crime, what we are seeing is that the position has become worse from 2002 to 2007. We are living in a state of anarchy and you have a Motion of the Government on crime since the Parliament started. They sat for one day, but they have never dealt with it because they think that they can fool the people with crowd and demonstration in Woodford Square; with regional integration and forget the issue affecting the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Prime Minister has not gone to the country; would not have a press conference with the media to say, "Ask me questions about the fight against crime. I will tell you what we are doing. I will tell you what progress we have made." None! From 2002—2007, we had serious crimes which include murder and kidnapping—106,683 committed. Figures from the police in 2007—numbers detected were 26,694 in 2007. Let us see what happened in 2008. For the first six months in 2008, number of total serious crimes committed—8,893. Total serious crimes detected—1583.

Mr. Speaker, what do we have in Trinidad and Tobago? How could the Prime Minister deal with crime? How could he fight crime? The Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister encouraged the criminal gangs to enter into treaties. As a matter of fact, they entered into agreements. I am reading from the *Sunday Express*, dated March 09, 2008, "Peace Treaties among warring gangs in various communities are causing the collapse of court cases..." which is supported by utterances, the Minister said.

We have a situation in Trinidad and Tobago in which there are criminal gangs. They are known to be criminal gangs, but instead of the Government dealing with it—they say that they are fighting crimes, but I would not go back into the Commissioner of Police process, but you had a good nomination and you rejected the nomination. If you do not have a Commissioner of Police in accordance with the law that you said that you needed to fight crime, you are not serious about fighting crime. You are playing games.

On the crime issue, I want to say that the nation today on crime faces one of its darkest moments. As a matter of fact, this country was known for its natural treasures, but now the country is known for the serious crime problem. The method of governance of this Government to deal with crime does not produce

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any effective solution or any semblance of success. We have had some sporadic events in fighting crime, but not on a long-term basis.

Mr. Speaker, from April 30 to May 01, 2008, six murders took place in our country in under 24 hours. This is unacceptable. In spite of that, we have a Prime Minister who spends more time out of the country, riding a private jet than seeing about the national security of this country. The lives of citizens are in danger. We are concerned with erecting tall buildings and empty towers, monuments of little significance, when our families, the heartbeat of our nation, are under seize.

I have done a little chart which I will give to the Prime Minister and it lists the names of people who have been murdered in the background of a coffin. I would present this to him at a more appropriate time, but I am hoping the murder rate is much more than it is there now because it has been done approximately two weeks ago for you, hon. Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, I also have a chart and you would see from this chart that notwithstanding the amount of moneys which had been spent, the crime continues to go up. I have another one here—I want to guide the Prime Minister and make it simple for him because I know he cannot deal with these technical things. I have done some of the major headlines and I hope that you would put it up in your office, so that you would get the prophetess to tell you that is important to see about instead of flying on an aircraft. So, on the issue of crime alone, the Prime Minister is not fit to lead this country.

The holy word says, "Pride goeth before a fall"—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** No, no, it did not say that.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:**—"and a haughty spirit before destruction."

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, it is wrong, for that matter. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Well, when you respond, you will tell me what is right then. Okay?

**Mr. Speaker:** The information may not be available to you, I am aware that at one stage, the hon. Member for Tabaquite was contemplating going to the cloth. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, that has to be many, many years ago.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Prime Minister to look into a mirror on a morning and see whether what he reads in the *Bible*, he practises.

Mr. Speaker, you must forgive me if I spoke with some passion this afternoon, but the Motion to get rid of the Prime Minister is very important. Because unless he leaves the Office of Prime Minister, the longer he stays there, the more suffering



there will be in Trinidad and Tobago. I know that we may not persuade our friends on the other side, but I want them to know that their colleagues have been punished for standing up for what is right. It may be they do not have the similar courage.

Mr. Speaker, you may think I speak the language of the Prime Minister with my religious quotations, because it is he, hon. Prime Minister, who says that he has a deep religious fervour. But he must know not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord", shall enter the kingdom of heaven. I say today, hon. Prime Minister, go tell it to the nation; go to the mountains; go to the valleys; and go to the plains. Go to the north, to the south, to the east and to the west, and tell them that your day of reckoning is coming. Tell them the coming has given to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, a dream—dream—and they are saying it, hon. Prime Minister, "Manning no more".

In this Parliament we have had history and on that ground alone also, the Prime Minister should leave office. We have a situation in this Parliament in which the Government is before the Privileges Committee. For what? They are before the Privileges Committee for not being accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If it is that the Prime Minister believes in the ideals of good governance and he is having these two international conferences in which those issues are on the agenda, then the Prime Minister must demonstrate that he believes in the good governance and he must give Trinidad and Tobago the principles of good governance. Practise it!

Mr. Speaker, whatever may have happened in the Parliament here in respect of the Leader of the Opposition, it is an indictment against a government which would not take the initiative, would not be democratic to show its democratic commitment in order to—the Government itself should have moved a Motion to end the suspension. As a matter of fact, the tradition of the Parliament has been when the hon. Member, Dr. Rowley, was suspended, Prime Minister Panday met with you, and both of you went to the Speaker and a joint Motion was filed and the suspension was suspended. What the Prime Minister is coming to do—he does not want an Opposition. He wants a one-party State in Trinidad and Tobago.

I do not have the time, but there is a very good analysis which was done on the Draft Constitution, the model the Prime Minister talked about. Based on that model, it shows that the African States which had that model, had to change and go to a different model because the African States were not enjoying democracy.

**2.45 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, we have to show the Government's non-commitment about corruption. There was a report of the Auditor General on corruption with CEPEP

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and URP. As a matter of fact, the Auditor General talked about every rule, every principle, being contravened and procedures not kept. It is a scandal. This report of the Auditor General, the Government has done nothing about it. The same things which happened under this period when this report was done, the same thing happens today in Trinidad and Tobago.

Any government which is not committed, which is not honest, clean, transparent, open and accountable, any leader of such government is not fit to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Hamza Rafeeq:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion as moved by the Member for Tabaquite and reserve my right to speak at a later stage of the debate.

*Question proposed.*

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, regrettably I have nothing to respond to. However, since I am on my feet, I will take this opportunity to speak. Let me just deal with things in a bit of reverse order and just deal with some of the untruths uttered by the Member for Tabaquite, and a blatant untruth that he uttered was with respect to the contract given to Sunway to manage Scott's quarry on behalf of the National Quarries Limited.

I happen to be a member of the construction oversight committee of Cabinet which is currently chaired by the Minister of Trade and Industry and I have been a member of that committee for years and I happen to know that the question of awarding a contract for the management of Scott's quarry has been in the public domain for a very, very long time, and contrary to the untruth—I wish I could use a stronger word—uttered by the Member for Tabaquite—and he really needs to get his facts straight; I do not know where the Member is getting his information from, but it is bogus.

The fact of the matter is that the contract to manage Scott's quarry was the subject of open competitive tender. I want to repeat that. The contract to manage Scott's quarry was the subject of open competitive tender and there was a public opening of the bids. It is, therefore, a blatant untruth for the Member for Tabaquite to say that no opportunity was given to a local company to bid for this quarry contract. As a matter of fact, I wish I could use stronger language. Do your research! Somebody set you up! [*Desk thumping*]

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The fact of the matter is that Sunway was awarded the contract to produce aggregate for National Quarries who owns Scott's quarry because they submitted the lowest production cost. I think I need to give some more information on this matter because he wove his dirty tapestry and he tried to implicate all sorts of people in this web that exists only in his imagination. He brought in this contract that Sunway has been successful with and tried to stick it in there as evidence of malfeasance on the part of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Prof. Julien and sundry others.

The fact of the matter is the Government, through National Quarries, invited tenders publicly for contractors to bid to indicate at what price they would produce aggregate from Scott's quarry and this material would be given to National Quarries to sell to the national community. So the contractors were required to put in a price, whether it was \$50 a ton, \$80, \$100, whatever it was. Each contractor was required to bid and indicate at what price would they produce aggregate for National Quarries in the management of Scott's quarry, and Sunway's bid was by far the lowest and its price was by far the best. So that is a blatant untruth.

With respect to the other statements made by the Member for Tabaquite, I can also reveal another fantasy. The Member for Tabaquite spoke about 50 presidential suites at the Hilton, clearly implied that they were being constructed by Sunway; a clear inference. That, too, is not correct. Where is the evidence of all of this? Some fantasy, some nancy story about Sunway being handed a gift to renovate or create 50 presidential suites at the Hilton without tender. This is the clear inference and implication of what he is saying.

I can say categorically, that is not true. As a matter of fact, I am not aware that Sunway is doing any work at the Trinidad Hilton and I invite the Member for Tabaquite to go up to the Hilton and see if you see any Malaysians there, and see if you see Sunway working on the Hilton. I invite you; go up there. You get set up again.

With respect to the other matters, what I found so disappointing about the presentation of the Member for Tabaquite, there is nothing new. He spoke about the former Minister of Trade and Industry complaining about Calder Hart. That is in the public domain! That is in court documents! That is a matter of public knowledge! That is on affidavit in the High Court! There is nothing new about that! Anybody who wants to read the affidavit and the statements made by the former Minister of Trade and Industry can go down in the High Court, request a copy from the registry and read it! It has been there for more than one year! So these are just statements about matters that have been in the public domain for a very, very long time.

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The Member for Tabaquite also quoted from newspaper articles where the former Minister of Trade and Industry complained about UDeCott and complained about his relationship with the Prime Minister. That is in the public domain! That has been published for months! What is the basis of this Motion? We could go home now! We could wind up this debate now! There is nothing that has been said by the Member for Tabaquite that is new; that is surprising; that is a bombshell; that is of any interest to the public. This is all out there in the public domain.

He quoted statistics about crime. That is in the public domain. In fact, it is the Minister of National Security himself who has been bringing the national community up-to-date in terms of crime statistics. And if the Member for Tabaquite wants to talk about obeah, I did not bring a coffin into this House; I do not walk around with a coffin in my bag. So if there is any person in this Parliament who believes in obeah and voodoo, it is the Member for Tabaquite! [*Desk thumping*] What “yuh doing with a coffin in your bag? What happen to you?”

The Member for Tabaquite spoke about nepotism. You have three Pandays on that side; father, brother, daughter. [*Desk thumping*] What “yuh” call that? Nepotism cubed? [*Laughter*] The Member for Tabaquite has brassface!

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** There are two Mannings on that side.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** All right. So that it is no problem for the Member for Couva North to appoint his brother and his daughter to the Parliament.

**Hon. Member:** Appoint?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Appoint, yes. They have no screening on that side. They have no committee; they have no process. We all know that that they were appointed. So it is no problem for a dynasty to be created on that side. That is not nepotism.

**Mr. Rammath:** Let “we doh talk about that nuh”, before we have to go into details.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** You could say what you want. You have a URP job; I have said that before, taking money under false pretences. “You doh even clock in; you doh even go to work.”

Mr. Speaker, let me just deal with some of the issues raised by the Member for Tabaquite. He referred to allegations made in various public documents with respect to an award of a contract by UDeCott and, I believe it is the Customs building. I assume so; he did not say so, but I assume so. You know, the Member for Tabaquite has to be careful, because he is only dealing with one side of the story. I know, because I am going to quote from some very fine statements made

by the Member for Tabaquite. I know that he thinks better and he knows better. I know he is someone who really likes to look at all sides of a story, but in this particular Motion he is dealing with one side of the story.

What are the facts with respect to the award of the contract for the Customs building? There was a tender; the bids were opened; a particular contractor was the lowest bidder; another contractor was not the lowest bidder. That is what happened. And the board, in going through the process of evaluating the tenders, was getting to the point where they were seriously considering awarding the contract to the lowest bidder—normal; standard. You know, if the contract had not been awarded to the lowest bidder, you would have heard the Member for Tabaquite get up in this House and allege corruption.

So you had a tender process for a public building, a series of bids came in; a particular contractor was the lowest bidder; another was not, and everything that the Member for Tabaquite has put into this Parliament today is really the case made by one of the disgruntled bidders. He obviously does not know that. But one of the bidders who was not the lowest is the one who is prosecuting this case, the one about the quantity surveyor not awarding the points. You see, it is a case; it is a matter of opinion. These things are all matters of opinion.

You have a public tendering process; you have a particular contractor submitting the lowest bid; you have other contractors complaining and saying that he should not get the contract; disqualify him; throw him out; give the contract to somebody else, and you are getting yourself caught up in that, Member for Tabaquite. That is what is going on. These are all allegations; these are all matters of opinion.

In this particular case, UDeCott had employed a particular quantity surveyor, a professional person, who submitted a report and indicated that in his opinion, the lowest bidder should get the contract. That is all that happened. And another disgruntled bidder who was not the lowest bidder, decided to promote a case to disqualify the lowest bidder. That is what you have got yourself caught up in.

At the end of the day, there was no contract. The tendering process was aborted; no contract was awarded so there was no corruption; there was no issue there. You have not produced any evidence of bribery on the part of anybody. The UDeCott aborted the process; did not award the contract to the lowest bidder; retendered the process and by coincidence, the contractor who was complaining about the lowest bidder, became the lowest bidder and then got the contract. It is ironical.

When the thing was first tendered, the argument was that the lowest bidder is incapable of doing this contract and a set of confusion was created, resulting in

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abortion of the tender procedure. It was retendered. The same contractor making all the confusion is now the lowest bidder. He say: “Yuh have to make sure I get this contract eh”, and he got it. That is what happened. And all of that will be dealt with in the commission of enquiry. All of these issues as to whether the original evaluation of tenders was appropriate; whether in the first round the lowest tenderer should have got the job or whether in the second round it was appropriate to give the lowest tenderer the job.

**3.00 p.m.**

These are all matters of professional evaluation, yet the Member for Tabaquite comes here and makes a big song and dance about manipulation of process, bid rigging and so on. I can assure you that if the contract had been awarded to the second or third bidder, which is the case Member for Tabaquite with the legal affairs building—in the case of the legal affairs building, it is necessary to let the population know what is going on. In this building where it was an open tender and where UDeCott chose to award the contract to the third lowest bidder, the Member for Tabaquite is saying that it is corruption. But the lowest bidder on the building for the Ministry of Legal Affairs was also the lowest bidder on the customs building. Were you aware of that, Member for Tabaquite?

The Member is promoting a case that the lowest bidder on the customs building should be disqualified, which is a \$100 million job, but he is perfectly and eminently qualified to get the Legal Affairs building, which is a \$300 million job. Do you realize the foolishness you are getting yourself embroiled in? All this will come out in the commission of enquiry, Mr. Speaker. Foolishness! You are just drinking bush tea for someone else's fever. Familiarize yourself with the facts!

What are these allegations here against the Prime Minister? This is a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister. Let me see what it is all about. He said that the Prime Minister is unfit to be an MP based on moral and spiritual values. [Steups] [Laughter] I would not even bother to answer that.

What else? He said that the Prime Minister disregarded the advice of the Central Bank. Well, so did I. All of us should go. Big deal! The Members opposite want all their roads paved, all their drains cleared, schools built in every constituency; hospitals, police stations, even the Member for Fyzabad wants money. Every time we have a budget the Member says to give MPs an allocation of \$5 million to spend as they see fit.

They want everything under the sun. The Member for Chaguanas West wants lights, recreation grounds, money from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs;

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hundreds of millions of dollars. All of this money, these projects and the developmental works the Members opposite demand, but we must not spend money. How do we do these projects? With jumbie beans? Of course we have to spend money to build a police station in Chaguanas. We have to spend money to build a hospital in Tobago. We have to spend money to build a jetty in Cedros. How will we do it? With M&Ms? Do we do it with chocolate sweets? Obviously we have to spend money.

I cannot accept someone telling me not to spend money. How are we to develop this country? How are we to satisfy the needs of the population? How are we going to achieve our First World vision without expenditure on physical development? It is nonsense! If the Prime Minister did not agree to stop spending, I do not agree either. So file a motion on me too.

Let us see what else is going on here. The Prime Minister is dealing with integration. Prime Ministers have dealt with that in 1956, 1961, 1966, 1976, 1980, 1991, 1995 and 1997. The former Prime Minister, the Member for Couva North, signed the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, binding us to all sorts of things to do with Caricom, without reciprocity. We have to do things and there is no reciprocal action on the part of other Caricom States.

The Member for Couva North, advised by the Member for Tabaquite and the Member for Siparia, did that. They did not hold a referendum. I do not know where it was; whether in Kingston or Barbados. They went off; they committed this country to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas locking us in to all sorts of things in the Caribbean. They held no referendum. They asked no permission. They just did their own thing.

So the Prime Minister pursued the integration plan of the former administration. You have no confidence in the Member for Couva North because all the Prime Minister is doing is fulfilling the policy and the tenets of the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. But no, that is a big deal for you. Clearly, the Member for Couva North did not know what he was doing when he signed the declaration on your advice.

The Prime Minister has prepared a draft Constitution without the agreement of the people. There needs to be lessons in literacy in this country. I am having a problem here. That is not even Standard II. The word "draft" means it is not final; it is a work in progress; it is preliminary. That is what "draft" means. If the Prime Minister prepares a draft, how can you prepare a draft with the agreement of people? You have to prepare a draft first, then you put it out for discussion and

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when you get feedback, you arrive at a consensus and prepare a final document. So how can preparing a draft constitution for discussion be a crime for which the Prime Minister should resign.

That is why I say I have nothing to respond to in this Motion. Nothing! Nothing of substance! All the allegations about UDeCott and Calder Hart have been said before.

The Member for Tabaquite said that the Prime Minister took away the crest from the President. I saw the President driving around the savannah yesterday with the gold crest on. [*Interruption*] You said he took it away. I see the gold crest of the President on his car almost every day.

You congratulated the Prime Minister for party mobilization. Whose side are you on? You congratulated the Prime Minister for mobilizing the PNM. Are you sure you are UNC? These are the allegations. They will be proven one way or the other. Why are you taking one side. Let the allegations stand on their own. How did you reach in that?

What else was said? Same thing. What is in the court documents? What is in the newspaper? What was said by you when you called for an enquiry into UdeCott, which, by the way, we have done. Rubbish! Let me put some facts into the record now.

For the record, I want to say that, whatever you say, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has appointed a commission of enquiry into the construction sector in Trinidad and Tobago and into UDeCott and the commissioners have been sworn in. They have accepted their instruments of appointment and held their first public meeting earlier this week. So the commission of enquiry into the construction sector and UDeCott is in progress. If you listen to what the distinguished chairman of the enquiry had to say, he said that to complete the work of the enquiry by September or October of next year is an ambitious task, but he will make his best effort to meet that schedule.

Anybody who knows anything about procedure will be aware of the stages in an enquiry. I know that the Member for Tabaquite is aware of this. You have the evidence-gathering stage, which will take place now. The members of the commission have received their instruments from the President. That is a requirement of the Act. They have no authority until they are appointed by the President and that has been done.

They have said that over the next several months, they will gather information; they will receive memoranda, submissions, documents and so on and



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get a better understanding of who wishes to give evidence before the enquiry. Having collated all that, they will have public hearings. They will have factual evidence first, then expert evidence, then final oral submissions and then they will submit their report.

The Member for Tabaquite is aware that that is the proper process and that the matter of a commission of enquiry into the construction sector and UDeCott is now of no consequence. It is in progress. We have picked men of honour and integrity to manage that enquiry.

Let me deal with some statements made by the hon. Member for Tabaquite. Do not get vex. This is the *Hansard* record. I know you like to get hot when I remind people about things. I am just going to read it. Do not get vex with me.

This is the *Hansard* record of the hon. R. L. Maharaj SC, who I believe was then the Member for Couva South and Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, on Saturday, September 22, 2001.

“First, I would like to join the debate in respect of informing the House and the national community...how the work of the Ministry of the Attorney General would be affected, so that the public would not expect too much from the Office of the Attorney General...I would like to deal with the issue, specifically of corruption which has been a major plank of the budget presentation and which, as Attorney General, I consider it my duty to deal with.”

He goes on to complain that the office of Attorney General—this is in the budget of 2001, which was read by a UNC Minister when the UNC was in power—was inadequate. He complained he did not get enough money for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—the allocation for various Magistrates’ Courts was inadequate. He asked for \$4 million for Sangre Grande Magistrates’ Court, he got \$1.5 million and that that was not enough. He asked for money for a family court [*Interruption*—his own Government he was complaining about—he got \$300,000. He wanted money for upgrading the San Fernando Magistrates’ Court, he got none. In respect of the Chaguanas Magistrates’ Court, none was allocated.

So here you had a UNC government in power and a UNC Attorney General complaining that courts, essentially in areas represented by the UNC—Chaguanas, Siparia and so on—there is no funding from his government when he was Attorney General.

He goes on to talk about the functioning of his office and the various arms of his office—the Solicitor General, the Director of Public Prosecutions, et cetera.

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He says to this:

“...if an Attorney General is reckless, if he gets advice from the Solicitor General and he does not take that advice but he recklessly advises Cabinet in a different way, records have shown that those persons can be prosecuted for misconduct in public office.”

These are the famous words of the Attorney General under the UNC. He goes on to speak about a Commonwealth conference that he attended. He goes on:

“If an Attorney General is responsible for these matters, then one would expect that if there are reports in which *prima facie* there are allegations or findings of corruption and misuse of public office, the first office that should be approached by a Minister is the office of the Attorney General.”

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What that does is give opportunity for persons to cover up trails. The then Attorney General was saying that his government had published a report and by so doing, had given an opportunity to persons to cover up trails. He was talking about members of his government. He went on to say:

“...one of the major reforms as Attorney General I had the privilege of piloting. The reason...is that persons who are corrupt, whether they are ministers; whether they are ex-ministers; whether they are public officials,...they would not be able to escape the law.”

He went on to speak about the central authority. Now in this Parliament, you are not in the Chair; I made certain statements and the Member for Caroni East and the Member for Oropouche East said that I was not speaking the truth and these things never happened.

I am quoting from Saturday, September 22, 2001, the hon. R. L. Maharaj.

“...If there is a NorthWest Regional Health Authority report, then I would have thought that common sense demanded that the Attorney General’s Office should be called in. What happens then is that the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Solicitor General and if it is impossible for the Attorney General to be there, he sends somebody, the matter is discussed and you have the relevant law enforcement agencies.”

This is Mr. Maharaj speaking at the top of his voice.

“I am not going to allow anyone as long as I hold the office of Attorney General, to undermine and subvert the functions of the Attorney General. I

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want to announce that in respect of that authority, —Northwest Regional Health Authority—I have taken the position that there should be a full commission of enquiry in respect of that report, the Northwest Regional Health Authority and any other state enterprise...”

He was speaking about a report where the now Member for Caroni East had been named as being associated with the misappropriation of public funds. Get up and deny it now. Get up and deny it now. Get up! Get up! Get up! The last time I said this in this House, that there was a Northwest Regional Health Authority Report—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. Minister is imputing improper motives on this, again. In your absence last week I made mention of the fact that I was brought before the Magistrates’ Court and I was cleared by the Chief Magistrate Mc Nicholls and the Prime Minister encouraged me to go to the High Court. It went to the High Court and the High Court judge, Justice Myers ruled that that case should not have come before the courts. My name had been cleared completely of any wrongdoing and mischief. My hands are clean; my heart is pure and my heart is clean. No type of associations or insinuations will show any sort of impropriety whatsoever on Dr. Gopeesingh.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** In that case, why did the then attorney general say that there should be a full commission of enquiry into the NorthWest Regional Health Authority? Was he mistaken?

Let me go on. I am reading again from September 22:

“I have information that funds from the NorthWest Regional Health Authority were used for political purposes and personal purposes.”

The Member for Caroni East was the chairman of the RHA at that time.

Where is the Member for Oropouche East? He run away?

“I have information that a top public official who was employed as a public servant at the Office of the Prime Minister got two salaries in respect of while he was getting a salary and in respect of getting money from the Northwest Regional Health Authority.

These are the words of the former attorney general. I made these statements in this Parliament a couple months ago and the Member for Oropouche East got up and said that that never happened and I was telling untruths.

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The Member for Tabaquite said this:

“I have information that a top public official—naming the Member for Oropouche East—who was employed as a public servant at the Office of the Prime Minister got two salaries in respect of while he was getting a salary and money from the Northwest Regional Health Authority.

Hear what the Member goes on to say:

“I cannot in the light of that kind of information cover it up or hide it under a carpet. I cannot do it. So I have taken steps to have those matters investigated.”

That is why I said the Member for Tabaquite has a history of looking at all sides of a matter. Why did you come in Parliament today and quote one side of a matter? You are getting yourself embroiled in foolishness. You are drinking tea for other people’s fever. Let me go on.

“...In the last budget debate when the Opposition raised allegations of corruption, he was talking about 2000—I was so sick of those allegations that—”

I could just remember the way he was talking.

I spoke to the Minister of National Security at the time and right in this House we decided we would have an anti-corruption squad set up in order to investigate those allegations. There were three main areas mentioned, I think by the Member for Diego Martin West. These were the Airports Authority, the InnCogen issue and the desalination plant.

“I took it upon myself to retain Mr...Lindquist...I retained him and made available for that squad the services of a special counsel, Mr. Karl Hudson-Phillips and they assisted this squad in the investigation.

Mr. Speaker, the preliminary report came to me and it showed that there was no way the report could be made public, because the contents of the report needed further investigation. Those investigations, I understand, are continuing—I gave the report—to the Minister of National Security who is the present Prime Minister...and Minister of National Security.”

That is the Member for Couva North. He got a report on corruption with respect to the Airports Authority, InnCogen and the desalination plant. He thought that it was so serious and said that they could not publish that, let them hire Lindquist. He gave the report to the then Prime Minister, the Member for Couva North. This is the origin of the Lindquist investigation into the airport. It was not us. That is true continuity in government. True continuity in government, Mr. Speaker.

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There is another part of this statement that I find— [*Interruption*] “He is a good fella, yuh know. He just in the wrong place.” There is another statement here that I always found so interesting. He was talking in 2001. He said:

“...In 1997, I drafted a National Tenders Bill.

What happened to the National Tenders Bill? It never saw the light of day. It went up in smoke.

“...In 1997...I drafted a National Tenders Bill...The Cabinet appointed a committee and I am still trying...to get that Bill to the Parliament.”

That is what you said in 2001, four years later. You drafted a National Tenders Bill to deal with procurement and public policy in tendering in 1997 and in 2001, under the UNC you still could not get it to the Cabinet. What happened? They did not want you to go to the Parliament?

There is another part of this that I find so interesting. It is the issue of the Employment Training Programme under the distinguished direction of the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. That was you, right? Who was doing it after you? He had some choice words to say.

“Mr. Speaker, the issue of the Employment Training Programme has been raised here...”

They changed URP into ETP. [*Interruption*] It was a good move? He did not think so. I continue:

“based on information which I have got, I have referred matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions.”

Was that when you were the minister or somebody else?

“I cannot support the contention that nothing is wrong with the ETP”

I just heard the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla say *softe voce* that the ETP was a good programme. You have here that the Attorney General of the UNC saying:

“I cannot support the contention that nothing is wrong with the ETP. I cannot support it. As a matter of fact just two days ago a gentlemen walked into the office of the Attorney General and gave me certain information. I requested a certain lawyer to see the person and take him to the DPP. We have volumes of letters in which there have been allegations of corruption. We cannot hide the fact that the ETP...the successor to the URP is perceived to be used for even the party’s purposes in party elections.”

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They used the URP for party election. That is what you said. They used the URP, its successor the ETP, to rig party elections.

“We cannot hide the fact that the ETP is perceived to be used for even the party’s purposes in party elections.

*[Interruption]* Stop that! So it went on under you.

He went on to talk about a Cabinet minister who participated in an attempt to grant a telecommunications licence. He had given instructions to the Solicitor General that that matter go back to Cabinet for reconsideration and the fact that ministers who are businessmen must declare their interest.

He spoke about the Caroni rum distillery matter. He said:

“...the process is null and void and of no effect and as Attorney General—I have directed that that go back to Cabinet.

The Tanteak transaction is null and void of no effect. The matter would be taken back to Cabinet. That is what you said.

The then Member for Arouca South, Mrs. Robinson-Regis got up.

“Mrs. Robinson-Regis: If the Minister would give way. In the budget debate the Minister of Finance...”

This is the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Yetming, I believe. Mr. Clean.

“...indicated that those transactions were open above board...and that the media should be allowed to come in. In light of what—Mr. Maharaj—has said, what is the effect of what was said in the budget debate?”

Hear Mr. Ramesh Maharaj:

“All I can say is that a decision has been taken by the office of the Attorney General that those decisions”—the Caroni rum distillery, the Tanteak matter, et cetera—are null and void and if the Minister...

Talking about his Minister of Finance.

“...wants to disobey that, they can, but there”—would be—consequences.”

Beautiful words. He went on to say that he would deal with them.

“I have decided that the Attorney General also has the power to take proceedings in court on behalf of the public interest and if...the Attorney General believes that the public interest is violated or adversely affected in

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any one of these matters—Tanteak,...—and the public officials do not want to adhere to the advice and the views of the Ministry, I will take proceedings to prohibit the action in a court of law.”

That is man! So if the minister of finance and the other ministers in the UNC did not want to follow your advice, that all of these contracts should be declared null and void, you were going to take them to court. That is man! That is real emperor. The emperor was speaking.

The part that struck me in all of this is that he spoke about a minister should not have his business and participate in decisions of Cabinet which may affect the business. He could not do that and it was influence peddling.

He went back and dropped a next lash on the Member for Oropouche East. Where is he?

“Public officials cannot take two salaries. I have been told that...important public officials who are employed in ministries are getting a salary from the State and...a salary from a...company. They are on contract...”

It is Moonilal he was talking about.

“—that is wrong.”

You said it was not true. He declared it in Parliament. Hear what he said.

“—that is wrong.”

This is the Member for Oropouche East who was getting two salaries from the State. He continued:

“...I intend to take steps in respect of the information which I got to have the Director of Public Prosecutions look into the matter and...the police would have to look into it.”

What? “Yuh was bad in dem days. Yuh was bad!”

This is the part. “Ah tell yuh doh geh vex. Ah just reading de Hansard. Doh geh vex wid meh.” This is the part that I like and I admire you for this part.

“I cannot close my eyes to the fact that there are certain public officials”—he is talking about UNC—“who have suddenly become rich. There are certain members of boards who, before 1995 could not pay a rent or their mortgages, but they got new homes, big cars and new lifestyles. Public officials can now send their children abroad to school. They have credit cards where other people are paying for them.

I have had many nights in which I had to decide what I am going to do...”

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“On the other hand, I thought whether I would, in effect, be doing wrong if I remain and say what I had to say...and looked at other countries and I believe that my duty, regardless of the consequences, is to stand up and fight. [*Desk thumping*]...As a matter of fact, I think the public perception is that if we have allegations of corruption and there are certain Members of the”—UNC—“Government—we cannot hide it— who feel the matter should be dealt with in a certain way and others believe it should be dealt with in another way. We cannot allow time to go to see whether the situation would improve...but, at the present time, unless removed, the Attorney General is going to stay.”

He did not last very long. How long after that did they remove you? Was it the next day or something?

The fact of the matter is that we are here today to debate a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister. The person who was the head of the government was the person that Mr. Maharaj was talking about; one of the persons was the Prime Minister. He clearly, at that time, had lost some confidence in his government and his Prime Minister. What the Member for Tabaquite should have done is file a Motion of no confidence then, because we had the majority. There were 16 of us and three of you. That was 19. They had only 17. Why did you not file a Motion of no confidence then? Anyway, I know why, the then Member for Couva North dissolved the Parliament and called an election. He dissolved the Parliament four years ahead of time, so you did not have a chance to file your Motion of no confidence. If you had filed it then, it surely would have succeeded. It surely would have made sense.

Let me deal with some procedural matters.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before you proceed. 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. [*Hon. N. Parsanlal*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Let me deal with some procedural matters, because there is a misunderstanding of the context and relevance of a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister. In the United Kingdom, which is the birthplace of the Westminster system, there is such a thing as a Motion of no confidence in the government, but not in our system. In our system, the Constitution only provides



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for a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister. [*Interruption*] Yes, read the Constitution, you would see it. There is a provision in the Constitution on which this Motion is founded. This Motion is founded on a particular section of the Constitution which speaks only to no confidence in the Prime Minister. In England, they have both Motions of no confidence in the government and in the Prime Minister and other Ministers. Therefore, when a Motion of no confidence is filed in the Prime Minister, it is in effect also a Motion of no confidence in the government. That is how our system works.

The fact of the matter is, in terms of when these Motions should be held—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Heard.

**Hon. C. Imbert:**—heard, sorry, it is convention that the Government would make available a day to the Opposition to hear the Motion, but May's *Parliamentary Practice*, page 330 says:

“for this purpose the government is entitled to have regard to the exigencies of its own business,”

What May's tells us is that it is conventional when a Motion of no confidence is filed in the Prime Minister, the government would set aside a day, which we have done. We have set aside today, but in so doing we have to look at our own parliamentary agenda; in other words, it is not mandatory. That misunderstanding is why there was the thought that was in the public domain a month or so ago, that as soon as this thing is filed, the Speaker would reconvene Parliament. I was on vacation. The Speaker was on vacation. We have better things to do with our vacation period. The fact of the matter is that there was this thing in the public domain that as soon as this Motion is filed, the Speaker must reconvene Parliament immediately and have this debate. That is not so. That is not how the system works at all. The Speaker did not reconvene the Parliament. He knew exactly what he was doing. I thought I would make that very, very clear. It is up to the Government to decide when this Motion is heard.

With respect to the Motion itself, the Constitution says if the Motion is successful, the Prime Minister has two options, he can either resign or he can dissolve the Parliament and call a general election. Those are the options. In other countries this has happened. It has happened in Barbados. I remember years ago, then Prime Minister Sandiford found himself on the wrong end of a Motion of no confidence where a number of persons, including some of his own people, voted against him and he did not have the requisite majority and he dissolved the

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Parliament and called a general election. It happened in St. Vincent and Grenada many, many years ago. It has happened in other Caribbean countries. But there it is not a snowball chance in Hades, I wanted to say hell, but I would say Hades, that this Motion will succeed. Not a snowball chance. It would not succeed anywhere, anytime or any place.

What the Opposition would like the public to forget is that on November 27, there was a general election and they sentenced you to five years hard labour on that side, 26/15. We are not any shaky, weak minority Government. We have 11 seats more than you and it is impossible for any Motion of this type to succeed. It is nonsense. The Member for Tabaquite knew that when he filed the Motion. He knows the Motion was futile. He knows the Motion would fail, the other side would be outvoted and the Motion would go in the dustbin where it belongs. It is just a chance for them to talk. All of them are wasting the Parliament's and the population's time. You could have come, if you wanted to attack the Government, on a Private Members' Day and talk your nonsense. Why waste the time of the country? We shall use this opportunity to demonstrate that we have confidence in the Prime Minister and certainly in the Government.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Singing for your supper?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Oh, definitely, alto, soprano, baritone, whatever. When I hear this *sotto voce* thing from the URP worker, it is frustration. It cannot be nice to spend six years in opposition and spend another five and another five staring you straight in the face. The Member for Couva South would become an old man on the Opposition Benches; a very, very old man. You could say what you want, you are in Opposition and you shall remain there probably for the rest of your political life.

This Motion is nonsense. When you look at—I am going back to what the Member for Tabaquite had to say. What did he say? We are having two conferences next year and he would be holding a public enquiry, delusions of grandeur. I believe that the Member for Tabaquite needs psychoanalysis. He/the Opposition would be holding a public enquiry. Under what law? You and some other person will conduct a public enquiry in Trinidad and Tobago? Who vested you with that authority? Delusions of grandeur. I am so thankful, Member for Tabaquite, that you have signalled to us that you intend to disrupt the Summit of the Americas and the Commonwealth Heads of Government next year. I am so thankful that months in advance to those two very important conferences which would put Trinidad and Tobago on the world stage, you have said that you are going to have an enquiry which will reveal that the Government is not fit to run this country and the Prime Minister is not fit to be Prime Minister. Thanks for letting us know.

The other things that the Member had to say—I cannot bother with this stupidity. I will deal with the other things. It think it is time for me to put on record some of the achievements of this Government. There is nothing to answer here. Let me talk about the achievements of this Government in public transportation. This week I had the privilege to participate in a function commemorating the launching, introduction into service, or commissioning of 70 new buses for the Public Transport Service Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago. When the records are examined, one will see that in September 2001, on the day that the Member for Tabaquite made this brilliant presentation in this Parliament, there were 83 buses on the roads in Trinidad and Tobago. This week, there were 293 buses on the roads in Trinidad and Tobago. We have moved from 83 buses in 2001 to 293 buses in 2008, a 250 per cent increase in the number of available buses for the poor and needy citizens of this country. There are 20 more buses on the docks. Within the next three weeks, we would have 313 buses on the roads in Trinidad and Tobago; almost four times as many buses as they had when they were in government.

The number of routes that would be serviced would exceed 120 within the next two weeks, whereas under them, they were servicing maybe 30 or 40 routes. We were servicing in excess of 100 routes in Trinidad and Tobago: urban, suburban and rural. When you look at the Public Transport Service Corporation that has evolved over the last six or seven years, under the stewardship of Mr. Telly Paul, I must congratulate him. He has been a very effective chairman of that corporation. There is an array of buses. There are the longer articulated buses that can take 150 passengers, the standard buses that can take 60 passengers and others that can take 40. The 70 buses that we commissioned this week are between 29 and 33 seaters, specifically designed to service areas in Chaguanas, Couva, Barrackpore, Maraval, Tobago, Sangre Grande and every part of Trinidad and Tobago. That is performance from the Public Transport Service Corporation—  
[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Prime Minister did that.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Yes he did. If a ministry or corporation does not receive the active support of the Prime Minister, then the projects and programmes of that Ministry would not be as successful as they should be. I can say without fear or hesitation that the expansion of the Public Transport Service Corporation from 83 buses to 293 was all done with the willing support and encouragement of the hon. Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East. [*Desk thumping*] It did not happen by guess.

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**3.45 p.m.**

They have spent six years in office and they ended up in one “kankatang”. A former minister of government, Mr. John Humphrey, got himself embroiled in all kinds of legal matters over the award of the interchange contract where corruption, bribery and bid rigging were alleged in that interchange contract.

One disgruntled bidder took the government to court and prevented construction of the interchange. That is their legacy under the six years that they were in government. For six years they talk and talk about the construction of the interchange and then got themselves in a legal quagmire where they could not do anything.

Everybody who passes by the intersection of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and the Uriah Butler Highway could see the fantastic piece of engineering that is quickly taking shape there. Everybody who passes there would see the kind of technology that this PNM administration is bringing to this country. *[Interruption]* If the Prime Minister was not supportive of the programmes and projects of the Ministry of Works and Transport, do you think that interchange would have been constructed? Nothing was going to happen.

The Prime Minister is the chairman of the Cabinet. It is the Prime Minister who has directed that there be an immediate programme of accelerated and intense drainage work in this country. It is the Prime Minister who has directed that. You see, if you look at every project and successful programme of this Government, it would not be possible without the intervention and the active support of the Prime Minister. *[Desk thumping]*

We have the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP) and if the Member for San Fernando East did not support the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme there would be no programme. If the Prime Minister did not support the Government Assistance for Tertiary Expenses (GATE), there would be no GATE. You can look at it any way you want, but in the Westminster system the Prime Minister is the head of the Cabinet and it is he who decides whether things are done or not done as the case may be. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, the intersection at the Uriah Butler Highway and the Churchill Roosevelt Highway is something that they could not do. They have spent six years in office and they did absolutely nothing. That is only the beginning. We are in the final stages of awarding a contract for the flyover at El Socorro and improvements at Aranguéz. We are in the final stages and we expect to be able to get the necessary approvals within the next month so that contract could be

awarded and construction could begin to deal with the traffic lights at El Socorro and Aranguez thus making the Churchill Roosevelt Highway a truly great separated highway, all the way from Port of Spain down to San Fernando.

We are also in the final stages of putting together the package for the grade separation of the Uriah Butler Highway and the Churchill Roosevelt Highway at the intersection. When that is completed, the interchange will become a full interchange so that all turning movements—whether you are going from west to south, north to east or east to north, et cetera—will then be separated by interchanges, flyovers and so on, and you will be able to drive, as I said, from Port of Spain to San Fernando without encountering a single traffic light. [*Desk thumping*] Could they do that?

Mr. Speaker, all they did in the six years that they were in office was to build a shed up in Piarco which was supposed to cost \$300 million. It ended up costing \$2,000 million and there are about eight of them before the court right now. That is all they did in the six years that they were in office. They engaged in rampant corruption. Nobody other than the hon. Member for Tabaquite said so. He said that he could not sit idly by and remain in that government. That is what they did, but this Government has a plan to transform Trinidad and Tobago.

You see, we speak about Vision 2020, and every single Cabinet Minister is preparing and implementing plans in their ministries in order to realize the objectives of Vision 2020. That is what every single one of us is doing in our ministries. We are not doing this by guess.

Recently, the Minister of Health announced a business plan, and that is not by guess or vaps. This is contained within the objectives and deliverables in the Vision 2020 document. Did they prepare any Vision 2020 document when they were in power? Did they have a plan to do anything for this country? They have no vision, and they just talk and talk. Some of their members have stolen from the Treasury and that is why they are there and we are here. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, I know what is the problem. The Member for Chaguanas West never thought that he would be in the Opposition. He thought that he would have been in government. In fact, I was told that he was invited into the government so that he would have been the leader of the UNC or the chairman. That is what I was told. So, you would have been the chairman, the Member for Tabaquite would have been the leader and the Member for Couva North would have been the President. That was the plan. That is the only reason both of them are there. They were set up. As soon as they came into the government, they realized that the Member for Couva North was not going any place. That is why Members opposite are so frustrated.

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It cannot be nice to have spent all that money, time and effort and find yourself in Opposition. It cannot be nice. I empathize with the Member and I know that is why he is so bitter and frustrated, and that is why he is sitting there and wringing his hands. I know that is why.

The fact of the matter is, they lost the last election and because the population had no confidence in them and they had confidence in us, we are the Government and they are the Opposition. That is why they have to create this mythology that this Government is in trouble, and that is a myth; it is pure mythology. I see it in letters in the newspaper; I watch it on television; and I hear it on the radio. It is a fantasy in the minds of disgruntled opposition elements. They cannot stand the fact that they were condemned to sit in Opposition for the next 10 to 15 years. [*Desk thumping*] That is driving them mad. It is only a madman that would bring a Motion like this to the Parliament driven by mad frustration.

Mr. Speaker, they know that their party is going to “mash up” just now. Their party has a history of mashing up. I know that the Member for Tabaquite cannot sit on that side for too long. He is going to walk again. He did it before and he is going to do it again. Underneath that shell—in reading this, I believe that some of the words uttered by the Member for Tabaquite, when he indicated his distaste for corruption and when he said that he was sick of the corruption of the UNC, I believe he meant that and, therefore, I do not believe that the Member for Tabaquite is going to stay there for very long. I do not think so. The party is going to “mash up” just now, so they have to prepare themselves for about 20 years in Opposition. In fact, the party that might disintegrate in six months might be the UNC. I know you better than that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, let me just deal with this matter. It is in the *Jerusalem Bible* and it says: “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” That is in Proverbs, Chapter 16:18. Poor fellow, he got it upside down. You said “Pride goes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction”. That is why he could not finish. Mr. Speaker, you made the point that he was on his way to becoming a man of the cloth, but he did not read it and he did not do his home lessons. This Motion is so absurd.

Anybody who travels between Trinidad and Tobago on one of those modern luxurious fast ferries that this administration had the vision and foresight to introduce into Trinidad and Tobago; the fast ferry technology—previously, it took six hours to get to Tobago. It was choppy and it was a difficult ride and now on a good day you can get to Tobago in two and a half hours. It is not just one ferry, but there are two ferries. You can get there for \$100. I know the Member for Oropouche knows what I am talking about.

You know, they would say things in the corridor and they would never say it in here. The Member asked me to assist him in getting on the ferry and I obliged. He went off to Tobago and he told me: “Boy, it was marvelous. I just drove on and I drove off. It was marvelous.” That is what the Member said.

I do believe that it was in fact a marvelous innovation of this Government to introduce the fast ferry technology to the inter-island route between Trinidad and Tobago. That is what they should have spent the money on instead of thieving it out at the airport. [*Desk thumping*] They could have bought two fast ferries. [*Desk thumping*] They do not care about anybody. They were just interested in filling their pockets. That is what they were interested in. That is what he said and not me.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen a revolutionary transformation in inter-island travel by sea where thousands of persons can now travel to Tobago on a daily basis in supreme comfort—modern air-conditioned comfort. The fact of the matter is that they do not understand that the Member for San Fernando East is the political leader of the PNM; he is the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago; and he is our leader of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Do you honestly think that we would do the foolishness that the Member for Tabaquite has implied? Do you think that anyone here would get up and vote with him on this dotish Motion? Do you really feel that we would do that? We are all proud Members of the PNM Government of Trinidad and Tobago. This Motion is just absurd.

In terms of transforming the landscape; in terms of a modern highway system; in terms of bringing Trinidad and Tobago into the First World; in terms of highway systems; in terms of sea transportation; and in terms of public transportation, I can assure you that the population has a lot more confidence in the people on this side than the people on the other side. [*Desk thumping*]

Look at the revolution in tertiary education! When they were there they had something called the Dollar for Dollar, pandering to the rich as usual. That is what they did. They pander to the rich. So, they came up with this brilliant innovation that in order to go to University you must have money first. They were just pandering to their wealthy friends, and they came up with the Dollar for Dollar Programme. They said that if you bring a dollar, they would give you the next dollar, but you had to have the first \$5,000 or the first \$10,000.

Which person in Barrackpore, Penal, Port of Spain or Laventille had the first \$10,000 so that they could have given them the next \$10,000? No! It was the people in Westmoorings, Goodwood Park, Gulf View, Maraval and Fairways who had the first \$10,000. It is the people in those areas, the upper income areas, who benefited from the Dollar for Dollar Programme.

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If you do a profile on the beneficiaries of the Dollar for Dollar Programme, you would see that it was a regressive programme and it made sure that it excluded persons at the lowest income of the society. What did we do? As soon as we came in we scrapped that programme and got rid of that retrograde policy and that discriminatory policy and we introduced the Government Assistance for Tertiary Education (GATE) which is open to everybody. We do not discriminate against anybody. There is no means test. Whether you are poor, rich or you are in the middle class, this Government has taken a decision to make sure that you can get tertiary education. That is our record. What is your record in tertiary education?

When the Prime Minister appointed me as the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in 2003, I went down to John S. Donaldson Technical Institute—while I am at it, I heard some stupidity that the Prime Minister removed the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West because of some problem with UDeCott.

**4.00 p.m.**

There was a Cabinet reshuffle in 2003; I was moved; the Member for Diego Martin West was moved; the Member for Couva South was moved—  
[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** "Yuh losing it!"

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Arouca South; Arouca North; there was a widespread shuffle of the Cabinet, about 10 or 11 ministers were given new portfolios. I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker, it worked, because in 2001, how many seats did we get?

**Mr. Manning:** Eighteen.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** In 2002 we got 20, and after the Cabinet reshuffle we got 26 seats. The Prime Minister re-engineered the Cabinet in 2003; moved his ministers around and gave them different portfolios; tried out persons in different areas, and it resulted in a 26/15 victory in 2007. [*Desk thumping*] So put that in "yuh" pipe and smoke it!

I went and tell him something about Calder Hart too; that is the dotishness you want to tell me? That is why I was moved from health to tertiary education, because I complained on Calder Hart? Because the former Member for Arouca South allegedly complained, she was moved too? Nonsense.

The movement of the Member for Diego Martin West was part of an overall Cabinet reshuffle, where a number of important and fundamental portfolios were



redistributed in the government, which is the prerogative of the Prime Minister. Who are you to tell the Prime Minister which person should be a minister in which portfolio? The Member for Tabaquite knows very well that in the Westminster system it is the sole purview and prerogative of the Prime Minister to redistribute his ministers. *[Interruption]*

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I absolutely reject this stupid Motion. *[Laughter]* If you rebuke me for being unparliamentary, I consider it to be dotish and destined to fail.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jack Warner** (*Chaguanas West*): Mr. Speaker, before I start I want to publicly thank Acting Commissioner of Police, Mr. James Philbert, for helping me enter the precincts of this Parliament unharmed. He, of course, embraced me with his men and carried me through an unruly mob dressed in red, supported, condoned and transported by the Prime Minister and his party, the PNM. I want to tell him thanks for that. Mr. Prime Minister, the legacy you have left in this country today is one for which you shall be ashamed eternally. *[Crosstalk]*

The structure of my debate today is a bit different from the drivel I just heard a few minutes ago. I want to stick to the debate; it is one which says that this House has no confidence in the Prime Minister. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I am hearing disturbances from the public gallery. I am warning the person or persons who are disturbing this House. On the next occasion I will have to ask you to leave.

**Mr. J. Warner:** No amount of shilly-shallying, no amount of histrionics by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, will deter us on this side from sticking to the issue. The issue is no confidence in the Prime Minister; that is the issue. The issue is no confidence in the leadership of the Member for San Fernando East.

Before I say that, however, though I am tempted not to respond to the last speaker, there are one or two points I feel obliged to say. When I want to relax, I look at Tom and Jerry cartoons; for the last 75 minutes I relaxed. *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Ramnath:** Tom and Jerry are fools?

**Mr. J. Warner:** I did not say anything about that; I said that I relaxed.

The last speaker spoke about fantasy and untruths; of course, he again missed the point. The point was made by the Member for Tabaquite that the Prime Minister knew about the Sunway contract and approved it before it went to

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Cabinet; that was his point. He was saying, therefore, that it was wrong. In any Parliament, in any Cabinet, in any country, in any government, that is wrong. That was what he was saying.

The Member for Diego Martin North/East listed two, three, four, five, six matters and he said that they were already in the public domain. I ask, "So what?" Does it mean because they are in the public domain, they are right? Does it mean that because they are in the public domain they must be overlooked? Does it mean because they are in the public domain they must not be corrected? Mr. Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East, does it mean that? You cannot be serious.

Moreover, he talked about the three Pandays on this side; those three Pandays were elected by the people. [*Desk thumping*] I was on a plane last night, coming back to take part in this debate, and people were telling me, "Jack Warner, where yuh going?" I said, "I am going back home." "To paradise lost?" I said, "Not lost, but losing." "To a country where you have Papa Manning and Mama Manning and son Manning?" But who elected Mama Manning; who elected son Manning? The people elected, of course, the Member for Oropouche West; the Member for Couva North and the Member for Princes Town North. They were elected; that is not nepotism. They were screened; the last speaker almost was not screened. His memory is short. His memory and his—[*Interruption*] no, I will not say that. I will not talk about your memory and your height and say that they are the same thing. I will never say that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Where were they screened?

**Mr. J. Warner:** They here were elected; those on that side were not elected, but I will come back to them later.

I want to repeat: The Sunway contract was not about the lowest bidder. [*Interruption*] If you believe that you will get me sidetracked today, I have news for you; not today.

**Mr. Imbert:** I was not talking to you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. J. Warner:** It was not about the lowest bidder, it was the fact that there were family ties involved, which the Prime Minister knew about and which he condoned; that is the issue. I will come to the issue of lowest bidder just now when I talk about the Waterfront project just now. Do not miss the point; the issue was about bid rigging, which the Prime Minister was aware of; that is the issue. No amount of circumvention of the issue would change what it is.

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In fact, after he was able to be involved in the bid rigging the contract was approved and the man got promoted. I will go quickly, because I do not want to spend too much time on the nonsense that was spoken for almost an hour and a half by the last speaker.

The Member spoke about the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, and he said that the Member for Couva North, when he was Prime Minister, was the one who, of course, began to talk about political integration and, therefore, the Prime Minister merely followed. Jesus Christ! [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Members:** No, no! [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. J. Warner:** My apologies. "Oh Jeeze"!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. J. Warner:** Okay, I will say "Oh Jeeze".

He said that the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas was synonymous with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Prime Minister. "Oh Jeeze"! [*Crosstalk*] The Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas is a document that has economic basis and principles; I would not go into details. The MOU is a document that changes the Constitution of our people, of our country.

**Mr. Manning:** How does it do that?

**Mr. J. Warner:** The MOU is a document whereby the Prime Minister, solely and only, sat with two guys in the Caribbean, one was the Prime Minister from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, his sidekick who he gave \$10.78 million to—I will come to that just now—and Tillman Thomas from Grenada. He sat with those guys and signed a Memorandum of Understanding to change our Constitution. We were told today that was synonymous to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

When I come to talk about foreign affairs, I will show the fallacy of that and I will show that this country is going down the tube, but I will not go into that detail now. All I am saying is that the last speaker missed the point; but it is not the first time he has missed the point. Therefore, I will not spend much time on what he has said, because he began by saying that he had nothing to say, and believe you me, he lived up to the words; he said nothing. [*Laughter*]

My debate this afternoon is posited on a particular structure. I will begin my debate by giving this House and, by extension, the national community, a very brief outline of what is a no confidence motion, its history and the purpose of it. Do you know why I have to do that, Mr. Speaker? For them to understand that it

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is not about, "We on this side and you on that side"; it is not that "We have 26 and you have 15"; that is not the issue. I will go to history, as far back as 1782 with Lord North in England, to show them the purpose of a motion of this kind. [*Desk thumping*] You talk about erudition, I will teach you about erudition.

I will go further, Mr. Speaker; I will show how the Prime Minister has failed in every aspect of endeavour of this country, and that is why this country should have no confidence in him. I will talk about inflation briefly, about crime, about poverty alleviation, about high food prices, about flooding, about falling bridges—falling bridges. I repeat: falling bridges. I will talk about social infrastructure, water for all, youth development, equality and discrimination, gender affairs, Tobago affairs, foreign affairs and, believe you me, I will end up on sport.

I will show the country how the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs today is the most corrupt ever and I will show that this has the Speaker's support and condonation, that is why the Prime Minister—[*Interruption*] sorry, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister—never you, Sir; never at all. I would never do that; my apologies, but that I am so worked up. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I was a little worried.

**Mr. J. Warner:** I will never ever do that; you are too nice a person.

**Mr. Ramnath:** What! Did you ask opinion of this side?

**Mr. J. Warner:** I will tell, of course, the Prime Minister, how he condoned this. When I go through the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and show you the waste and the money spent, \$253 million, I will show you where it went. I will show you projects and pictures, and I will ask this House to tell me if this is not a corrupt Ministry condoned by the Prime Minister. What is wrong, what is even worse, is that the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs is so young in the game, just one year. If he is there for one year, or less than a year, and is so corrupt, we are in a bad way.

After I am finished, I will then deal with the mother of all, UDeCott, again briefly. So first general, then to the specific UDeCott, and then I will turn to a company called Genivar, G-E-N-I-V-A-R. I will talk to the House and the country about Genivar; I will trace Genivar's history. I will show how many contracts Genivar has with UDeCott, and I will show a link between UDeCott and Genivar. I will talk about what I will call today, "the Canadian connection". If I talk to this country today, I hope the country listens, Mr. Prime Minister. The Member for Diego Martin North/East could talk if he wants but, Mr. Prime Minister, I beg you

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to listen, because this debate today is to help you. I know "stick break in yuh ears" but today, [*Laughter*] take out the stick in your ears.

Then I will talk about what local and international bodies say about this country, and the Prime Minister, of course. I will talk about the Central Bank advice. I will talk about the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Architects, and I will talk about the media. I will end the debate—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** The debate.

**Mr. J. Warner:** My debate. I will end my contribution—I am glad you are listening—by referring the Prime Minister to this book, *Political Hypocrisy*, written by a fellow called David Runciman.

**4.15 p.m.**

If you think you can trivialize a serious issue and make a mockery of this debate, I have news for you. You continue, because your arrogance is so powerful, just listening to you, the arrogance comes through your pores and you believe of course, with your arrogance, you are master of all you survey.

Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Minister of Works and Transport, what goes around, comes around and I will tell you this Mr. Prime Minister, because it was the Prime Minister who said that the Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Minister of Works and Transport, has put enough scars on his back. He said that, and I am telling you he will put many more before he is through with you, mark my words.

Mr. Speaker, if I have time I would also talk about Caroni (1975) Limited lands and the houses that have been distributed among their friends and families. One family has four houses; of the four houses, two have never been seen by the family because they do not live there. And that has been a distribution which has been looked after by the Member who is now the Minister of Trade and Industry, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith and Jerry Hospedales. [*Interruption*] Let me talk.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. J. Warner:** I do not have time today, so for the budget debate which begins September 22, 2008 I will say much more about the Caroni (1975) Limited lands, where you rob poor people and give one person four houses. So therefore, with your permission, I now begin the body of my debate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point that motions of no confidence like this one have been filed all over the world; in Malaysia, Bulgaria, Pakistan, the United

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Kingdom and so forth. And all these motions were encouraged by a series of acts and a pattern of behaviour by leaders that led to unprecedented frustration and desperation.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Tabaquite said earlier on, there was one motion in 1987 moved against the then Prime Minister, Mr. ANR Robinson; in 1994, there was another motion moved against the present Prime Minister. In the history of this country, to the best of my knowledge, it is the first time one sitting Prime Minister has two similar motions against him in 14 years.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that these motions came at a time when there was desperation and frustration in the country. Both motions came at a time when there was unprecedented industrial strife in 1994, and today the motion has come again when there is industrial strife and, therefore, history today is repeating itself when labour once more is on the brink, when there are cries for a total shut down, once again we have a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister, 10 months after being sworn in as Prime Minister, there is a Motion of no confidence against him. I do not care what May's did or did not say, the Motion is here today and it is one we are going to debate for the national community to hear whether what we are saying is true or false, and make their judgment. That is all.

Mr. Speaker, in 256 days of being Prime Minister of this country there are 373 murders—more murders than there are days—and I say, never in the history of any country has that ever happened before. But one gets the impression that Prime Ministers were not defeated by no confidence motions before.

Mr. Speaker, history is replete with examples where Prime Ministers had been defeated by no confidence motions. Admittedly, in these governments, there were not as many political babies as you have here, but Governments have fallen and I will give you a few names to enlighten you.

In Australia, James Scullin as Prime Minister fell in 1931; in Australia, Arthur Fadden, Prime Minister fell in 1941; Malcolm Fraser, the Prime Minister of Australia fell on a no confidence motion in 1975; in Canada between 1926 and 1979. Between 1926 and 2005, Canada had five Prime Ministers who fell on no confidence motions. The last two were Joe Clark in 1979 and Paul Martin in 2005. That should be your guide, Mr. Prime Minister. You are not, of course, insulated. I know you feel you can walk on water and you can fly, but Mr. Prime Minister, Prime Ministers have fallen, and you can fall.

Mr. Speaker, in France, in 1962 Georges Pompidou fell by a no confidence motion. In Germany, Helmut Schmidt, whose shoes you cannot walk in, fell in 1992.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way. How many of those governments were coalition governments?

**Mr. J. Warner:** I am coming to that in five minutes. As you say, Mr. Prime Minister, “hurry dog eat raw meat.” Those are your words, right?

Mr. Speaker, in India, the Prime Minister Atal Bihari fell in 1996; Israel’s Yitzhak Shamir; Italy’s Purgee; in Japan five of them fell; New Zealand, MacKenzie and the list goes on and on. Norway, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, James Callaghan in 1979. So, therefore, history is full of examples, and to come here and be dismissive of a motion of no confidence as the last speaker has been, shows blatant ignorance of history.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point that this Motion of no confidence is not really one that we would hope that they would listen to reason and the Members would of course vote and say they are for the Motion. We do not expect that, Mr. Prime Minister.

In this Motion, we expect to expose a number of things which have occurred under your Government which this country does not know and which you have sponsored, condoned and supported. That is what we are doing today and, therefore, the country will be wiser for it.

Mr. Speaker, in a two-party system particularly as so structured, one does not expect this Motion to succeed by a vote, far from it, but one expects that it would ventilate to the public the errors of the ways of the Prime Minister and the team he leads. And if by chance we have done that, Mr. Speaker, as I believe we are doing, then we have achieved our objective.

To answer the question of the coalition governments, I have called 12. The motion of no confidence has succeeded in eight of them and four governments like ours. The point however, is that in coalition governments it is far easier to succeed. We know this. But with a two-party system as we have, it is difficult, yet not impossible because I am the imperial optimist and I am quite sure that Members on that side will not allow history to be unkind to them. They will never allow history to judge them wrongly and say that they were part of a corrupt system because if there is anything the Prime Minister is guilty of, if there is any reason he should fall, it is on the issue of corruption and I am coming to that.

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[MR. WARNER]

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Mr. Speaker, before I go to the Prime Minister's failings and before I talk about all the corruption of the Prime Minister, and before I talk about UDeCott and Annisette and so forth, which I shall come to, I feel compelled to go to a company called Genivar.

Mr. Speaker, Genivar is a company, it is a website, Genivar.com which is based in Canada, but in Trinidad and Tobago, they have no website. Their studies include engineering, the environment and so forth, their profile says that they are a Canadian consulting engineering firm with over 3,000 employees, they were established in Canada and it is said that part of this company, or part of the funds they have are being used to assist Third World countries like Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, Genivar's three directors are Eric Mc Donald whose address is Sackville Street, Port of Spain; Rienk De Viernas, whose address is the same and the third one is Roxanne Colthrust. This Canadian company came here more or less around the same time as Calder Hart, Canadian. This company without any tendering process was given by UDeCott, the contract of—and this of course, is on the website of the company—US \$300 million, TT \$1.8 billion to build the waterfront.

They were given to build the waterfront with no tendering process. So Canadian Calder Hart gave Canadian Genivar. This same company, Genivar, was given the WASA contract at a value of US \$60 million by UDeCott and Calder Hart. This company went on to buy a firm called ADB Consultants in Port of Spain and, therefore, this company had access to a local firm to use.

Mr. Speaker, this company Genivar drafted the master plan for the revitalization of Central Port of Spain and this company, Genivar, is also dealing with Transcorp which is the credit union of the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC), the company with the 17 new buses.

This Transcorp Credit Union—Mr. Speaker, I know you do not get tired easily, but this is important—for PTSC, which is a small credit union for its employees has gone on a real estate spending spree and bought 95,000 square feet of prime property in Port of Spain at a cost of \$60 million. [*Interruption*] “Wait nah, yuh hurry?” Wait Dorothy, wait.

In 2004, this company in its report said—

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, it is 4.30 p.m. The sitting of the House is suspended, and by agreement we will resume at 5.30 p.m.

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



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**5.30 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Mr. J. Warner:** Mr. Speaker, before the break I was trying to advise the hon. Prime Minister about a company called Genivar. I was saying that this company came in more or less around the same time that Calder Hart came in. They are both Canadians. This company, Genivar Trinidad and Tobago Limited, I checked up to yesterday and it is not registered under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* When you get a chance to answer, you answer. I want to get it correctly. The company's principal office is in Canada. I say again that they have offices on Sackville Street—I counted two—and in Barataria. The company is Canadian and Calder Hart is Canadian. They came here more or less around the same time. I guess that is coincidence.

The little, unknown company got the Port of Spain International Waterfront Project which was estimated originally at US \$300 million. They were the consultants. This project ballooned from \$3.4 billion to US \$1.8 billion. This is under the reign of the Prime Minister, Patrick Manning.

I read from the *Trinidad Guardian* of May 25, 2007.

“The cost of the Port of Spain Waterfront Project has more than doubled to \$3.4 billion (US \$551 million), with the cost overrun on the project considered to be the jewel in the crown of the Patrick Manning administration amounting to a massive \$1.8 billion...”

That company which is so good and great—*[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. J. Warner:**—is of course, the construction people at Genivar. The client for the Waste Water Rehabilitation Project is WASA. The consultant is Genivar. The construction cost is US \$60 million. Genivar is a company that came in more or less around the same time as Calder Hart. Genivar has been awarded a major project for Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of National Security aimed at redeveloping a security facilities including, but not limited to, police stations, fire house and detention.

The same Genivar Trinidad and Tobago and a local firm Bynoe Roe Wiltshire are the architects behind the new design of the Red House. Genivar, of course, is the project manager of the refurbishment work.

This company Genivar may be a whiz kid. I do not know. Under the Prime Minister's watch this little, unknown Canadian company has been given contracts in which there are many areas of corruption.

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I go to Transcorp Development Company. The point about Transcorp Credit Union, the credit union of the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) with the help of Monteil, Lennox Archer and Anthony Rahael helped to raise funds to buy all the land opposite PTSC. They intend to build—and are waiting now on approval from Town and Country Planning—to build a kind of Broadway project; a multiuse complex comprising of a 15-storey office tower and 75 retail entertainment outlets. It is estimated that because this project is opposite PTSC, the walk-in traffic would be at a minimum 50,000 persons a week. The cost of this project is estimated at \$500 million. Who are the construction project consultants? Genivar. I repeat, Genivar came in more or less around the same time with Calder Hart.

I ask the question: Why was Genivar given all these projects with no competitive tendering? I go further to ask: Why has Genivar been given top projects from UdeCott without any competitive tendering? What is the track record of Genivar? How do we know that our money is well spent? This is Genivar.

Following Genivar I tried to get—I will come to what I call the Canadian connection. [*Prime Minister is leaving*] “Yuh cyah stay to hear dis eh. Yuh cyah stay to hear. Is alright. No problem. Yuh could run but yuh cyah hide, yuh know.” I am talking about the Canadian connection. Calder Hart is a Canadian. Genivar is a Canadian company. The Bombardier jet that they almost bought is Canadian. Of course, we know that several companies from Canada have come here since such as Petro Canada, Canada Energy, Canada Superior Energy, PCS Nitrogen and so on. What you are seeing, with the emergence of Calder Hart, is a series of companies that are coming under suspicious circumstances. The Prime Minister is supporting that. He condones that. Of course, he sponsors that. That is why this Motion is so relevant.

Prime Minister before you leave I want to show you this. This is what I want to end with before you leave. [*Mr. Warner shows a picture*] I will send it home for you. If anything is an indictment against the Prime Minister in this country, this is! This is what he is defending. This cannot be defended. All you political babes in the woods, history will determine what you have done or failed to do for this. My two friends in the back, “yuh doh want to see this or what?”

What of UdeCott? UdeCott has seven directors and an executive chairman Calder Hart. He is chairman of Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance, the National Insurance Board and Nipdec. The other guys I will not call except one. That is Michael Annisette. I say to him a man called Annisette whom I spoke about sometime in this House about a house which he was building in Valsayn. Michael Annisette is a member of UdeCott board. He is a member like Calder

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Hart of the TTMF. Annisette, like Calder Hart, is a member of the NIB. Annisette, like Calder Hart, is a member of Nipdec. Annisette is also chairman of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union. UdeCott has the contract for the waterfront about which I spoke to you. Genivar is the consulting firm. This man called Annisette is the Senator to speak for labour. What a labourer he is!

The Office of the Prime Minister on March 13, 2007—I will read a short paragraph from the release of the Prime Minister. This is a man called Annisette.

On March 13, 2007, the Prime Minister agrees to support the SWWTU in facilitating construction of its new office building in downtown Port of Spain.

Prime Minister Patrick Manning today, March 13 met with a delegation from the SWWTU at Whitehall and has agreed to propose to Cabinet a land joint venture with the union to facilitate the construction of a 26-storey office building at the current site of the SWWTU headquarters.

President General of the union, Mr. Michael Annisette led the four member delegation to the meeting at which the Prime Minister also agreed to propose that the union use the state lands surrounding the site for construction of the building to take place.

If ever you had a system of networking, this is it. This same Mr. Annisette; this speaker for labour; this man who speaks for the trade union movement is now in bed with Calder Hart and the Prime Minister is condoning this.

UdeCott has a total of about 50 projects. I want to talk to my colleagues on the other side. When you go home and talk to your families, children and grandchildren, what do you tell them? Listen to what UdeCott has as projects! Trust me, Mr. Speaker. UdeCott's project list consists of the following:

- Arima Regional Administrative Complex;
- Blenheim, Castara and Roxborough Housing Development Projects in Tobago;
- Brian Lara Academy;
- Canaan Place, La Romain;
- Chaguanas Regional Corporation Complex;
- Champs Fleurs Apartments;
- Chancery Lane Complex;

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- Cove Industrial Estate, Lowlands;
- Salvatori Building, Port of Spain (demolition of);
- Diego Martin Administrative Headquarters;
- Edinburgh 500 Boulevard Dual Carriageway;
- Government Campus Plaza;
- Green Street Housing Development;
- Harris Promenade;
- Invaders Bay Development;
- Lady Young Road Apartments, Morvant;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources Head Office;
- Ministry of Education tower;
- Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries;
- Ministry of Local Government Building;
- Ministry of Public Administration and Information Building;
- Naparima Bowl refurbishment;
- National Carnival and Entertainment Centre, Queens Park, Port of Spain—which caused the Member for Diego Martin West to lose his ministry;
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Winsure Building;
- Oliver Heights Housing Development;
- Oropune Housing Development;
- Palmiste Development, San Fernando;
- Pan Trinbago Headquarters—which has not started as yet;
- People's Mall, Port of Spain;
- Port of Spain Magistrates' Complex;
- Port of Spain National Academy for the Performing Arts;

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- Princes Town Regional Corporation Administrative Complex;
- Stoltmeyers Castle (refurbishment);
- Red House (restoration and adaptive use of);
- President's Cottage (restoration of);
- Mille Fleurs Estate (restoration of)
- Lincoln Land Development, Las Cuevas;
- San Fernando Transport Hub;
- Sangre Grande;
- Scarborough Promenade;
- Siparia;
- Breakfast Shed (new)

This goes on and on. 50! When my dear Minister of Finance delivers the budget, I will talk in the budget debate and go into more detail and tell you the amount of money that is involved in this; where some has gone to and how it was spent.

**5.45 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, we are not here to give the impression that we alone think the Prime Minister is at fault. The Prime Minister is at fault. In the *Starbroek News* of Guyana of August 2008, there is an article written by Vishnu Bisram which states:

“An opinion poll conducted by NACTA in Trinidad has found that the ruling party has slipped in popularity since the election of November 2007. A large majority of voters said that they are dissatisfied with the way T&T is being governed.”

He goes on to say why. When they say that is why we are here and you are there, let them understand that it is okay, but the people outside are asking questions. The people in the region are concerned. That is why this Motion today is so relevant.

What is also important for us to understand is—I would briefly touch some of the issues of corruption under Prime Minister Manning. Prime Minister Manning, I repeat, has supported, sponsored and encouraged this level of corruption and issues in ways unprecedented.

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You would recall that former Sen. Yuille-Williams was at one time the Deputy Political Leader of the PNM when she was in government. She spent \$3.9 million for public relations advertising over a 25-month period. This is in the *Trinidad Guardian* of July 10, 2005. On May 23, 2004 it was stated:

“Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, Joan Yuille-Williams, ran up a bill of \$109,680 at Hilton Trinidad between 2003—2004.”

The same newspaper of August 26, 2004 said:

“Manning forms state companies to avoid tendering and to promote political patronage. UDeCott, NEDCO...”

The same newspaper said that Manning makes Prakash Saith head of a major energy company and his brother, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. There is no conflict of interest there.

The same article says:

“Tobago hospital still not built, allegations of massive corruption surround a Cabinet Minister—\$400 million disappeared and no hospital.”

The article talks about Christine Levia who was charged and arrested.

**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. [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. J. Warner:** There are none so deaf as those who have ears to hear.

The *Trinidad Guardian* of August 08, 2004 speaks of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. I thank Minister Colm Imbert, the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Under him, 100 cheques were stolen from a cabinet at his ministry and these cheques were cashed at a First Citizens Bank branch under, of course the then Minister, Colm Imbert. These cheques were made payable to several persons who purportedly worked on the On-the-Job Training programme at his Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, it was the Prime Minister who said that until the URP is “cleaned up”, Government was not prepared to enhance salaries in a programme “riddled with corruption”. That is the *Newsday* of April 29, 2007. Where is he and why has he changed?

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Under the Prime Minister, Jusamco was awarded a contract of \$127 million to pave the airport runway after the same company botched the last job and cost taxpayers \$50 million. They gave it to the same company this time for almost three times the price. Under the Prime Minister, \$53 million has been spent on Scotland Yard to date and they have not solved one crime but, of course, they know where our beaches are.

The *Newsday* editorial of April 2007 states that they are critical of the Prime Minister for building his palace and for, of course, not taking care of citizens. The editorial complains about the corruption under him.

The *Newsday* of April 23, 2007 states that under the Prime Minister, they spent \$80.8 million over eight years to pay Prof. Stephen Mastrofski to transform the police service. The Minister said:

“At the end of the day the police service would be a highly performing organization, efficient and effective.”

That is not the case. The list can go on and on with CEPEP and URP how they work and the contracts.

We can talk about Home Construction and the UTT campus. Of course the campus was given to a Chinese company to be built at a cost of \$1.8 billion when, of course, a lower bid by \$730 million was rejected. That is in the *Trinidad Guardian* of May 19, 2007.

The Green Fund contains \$870 million. The *Trinidad Guardian* of May 02, 2007 says \$870 million. From that fund, several overpayments were made to foreign officers. In one instance, one officer received \$61,000 overpayment. Another officer was overpaid \$65,000. None has been repaid to date. The Prime Minister is aware of all of this.

There is CNMG and the Home Mortgage Bank. You would recall Mr. Monteil was supposed to have been brought to—an Act was supposed to have been passed to correct the evils of Mr. Monteil. In fact, it is said that the transaction will be sent to the Commissioner of Police, the Integrity Commission and the Director of Public Prosecutions. To date, nothing has been done. The list goes on and on. These are the things for which this Motion is relevant. The Prime Minister is, of course, sitting on a whole web of corruption that is engulfing this nation and is unimaginable.

What we have to ask ourselves, therefore, is what corruption has done to this country and what the local and international observers say. I would take two issues. First of all, what have they done to our country? The Central Bank on

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Saturday, August 30, 2008, in the *Express* newspaper stated that inflation rises to 11.9 per cent. Inflation has gone up once again to 11.3 per cent in June, 11.9 in July and will continue to be a problem to the Central Bank. Inflation, I want to point out, as we have been experiencing, is as a result of Government's spending. I would leave that to my other distinguished colleagues who would, of course, make the point. Inflation, according to the bank, has not yet peaked and will continue to edge upwards in the coming months, ranging between 13 and 15 per cent. The bank gave a series of factors why this would happen.

*[Hon. Kangaloo sits in Leader of Government Business chair]*

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** We have to congratulate our colleague.

**Mr. J. Warner:** I did not see that. I want to congratulate my colleague from Pointe-a-Pierre for being elevated to Deputy Leader of Government Business. I must confess that you look more charming in that seat than the incumbent.

This is what is happening to the country. If you look at the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Architects, they are also very concerned. With respect to UDeCott they are saying that what they are doing is unfair and that the building will cause inflation. When that happens, it drives the repo rate up, not vice versa. Inflation is the cause of Government's spending and as a consequence credit is going up rapidly. The cost of living is increasing daily.

All those guys who are in the square eating, drinking and "feteing" do not understand what is happening to them. What they can buy today with the dollar—the value of a dollar today is 10 cents to what it was five years ago. They do not understand. That is the Government's fault.

Middle income earners are struggling to survive because of inflation. A good medical clinic for one night costs \$18,000.

With respect to mortgage rates, you can go through the roof. There is the same situation in the United States and here in Trinidad and Tobago. There is a series of foreclosures. My other colleagues would deal with that.

I come to Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute. I would go quickly. This document is an Address given by Victor Hart on February 14 at the Queen's Park Oval—*Conference on the Planning, Design and Construction of Sporting and Recreational Facilities*. It is a very, very edifying and illuminating document. There are several points. I would raise one or two. Hart talks about the Chinese experience. He says that it was brought to Trinidad by the Prime Minister. The first place where they functioned effectively was at the Prime Minister's



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residence, costing \$150 million. He said that it is now \$200 million. Mr. Hart is critical of the fact that they are suing Chinese labour. He is saying that the Chinese labour is bringing a foreign design, style and culture and they displace local consultants and contractors and labour and they import materials that are usually available locally. He is saying that the Prime Minister is at fault. The Prime Minister is taking our country down the tube.

Mr. Hart says that in 2005 the Prime Minister brought to Parliament a White Paper entitled *Reform of the Public Sector Procurement Regime*. Today nothing has been done. When the Member for Diego Martin North/East talks about the Member for Tabaquite tendering papers that took four years, today nothing has been done on the Prime Minister's paper to reform the public sector procurement regime.

In the same document, Mr. Hart complains that there is no accountability. He says that there is no value for money and no transparency and he, of course, ends by saying that what happens today in this country, based on this Government, leaves a lot to be desired.

Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence to read one four-line paragraph. He says:

“From TTTI's perspective, we are concerned that, in the absence of the checks and balances that transparency and accountability bring to construction procurement, taxpayers money will be wasted and unscrupulous persons may enrich themselves at the expense of the less privileged in our society.”

The less privileged in the society are those who are in the red jerseys in Woodford Square. They are the ones for whom we speak today. They are the ones who are being robbed with the approval, support and condonation of the Prime Minister.

### **6.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, this document, the Policy Research Working Paper, Governance Matters VII: I just want to read two matters on page 35 and it says: “Significant Changes in WGI Estimates of Governance, 1998—2007”. In 1998, our governance score was 0.36; our governance level was 0.36; and our score today in 2007 is -0.22. What this is saying is that the country is poorly governed and poorly administered. This has happened over the last seven years under the Prime Minister where we have now reached -0.22 and going down. Barbados, by comparison, is 1.13. I want to repeat that our level of governance is -0.22 and Barbados is 1.13.

Mr. Speaker, I would just make one more point before I go to my favourite topic, which is the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. If there were no examples in the world of how to be frugal, how to spend money and how to take care of

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people, I would say okay that the Prime Minister does not know and, therefore, he has to reinvent, but in the world today there are several nations whose frugality is well known and the best of all is Norway.

In an article dated January 31, 2008 from the *Global Mail* in Canada, there was an article on Norway and it says “Frugal Norway saves for life after the boom”. Frugal Trinidad and Tobago spend everything now. So, what did Norway do? I read:

“Across Norway, the oil boom is being paralleled by record growth in the non-petroleum, export-driven economy. In November, Norway’s non-oil private-sector economy reported quarterly growth of 1.9 per cent, the equivalent of a 7.6-per-cent annual growth—an astonishing economic performance, beating even the growth of oil and gas exports.”

The article continues:

“Everywhere else in the world—including Canada—a boom in oil has led to a decline...”

We are talking here about our children and our children, children and theirs.

“if not a complete devastation, of conventional businesses.”

They said that this is known as the Dutch Disease and they have explained what the Dutch Disease is, but I would not go into that now. They said that in Britain the same thing has happened after Britain discovered North Sea oil in 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, the Norwegian model is the model used today. Most importantly, Norway long term savings account was launched 17 years ago. It currently holds US \$368.2 billion. Norway's account today holds US \$368.2 billion or US \$79,000 for each Norwegian citizen. By the end of the year, even with an oil price decline, it is projected that Norway's foreign reserve would be US \$500 billion or for each citizen US \$117,000.

What therefore is the management rule of Norway? I am going to tell the Minister of Finance this before she talks on September 22, 2008 but this article is going to help the Minister to see what Norway is doing and what we have failed to do. We behave as if oil is there forever and Ryder Scott does not exist. The Prime Minister, as the head of the Government, is the person who is most culpable of this. Spend all today for tomorrow we shall be here and who ketch, ketch! That is his motto. If, of course, a Prime Minister was ever guilty of a no confidence—

**Hon. Members:** He should be here.

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**Mr. J. Warner:** He is listening. That is the contempt the Prime Minister has for the country. There is a no confidence Motion in the Prime Minister and he walks out. That is the arrogance! I would tell you that time is longer than twine. My grandmother told me that who does not hear would feel. He believes that he could fly, and that he is God and he could walk on water.

**Mr. Ramnath:** And their sycophants have no problem with that.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Mr. Speaker, I repeat, time is longer than twine. Mr. Speaker, I now come to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. I am not concerned about the Minister of Sport and Youth affairs, the person, because he is new and, therefore, I think he would take time to learn. My concern is the Prime Minister who condones what he is doing, and for that reason I speak today. [*Desk thumping*] I hold no animosity against the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. I forgive him. He does not give football any money, so what? They have survived. That is not the issue, but the issue is the Prime Minister. What is the issue?

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that the Member for Mayaro, Mr. Winston Peters, asked a question which is No. 137 in April 2008 and the question is:

“With respect to the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago (SPORTT), could the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs state:

- (a) the total expenditure incurred to date by this special purpose company, all projects undertaken and completed for inspection from the inception of this entity to March 2008;
- (b) the individual cost for each project identified and the names of the various contractors; and
- (c) all ongoing projects, its estimated cost thus far, location and proposed completion dates?”

Mr. Speaker, that question was deferred for two weeks on May 23, 2008; for two more weeks on June 06, 2008; for two more weeks on June 27, 2008; and two more weeks on July 11, 2008 and to date it has not been answered. Today, I am going to give him the answer that he did not give the House. By the way, the Minister has the answer more than one month now, but since he did not give it to the House, I am going to give it to the House for him. I am going to sit if the Minister says that he does not have the answer, and I am going to tell the House that he did not have the answer. Why is he hiding it? I am going to take my seat, if he wants to talk and say that he did not have the answer a month ago. So, I would stand.

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Mr. Speaker, the first matter is the total expenditure to date by these special purpose companies on all projects undertaken amounts to \$154,134,477.08. The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs has spent to date roughly \$155 million. Of the projects completed, 27 of those projects amounted to \$58 million; ongoing projects, 36 of those amounted to \$96 million—I would go into more detail very shortly.

Mr. Speaker, the cost for each project and the names of the various contractors—I am not going into all, but Africa Recreation Ground, \$2 million; Balmain Recreation Ground, \$2.6 million; Gilbert Park, \$2.9 million—

**Hon. Member:** They did not do anything there.

**Mr. J. Warner:** I am coming to that just now. I have pictures—Mahogany Recreation Ground, \$1.6 million. There is also La Fillette Recreation Ground and Damarie Hill Recreation Ground and so on, and these grounds have been given as being completed. I have the cost for every project.

Mr. Speaker, there are several contractors who have been given these contracts. Of course, again, no tendering and many of them have party cards. I picked out the names of just five contractors and five of them have PNM party cards. Hugh Hackett got two projects amounting to \$4 million. He is a member of the PNM. Mr. Dwain Perez Persad got two contracts amounting to \$5.6 million. Mr. Speaker, I want you to remember the name Dwain Perez Persad, because I am coming just now to Damarie Hill Recreation Ground which he was paid for in full. He was paid \$3.3 million in full for Damarie Hill Recreation Ground, and I am going to show it to you just now; \$5.6 million. Mohan Selvon got \$5.1 million for two projects: Plaisance Park and Arima Sport and Youth Indoor Facility, and I am going to come to them just now. Darrel Pantin is a famous name, and he got three projects, \$3.2 million and Ravi Ramlagan got two projects for \$4.2 million. There are others, but I am going to talk about these five.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about Damarie Hill Recreation Ground. Damarie which was paid for in full, \$3.37 million. Mr. Speaker, this here is Damarie Hill Recreation Ground. [*Picture in hand*] Mr. Speaker, this picture was taken out yesterday, September 11, 2008. Look at the cricket nets! The cricketing nets have rails but no nets. The terrain for the bowlers to run up—they cannot even walk up because the grass is five feet high. Mr. Speaker, look at the bleachers! These are the bleachers in this day and age. That is “pera”.

**Mr. Ramnath:** I hope the URP people are looking at that.

**Mr. J. Warner:** They have spent \$3.3 million and this is what the Government is doing to produce top athletes. They went to Piarco and hugged up

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those four Olympians to blight them, and to say that it was the Government funding that helped them. They gave the Olympians a “cacada” a month ago. They barely gave Darryl Brown anything, and that helped the athletes to get the silver medal. These shameless people! That is Damarie Hill. I do not care. They could say what they want.

They have an email about me going around that Roy Keane say that I am a clown. I fought for Dwight Yorke to play for his country and Roy Keane could say what he wants. I am going to fight him wherever and whenever. If he tries it again he is going to pay a price. So, do not tell me about Roy Keane.

Mr. Speaker, I come now to Cocorite Recreation Ground. Before I go to that ground, let me go to the Arima Sport and Youth Indoor Facility. Member for Arima, I hate to do this to you, but I want to show you the facts, because you do not know. You are physically close to the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, but you do not know.

**Mr. Ramnath:** She is marginalized by the Prime Minister.

**Mr. J. Warner:** Mr. Speaker, this facility cost \$3.5 million and look at it! [*Picture in hand*] The fencing is to protect nothing. The savannah grass is very high. There is a security booth and no security.

Mr. Speaker, the Brian Lara Recreation Ground; in Santa Cruz, nothing! This is a disservice to Brian Lara. They have spoiled his name in Tarouba and this year—it was supposed to cost \$7.8 million and as of March 2008 they have spent \$2.7 million.

**Dr. Moonilal:** That is a pothole in it.

**Mr. J. Warner:** That is a pothole. Brian Lara, our hero. I can go on. With respect to the Paramin Recreation Ground, they have spent \$4.7 million. They did not have enough rails to build a fence and the fence fell down a couple days ago. This, of course, is in the constituency of the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**6.15 p.m.**

Mount St. Benedict tennis; you are playing with the Catholics, boy. The tennis court, to date they have spent \$342,000; look it here. It defies every OSH Act. The swimming pool, look it here, dengue. By September, they spent \$2.2 million and this contract has been stopped. Grande Riviere recreation ground has not escaped, look it here. Cocorite recreation ground, bush, \$3.3 million, bush, and the Prime Minister sees nothing is wrong with this, he is laughing, and the Member for Diego Martin North/East sees nothing is wrong with this.

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Mr. Speaker, I would go to the sports camps, which the Minister had last month and which she boasts about quickly. She of course, got equipment from the highest bidder. The camp showed a wanton wastage of State funds. The equipment they used there was inferior; there was no water. In one camp, they had 900 boxes of food for 200 persons. You talk about waste. The camps, I am saying to you, Mr. Speaker, were a disgrace, but I have to hustle and I will end by going to foreign affairs quickly, quickly.

I will just make two points quickly. The Prime Minister signed an MOU with the Prime Minister of Grenada. He is not concerned that he insulted us. He talked about political integration; he alone knows about it, not even his Cabinet until afterwards; he calls Mr. Thomas from Grenada.

The manifesto of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the Prime Minister of Grenada, Mr. Thomas, had nothing at all about political integration, but he comes here one month after election to sign an MOU with Mr. Manning, and that is what he is encouraging. If the Prime Minister, Mr. Manning, wants to help Grenada so much, I do not mind, but help those in Point Fortin first. Go in Point Fortin and help them by building hospitals and fixing Mahaica Oval; give them roads, bridges and so on, Madam Minister. Help our local Grenadians first, not these, they do not have any policy here for that.

Furthermore, I want to end by saying that the currency of this Parliament is the integrity of its Members and never in his history—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Are you going to give way?

**Mr. J. Warner:** I cannot, sorry, I just have two minutes—has the integrity been devalued. The oxygen of information in this country has been stifled. People are suffering, suffering. There seems to be no blackout period for suffering. People are asking, "Is it Manning or Mammon?" I hope and pray that we can find a way to rid ourselves of this mammon.

I thank you.

**The Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Emily Dick-Forde):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I came to the House today expecting some kind of excitement but all I can hear in my head is much ado about nothing.

I want to start the right way and say that the *Bible* tells us that in everything we must give thanks. So, I want to thank God; I want to thank the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East and the Opposition for giving me this

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opportunity to clear some issues in the House today. One thing I want to say too, is that we have been working so hard we really have not had a lot of time to communicate as clearly as we can today, so we want to thank you all. [*Interruption*] That is why we are here, to clear the air.

I want to quote something that is going to set the theme for what I am going to speak about this afternoon. You cannot lead the people if you do not love the people; you cannot save the people or assist if you will not serve them. [*Desk thumping*]

What I have identified since coming into service to the public is that the Opposition spends so much time on what we call symbolic levels of discourse. What that means? Symbolic levels of discourse means just raising a lot of alarms; alarm about this, alarm about that. You know what I realize after I did some analysis is that they are being true to their vision. In fact, I was told it is not a vision, it is a marble-eyed vision, which is civil disobedience; the country knows that vision. It is being articulated by you all, and that is what you do, symbolic levels of discourse, which provides the country with nothing but sensationalism, and that is what we heard today, allegations. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** Civil disobedience is your vision. So, you are seeking to distract us from the people's business—[*Interruption*] I know you all cannot handle this—and worse than that, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, we are in for the long haul I am told, so all Members will have 75 minutes; make your contribution while you are standing.

**Mr. Ramnath:** She is not a Member of the House, she should know her place.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, please, the Constitution entitles her to come to this House, so let us listen to her, please. [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me go back again, always making wild allegations and sensationalism in keeping with their marble-eyed vision of civil disobedience. And by so doing they seek to distract us from the people's business and worse than that, seeking to distract the people from accessing the good things that have been laid out for them.

Even worse, hindering the next level of human development in Trinidad and Tobago, which is responsible citizenship causing a lot of mayhem? Every time you look in the newspapers is some drama from them, and that is all part of civil

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disobedience. That is it, attacking the psyche of the country and that is what they are doing. It is all about national pride and a vision to see this nation and all its citizens prosper, they do not have it.

So, going into the international community for example—as the Member for Chaguanas West has admitted that he did—saying things about the country is a failing country, what kind of national pride is that, and how can you hope to govern a country that you are prophesying is going to fail. That is not love, you cannot serve the country if you do not have a love for it, and that is what is part of the problem with the Opposition.

So, instead of leading by example to do good and show people what they should do, what do the UNC Members do? They promote civil disobedience and that is expressed by their leader, and we have seen it in their behaviour. The leader is absent here because he has a commitment to that vision. That is why he is not here, because of his commitment to civil disobedience.

Civil disobedience, a vision that can promote welfare for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, I think not. Civil disobedience cannot promote the welfare of this country. Is that a vision of love or of one who is interested to serve, Mr. Speaker? I say no, it is not. Instead, what that vision promotes is no real meaningful sustained discourse in this country that can allow us to stop, think and seek to make improvements and that is what you want.

If you are talking about allegations of fraud in UDeCott, it is supposed to be discussed in a particular manner to seek improvement, but that is not what we are getting. Loud allegations, noises and in fact, I will show that a lot of what was said, especially by the Member for Chaguanas West just now, were untrue. In fact, I will say it now. That statement about the Green Fund having money paid out from it, I have gotten verification that no money has ever been paid out of the Green Fund. That is verified because no warrants have ever been prepared to pay money out of the Green Fund. It is an untruth.

Let me tell you how dangerous that untruth is. What it does is that it makes the business community feel that the money that is being taken from them to fund the Green Fund is being misappropriated and it is untrue. I will tell you all some things about the Green Fund in a little while, but I have to make that clear and I will repeat it. It is a dangerous story to tell because it makes the people feel that something is wrong where nothing is wrong, making up stories. I am not saying that you made it up, but somebody made it up and gave it to you. [*Interruption*] Somebody made it up, I do not want to say that; somebody made it up and gave it to you.



A number of things were said about UDeCott, both by the mover of the Motion and, of course, by the Member for Chaguanas West. As the line Minister with responsibility for UDeCott, I want to mention some things here. First thing, John Mair—my understanding is—resigned and was not fired. So, when you say that someone was fired—

**Hon. Member:** That is true?

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** Yes, he resigned and was not fired from the Board. Additionally, the entire board did not say what the Board reportedly said about Mr. Outridge, only Mr. Mair had that view about Mr. Outridge, so it is inaccurate to say so. Those are three inaccuracies already. The further issues concerning UDeCott, I have to take my time, I have 75 minutes, I understand, so let me make sure I get all in.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Senators have 10.

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** It is very interesting the discussion about tender rules not being followed and is an instance of corruption. The hon. Leader of Government Business made some statements concerning that. UDeCott has tender rules, which I have right here and one of the things about a board of directors is, it is not appointed to go slavishly from a matrix that people tick off; a board of directors has to use judgment in coming to a decision.

If it is any issue with the particular situation, where they said that Mr. Outridge did something and there was bid rigging, first of all, there was no evidence of bid rigging, the issue is that there was a problem with who was the chosen contractor. The tender rules in the company were followed and the board made a decision. The board, I understand, was not involved in that whole process of arriving at who had the lowest bid or anything like that.

So, when we hear statements being made about the tender rules and so on, it is that UDeCott has tender rules; UDeCott did, in fact, abort that particular one that was said to be problematic, and to raise it again and again as if there was something still unclear, I think it is seeking to mislead.

Someone said—I think it was the Member for Tabaquite—that two Ministers, myself and Minister Imbert, said that UDeCott promised to make statements in response to the accusations that were made in the House against the UDeCott concerning CH and Sunway. What I have to clarify and put into the public record is that, UDeCott never made any promise to the public, it was the Ministers who were in discussions with UDeCott and we saw the statements and felt they were

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good to go, but the decision is really the UDeCott's to decide how they actually want to represent themselves in that accusation that was made.

In addition, my initial instincts about this was that the commission of enquiry was announced and therefore those issues would be dealt with at the commission of enquiry. I have had backings for that position as well. If UDeCott, which has a management team and a board, decide that they are going to handle that in the commission of enquiry then that is what it will be.

The point that is being made all the time, you see it in the newspapers, you hear it in the House that the UDeCott has the second largest purse in the country; that is what was said here. Also, people say they have access to the Treasury and all sorts of things, but that is not so. UDeCott is a company that functions off its own profits. The last time the UDeCott received any direct funds from the Government was in, I think they said the second or third quarter of 2006, but sometime in 2006 and the money they received was a grant to assist with their administrative expenses of \$250,000, so, there is no line to any treasury that the UDeCott has.

In fact that money was stopped in 2006, because the line Ministry, the Ministry of Planning and Development, determined that the corporation was profitable and could meet their own costs and expenses, so the UDeCott does not have a line in with the Treasury. Any funds that the UDeCott accesses is through its fees and payments for development works that it would have done. I am not going to talk about CH Development and Sunway as I said because that is something that the commission of enquiry will cover.

### **6.30 p.m.**

The Member for Chaguanas West listed a whole set of UDeCott projects which to me was a positive thing. I did not understand the point of listing them all out. It means that the UDeCott is able to deliver and work on a whole number of projects and that is why they were set up. The fact that they have some projects that are not up-to-date or having problems with some projects is not the way that they should be judged at all. This company has done quite a lot, but I want to make some important points here. Firstly, Genivar came in around the same time as Calder Hart is another untruth that adds up to number four. The fourth untruth that I have identified. [*Interruption*] He said money was spent out of the Green Fund, which is not true, I explained that.

Mr. Calder Hart worked under the UNC administration. In fact, Mr. Calder Hart told me—and this was from since early when I came in as Minister dealing

with housing—that he worked with the Member for Couva North on a housing policy. That was about in 2000, they began the drafting of a housing policy in 2000. Mr. Calder Hart and the Member for Couva North. *[Interruption]* So he was here long before Genivar came, and I want to list some of the projects that the UDeCott was supposed to implement during the UNC term, but was only started under the PNM term. So, I hear somebody said “tabanca” behind there earlier. I do not know if it is “tabanca” they have why they are attacking the UDeCott, but here are some of the UDeCott—I will talk about your vision just now again—projects that were supposed to be implemented under the UNC but only started under the PNM: the Port of Spain International Water Front Complex; the port; Edinburgh 500; the interchange; Customs and Excise; Chancery Lane. Those were supposed to be projects. You see that is the problem. It is not enough to have a vision to run a country; you have to have more than that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You must also have the money.

**Mr. Imbert:** You were too busy collecting two salaries.

**Dr. Moonilal:** That is me, guilty. *[Crosstalk]*

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** So, UDeCott has made a significant contribution to this country and I find this quite unfortunate that the discussion about UDeCott continues to be around a whole set of negative things, again, as I said, symbolic levels. Symbolic levels of discourse, no real discussion about what the issues are. Symbolic!

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about one or two of the projects: the Hyatt Regency Conference Room and Hotel was started and completed under the PNM. It opened its doors on January 29, 2008 with 428 rooms and 43,000 square feet of meeting space. *[Desk thumping]* Do not clap yet, wait; wait for the real stuff here. I will go to the best part first and then—*[Interruption]* Yeah, yeah, clap. Oh, you will clap twice.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** This Hyatt Regency, year-to-date occupancy is 40 per cent, and that is average. Its operating profits for 2008, it has achieved it—\$42,248,061 *[Desk thumping]* and its year-to-date revenue was \$87,878,120 *[Desk thumping]* and they expect profitability in 2009, a year earlier than projected for such a costly project. *[Desk thumping]* For such a costly project, for you to come in with revenues so early, within a year of operation, that is a major accomplishment, and the UDeCott was able to oversee that project and bring it in, in a good time for major events, in fact, let me call some of the events. So far the

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Hyatt Regency has been able to host the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Investment Conference in April 2008, where approximately 600 delegates were in attendance; the Institute of Chartered Accountants of the Caribbean in June 2008, approximately 800 delegates. I wonder if they have ever been to the Hyatt Regency to see the facility that the UDeCott oversaw for this country?

**Hon. Member:** They went.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** They were there? [*Interruption*] Florida Caribbean Cruise Association—hear this one, the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association, October 2008 coming up, approximately 800 delegates; the Caribbean Shipping Association, again, October 2008, approximately 300 delegates. We have the fantastic Summit of the Americas coming in April 2009 where approximately 2,500 delegates will be in attendance.

Mr. Speaker, I have to stop here just a little and talk about this: Threats to undermine the country's hosting of these events, again, another sign of a lack of love or any care for this nation. Why do you want to govern a nation that you keep tearing down, not just in the public's eye but in the international arena? When they talk about our ratings would be low, this whole thing about our governance ratings being low, a big part of that is what is said in Parliament, what is said outside of Parliament by important persons in society.

When they go outside and malign the country, that is why people would see the country as not having sound governance. In particular, the comparison to Barbados is most interesting. No matter what side Members of Parliament sit or even Senators sit in the Barbados Parliament they never bad talk their country anywhere else.

**Dr. Moonilal:** We do not bad talk the country.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** Yes, he said it is a failing country. He said it is a failing country and he said it outside out of the country. He admitted it. It is in the record.

Mr. Speaker, then the Caribbean Association of National Telecommunications Organizations will be having a meeting in July 2009, approximately 700 delegates; the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting—I am not sure if the Opposition understands how important these meetings are—November 2009, approximately 5,000 delegates; the ELearning Conference—[*Interruption*] You all are the same people who are saying that the hon. Prime Minister oversaw all of these things and this is what he oversaw as well. The development of a fantastic hotel and conference facility that is up and running. [*Interruption*]—University of the West Indies 2009,

approximately 350 delegates, and finally, the UN AIDS Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and Conference Rooms in 2010, approximately 1,000 delegates. Those are the highlights for just one facility developed by the UDeCott.

A number of things we hear from the Opposition, I do not think they understand what type of company the UDeCott is, it is not a construction company; it is a development company, they provide project management and oversight for the projects.

One of the things I noted as well, is that there were a number of ideas that the UNC had when they were in power, a few of them had a lot of ideas and somehow the PNM Government had to come in 2002 and put systems and procedures in place in order to execute them. They were not coming off the ground. The Green Fund is an example. The Green fund is a great idea by the UNC but no process to ensure transparency and accountability. [*Interruption*] What I realize, after going through the history of the Green Fund—I am not going to take the House into all that detail—the Green Fund was a good idea to take 0.1 per cent of profit and accumulate it. Right now it is about \$1.46 billion, no money has been spent out of it and two days ago—[*Interruption*] I do not know what he was talking about, it was an untruth that money has been spent out of the Green Fund. No money has been spent as yet; however, I am pleased to put into the public record here which we already announced to the media, that the Green Fund is up and running now. It took the PNM a number of years to put in place a whole system of transparency, and accountability. What I realize is that the UNC when they were in power could not think things through and therefore they cannot govern. [*Interruption*] You could not think things through.

The Green Fund was launched this week with a fully thought-through process; it fulfils the mandate for the Green Fund; it builds community spirit and upholds integrity and the law. Nobody can get money out of the Green Fund unless they go through the rigorous processes that we have put in place. It took a number of years. In fact, the hon. Member for Arima would have spent quite a lot of time working on the Green Fund, trying to get it ready since last year, but it was that much work. Regulations had to be put in place, a whole set of things. So as you say, Member, excellent initiative but no ability to carry it through, so we had to bring it through to fruition and put some more life into it.

So, rather than offer ideas and hope, what we keeping hearing is a lot of noise, confusing the people and trying to confuse the Government but we are not confused; we are focused. Let me tell you why we are focused, because we have a Prime Minister, the hon. Member for San Fernando East, who has a vision which

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he released to the people for consideration, deliberation and development. [Interruption] Do not bother with them, that is the only word they know. So, on the other hand, we have a vision and not just a vision—it is not a PNM vision, it is a national vision—and the vision which we call 2020 it is not a PNM or a Patrick Manning vision, it is a national vision. I heard somebody say that we took that name from Malaysia, which defies understanding—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** It defies understanding that you would say you take a name like Vision 2020 from Malaysia. You are in the 21st Century, there is a year coming up called 2020; 2020 means perfect sight. Everybody in the world should have a vision called Vision 2020, but somebody said we got it from Malaysia.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am sure it is Diego Martin West must be said that. [Inaudible]

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** No, no, somebody from the Opposition who said we got it from Malaysia. [Interruption]

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about Vision 2020 which the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment has responsibility to report on in terms of achievement. The Vision 2020 was developed through wide national consultation led by private and public sector. It was not just a PNM or party vision; it was led—and I want to read out some of this vision and let the public compare this to the vision called civil disobedience. Let us compare civil disobedience to Vision 2020.

The vision statement for Trinidad and Tobago is that by the year 2020 Trinidad and Tobago will be a united, resilient, productive, innovative and prosperous nation with a disciplined, caring fun-loving society—[Interruption]—I am sure you all never heard this before—comprising healthy—[Interruption] This is the Motion, this is the motion—happy and well—educated people and built on the enduring attributes of self-reliance, respect, tolerance, equity and integrity in which every citizen has equal opportunities to achieve his or her fullest potential. [Interruption] Way more words and way more meaningful words than civil disobedience; all citizens enjoy a high quality of life, and this is the vision for the country.

Mr. Speaker, if you do not have a vision; if you aim for nothing you get nothing. So, if you aim for civil disobedience, you get that; and if you aim for a vision that sees all citizens enjoying a high quality of life, that is what you will get. Where quality health care is available to all and where safe, peaceful,

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environmentally-friendly communities are maintained, all citizens are assured of a sound relevant education system—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:**—tailored to meet the human resource needs of a modern, progressive, technologically advancing nation, optimum use is made of all resources of the nation. This is the vision of your nation, Member for Chaguanas West, listen to it: The family as the foundation of the society contributes to its growth, development and stability; there is respect for the rule of law, and human rights—and this is the part, I have this part bold—there is respect for the rule of law and human rights—and I have it there for a reason—and the promotion of the principles of democracy, the diversity and creativity of all its people are valued and nurtured.

That is the vision that has been developed under the careful watch of the leader of the People's National Movement, the hon. Member for San Fernando East and of the Government. So it is very difficult to understand how a Motion of no confidence could be moved by the Member for Tabaquite, when in fact the vision that his leader promotes, and I will keep saying it, because I do not know where his leader is. Where is his leader? So I want to ask, in whom does the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite have no confidence? I do not think it is in the Prime Minister. So, the Opposition Members in this House have been left headless to face a bunch of new, brilliant, hard-working people, alongside seasoned and grinning veterans.

**6.45 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, their leader was thrown out for bad behaviour and they, especially the mover of the Motion, really want to dethrone him again, so I am told. The Member for Tabaquite devised this Motion in my mind, as a way to open up his absent bad behaved leader, who is the obvious target to get some licks from us over here. He has exposed his leader, that is what this Motion is actually doing. When I thought about it, because I kept saying why would you move a Motion like this. It does not make sense and I think it is, so that to expose the leader to licks. It is a conspiracy.

I would show that a vision held by a group informs their action. This is a fact, the vision you have, informs your action. I would show what kinds of political action resulted from the vision of civil disobedience.

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

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** No, no. You have not heard the actions yet, you heard the vision. Listen to the actions that flow from civil disobedience as a vision. You built schools, I understand. I was not here. You built schools on leaking gas fissures, that was what I was told. It is still there?

**Mr. Peters:** Yes.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** On leaking gas fissures. They did not just do it, but against the advice of all the technical agencies. So when they talk about the hon. Members did not listen to the advice of the Central Bank, I think gas fissures—I have that one—building schools in heavy industrial estates, against the advice of all technical agencies. They built schools which fell down, I understand—Mayaro Composite. Work did however cease—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** That is not so.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** So I heard. It did not fall?

**Mr. Peters:** Chin Lee built that.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** Whoever. [*Laughter*]—on this side—who built the school in Mayaro? We built it? It is a mistake, something is wrong in Mayaro. [*Laughter*] When I saw this one. [*Crosstalk*]

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

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** Right, that is what I said. No, let me put this in the public records. They built a school which fell down, Mayaro Composite, and I understand that the PNM—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** Mr. Speaker, let me make a correction there, please. That school was built in the early '70s by a man named Chin Lee Company and it was rectified under the NAR government. They are now doing some work on it again because of old age, but the school was never, ever—The Mayaro Composite School was built by Chin Lee, it fell down and could not be used for years until the NAR came into power and fixed it. So let me just fix it for you.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** Mr. Speaker, what I will do is to verify this and I will make sure and bring it back. But I got this from the technicians who—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:**—will know that that is so. This one, placed a school upstairs a rum shop. That one I know is true. The thing I really



want to come to is the one that I think—do not be saying at last because you do not even know what I am coming with. What I highlighted was the whole idea of law-abiding citizens and one of the things we keep finding especially in the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment is that you have legal minds who sit on the other side, who promote squatting.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something about squatting.

**Mr. Imbert:** Member for, Member for.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** No, no, the Member for Tabaquite and the Member for Siparia and with friends from the other place. What I want to say, is the Act that outlined the role of the Land Settlement Agency was developed under the UNC, Act No. 25 of 1998. Now, that Act had a number of intentions. There were many intentions in that Act with respect to squatters and the main one was really to give people who were squatting, better living conditions. And so, a major part of the Act was really to ensure that—I am going to read it. The preamble of the Act says the following were the stated objectives of the Act:

- the improvement of the living conditions of everyone in the society of Trinidad and Tobago;
- the creations of access to adequate and affordable shelter;
- the provision and promotion of security of tenure;
- the improvement of living standards and the fostering of healthy development;
- the prevention of squatting by providing an alternative solution in the form of land for the landless;
- the development of sustainable settlements; and
- the regularization of certain squatter settlements.

Mr. Speaker, having passed that Act and having itself, that administration, done some curtailment where they broke down some houses from a place called Spring Village and they did that even though Spring Village was on the Schedule, which means they were not supposed to break houses there. That was done. That is the information that I have. But what I want to outline is that, in seeking to fulfil the mandates of Act No. 25 of 1998, the current administration, the PNM government, we find ourselves up against the very persons who piloted this Act and brought it to Parliament. I do not know the little green Standing Orders book

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too good, but I do not want to—yes, I do not know it that well—impute improper motives, so I would lay out the facts. Here are the facts. You have laid out intentions to improve the living conditions.

They set up the LSA Act which is supposed to do infrastructural works and to organize the living space of squatters in a way that gives them a better quality of life, and every time the LSA goes into a squatting community—we have Members who have legal education for decades. Some of them have been lawyers for decades. Cannot be 50 years—they hinder the work of the Land Settlement Agency using the very Act that they piloted. Why can they do that? Because the Act has a lot of problems, and somehow, they seem to take advantage of the loopholes in the Act that they created. So, in seeking to provide adequate and affordable shelter to all in Trinidad and Tobago, we come up against the persons who piloted an Act, giving endless trouble to the Land Settlement Agency to fulfil the mandates that the Act itself has given them.

We have identified a number of problems with the Act. There are endless problems with the Act which we have to go and rectify. How many Acts would we have to rectify from that period?

**Mr. Imbert:** Approximately 50.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** Approximately 50 Acts the Leader of Government Business says. So we have to go and do a major, major set of work on this Act because it does not provide the kind of protection for the Land Settlement Agency that it should.

One of the other things I want to say is that by constantly challenging the LSA; by consistently hindering people from getting regularization and getting their Certificate of Comfort, what happens is that they are actually disenfranchising the people. So that is why I have to go back to my original theme, that you cannot save or assist people if you do not serve them. These people are not being served properly by the Members opposite, and when you bring a Motion of no confidence, it cannot be the Member for San Fernando East; it has to be in somebody over there because you all are the ones who are hindering the population or segments of the population. In fact, the ones who are least able to help themselves, those are the ones that you mislead with all sorts of information about they have rights to State property. How can they have rights to State lands that they went and squat on? So when you make statements like that, it defies a division of a society that respects the rule of law. In fact, what they do in going and supposedly helping squatters, is actually to promote civil disobedience.

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Mr. Speaker, the PNM government did fulfil and continues to pursue our commitment to provide all of the things that we would have listed under Vision 2020 in terms of goals. I want to speak about housing because you would recall that I am always brought here to talk about housing, housing, housing all the time, so let me talk about housing. In Vision 2020, the vision for housing is that all citizens would have access to adequate and affordable housing. The objectives are to construct 8,000 housing units annually.

I had a look through in preparation for the budget and for this Motion. I looked through the budget speeches from the UNC period and I saw that under 1999—you must read it, it is very interesting reading—the extent of the housing initiative. It was a big announcement.

**Hon. Member:** How many houses were built?

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** The extent of the housing programme in 1999 was to sell out the rental units—not to build—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Built by the PNM.

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** Yes, built by the PNM, and thereby increase home ownership. That was one of the big announcements in the budget. Now, I want to explain something about rental units. Rental units meet the basic housing needs of people who will not be able for a little while to even get a mortgage or to own their own homes. Therefore, it is very unwise to sell rental units and claim that you are giving people home ownership. Rental units tend to be very small apartments that provide very basic shelter. But proper shelter nevertheless is adequate shelter for citizens and we have found that we have quite a number of citizens who are only able to afford the very low rents that the Government charged, between \$100 and \$350. The ceiling is \$350 a month in rent. The big plan in 1999 under the UNC government was to sell those units in order to increase home ownership. I think that is deplorable.

There was also an intention to build 190 houses and then I saw something about 260 units. We have constructed—I have not gotten the final figure, so I would say, we have constructed between 2002 to present, well over 26,000 units. I did not say 27,000 because I saw that figure, but I wanted to be sure. So to make sure that I am not misleading anybody, I will say well over 26,000 units.

**Mr. Imbert:** How many units?

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** In all I think it is 461 or 400. We have a number of initiatives and these are not just ideas, these are actual programmes that

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are ongoing to increase the number of households who can benefit from the home improvement grant to 1,500 people annually and we have achieved those to increase the number of home improvement subsidies. These grants and subsidies make a big difference for persons who own homes for approximately 30 or 35 years. They need these grants to help repair their roofs and to repair aspects of their homes and to increase the number of new homes subsidies to 1,000 annually.

Mr. Speaker, we have achieved quite a number—I now have the proper figures here. Over 32,500 housing units were started since 2003. I wanted to be sure. I want to say something about housing and the hon. Member for San Fernando East.

When I came into this service to the public, the Member for San Fernando East explained not just to myself, but to all of us how important housing is. One of the things the Member for San Fernando East has done is to give us a proper understanding of what it means to serve the public. So even though all Members of Parliament are representatives, all Senators are also sent to oversee constituencies and when the MPs go to their constituency offices, especially on a Thursday afternoon, all Senators go to a constituency as well to meet with people. That is service.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much Minister, for giving way. Of course I am following your argument very carefully. You are saying that Senators in the PNM administration also go to constituencies, but whose constituencies do you go to? Your colleagues?

**Sen. The Hon. Dr. E. Dick-Forde:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for San Fernando East is way wiser than that and he is way more concerned about the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, than to send us into constituencies with representatives already. [*Desk thumping*]

**7.00 p.m.**

We go to constituencies that are not represented by the PNM Members of Parliament; it is not a secret, it is known by everyone. [*Crosstalk*]

I want to explain my point; they are not going to distract me. I want to explain the importance of housing. When we went to these constituencies and met with persons, at first it used to be 90 per cent, now I have to say that about 99 per cent of the persons who come, not just to me, but to all the MPs, their concern is housing. They are not just saying that they need houses, they actually need houses; it is a dire need.

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One of the things that the hon. Member for San Fernando East with his vision for housing talks about is 8,000 units built by the Government and 2,000 by the private sector, which is 10,000 a year; his vision was 100,000 units in 10 years. That vision is actually directly related to the needs of the population; it is directly related to the needs of the citizens of this country.

If you aim low, you will achieve little; if you aim high, you will achieve much. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, 260 units plus the selling of rentals units so persons could get homeownership. It is really embarrassing; it means that there was a disconnect between the UNC administration and the needs of the people, because if you could build 160 units, it means you did not know what was happening to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member for San Fernando East and the PNM Government have a proper understanding of the needs of the people, and so we would push ourselves, work hard. In fact, I will tell you something; I had to tell the hon. Prime Minister that I did not remember working so hard in all my life since coming into service to the public, because we work tirelessly to fulfil—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** What were you doing before?

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** You would like to know that—the vision for the country, the national vision, and to bring to realization all the projects that we have outlined.

I have all confidence in the leader of the PNM and the Leader of the Government, because he has properly tasked us, he has properly oriented us to do what he knows needs to be done for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is not just his idea, because when we talk to the people, we know what their needs are. If you do not sit and wait and listen to people and their concerns, you would not know what they need.

I had a letter from the Member for Siparia come to the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment, and I do not know if that was supposed to be an indication of representation, but the letter had—I cannot say now because I cannot remember the number—100 names, or something like that, of persons who they wanted us to find out if their subsidies were ready. If you are serving people, one of the things that an MP would do would be to focus on your most urgent cases, your emergency cases; you would not send a whole lump list of 100 and something people, or how much ever was sent. That was not an example of representation.

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I get letters all the time from MPs who outline what their emergency cases are. The only way you know what is an emergency case is if you take time to listen to people and find out what their needs are. I am suspicious about the extent to which the people are being represented properly by the UNC Members opposite. There is a need to spend time to listen to the needs of the people. So we were not impressed by that letter at all; we felt that the Member did not understand what it meant to represent. Represent means that you are going to spend some time listening to the people and finding out what their needs are. [*Interruption*]

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

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. K. Swaratsingh*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the House.

I outlined a number of the achievements under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister. The Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment is a ministry with a wide ranging set of activities. We house the Town and Country Planning Division, the Central Statistical Office and we oversee the environment, which mean we have quite a lot to do with respect to policy. The one that takes up a good bit of time is housing.

I want to explain something about Planning, Housing and the Environment as a Ministry. It provides an amazing amount of synergy and it makes for a more efficient running of the Government, and ensures that, indeed, our housing programme is properly contextualized in a sustainable communities context. So, for example, I think in the past the Housing Ministry would have had to pull persons from different places in order to get things done; now we have everybody under us: we have Town and Country and the Environmental Management Authority (EMA), and we work together to provide the right type of housing. In fact, we are going to see some changes in the way our housing programme is executed.

One of the other things that the hon. Prime Minister has tasked us with is to improve governance in all areas. The end result really is to ensure that the service we provide to the public is also streamlined and efficient, and especially cost effective.

We hear about no confidence in a Prime Minister who leads his Cabinet and all the Members in government to work hard to make sure and deliver, and it is not like we are coerced, but we are encouraged. We have the right environment.

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Anybody who understands about management and leadership knows that leaders lead from in front. The hon. Prime Minister works hard and so too do all the Ministers; we all work very hard to ensure that we deliver the things that we are supposed to under our particular ministries.

One of the other things I want to explain about the housing programme, and this one is very important, is the programme around helping the most vulnerable in society to achieve the acquisition of, or to be able to go into adequate and affordable housing. There are so many people who are unable to access homes, even with the 2 per cent subsidies for persons working for \$8,000 or less a month. We have seen as well that quite a number of persons, even working for over \$8,000, still cannot afford mortgages outside of that 2 per cent. So the rent-to-own programme was devised. That programme actually assists a number of persons, who would not normally be able to acquire their homes, to be able to do. We meet them all the time in the constituency offices.

People are very grateful, and not just that, but sometimes we have meetings with persons who actually challenge us to revise the housing policy for them to be able to access their homes, because some persons are still not able to. We have a lot of poverty housing in Trinidad and Tobago, and in order to address that one of the initiatives, I believe, we need, is to partner with the private sector to help them to help us improve communities where you have persons in very dire straits. I have met, at least, two of them in Couva North; two persons in very poor living conditions that require a significant amount of innovation to assist them.

Mr. Speaker, as I close I want to speak to the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* Before I close, as I heard the hon. Member for Chaguanas sigh, it reminds me to repeat the things that were untrue. It is not true that Genivar came here at the same time with Mr. Hart. It is not true that the Green Fund has money spent out of it. It is untrue that Mr. Mair was fired, he resigned from the board. *[Interruption]* Do you mean the Mayaro one? Technicians and the Minister here said that the Mayaro school was built under your watch. *[Crosstalk]* I am not pulling it back. We pull it back only if it is proved differently. I believe the Minister. *[Crosstalk]*

I want to speak to the nation and to our citizens. We had a lot of *Bible* reading earlier from the Motion mover and, again, even the *Bible* reading that the Motion mover made was incorrect as well; the hon. Prime Minister showed that. I do not know how much more incorrect information we would be getting from Members over there, but I advise my colleague that they check every bit of fact that they try to throw over here.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** What about Calder Hart family?

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** They will answer in the commission of enquiry. The commission of enquiry will answer that.

In the same way that Joshua threw out a challenge to the children of Israel, he gave them the choice and he asked them to choose who they would follow. In the same way I ask the people of Trinidad and Tobago: Which leaders would you have confidence in, the ones with a marble eyed vision of civil disobedience or the ones who have a vision for you to see prosperity, to grow in a safe, law-abiding society, able to fulfil your potential in every area of human activity, regardless of class, race, creed, physical or mental ability? Will you follow men and women with a track record for a lack of integrity and an inability to follow through with discipline? I want to repeat that, because if you disturb me I will have to repeat everything. *[Laughter]* *[Crosstalk]* Trust me, I will repeat everything. Mr. Speaker, do not even tell them to behave; I have time.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is very unusual for a Member of the other place to ask for protection, but I think the Member is asking for a little protection. Please, afford her the courtesy of that.

**Sen. The Hon. E. Dick-Forde:** You do not want to hear the truth, so I am asking the good citizens, like Joshua asked the Israelites: Will you follow men and women with a track record for a lack of integrity—we heard the whole story—and an inability to follow through with discipline, to create institutions and systems to meet the needs of the nation? They had the idea of the Green Fund but could not do it. They did not know what people needed in terms of housing, so they wanted to sell the rental units, which people needed, at that price, and the big budget announcement was 260 units to be built, versus 32,500. Would you follow leaders who have demonstrated the ability to think, organize and work towards improving systems and providing an environment where all could access a good life?

The choice might sound easy, but that is the vision and we are working towards it. If everybody works towards it and not bad talk the country in international arenas, we would get there. *[Interruption]* He admitted that he had talked the country; he said that we were a failing country.

The choice might sound easy, but I know it is not, because of that thing I mentioned, symbolic discourse of the Opposition, and others who seek—*[Interruption]* yes, symbolic discourse. I know what I am talking about. It is not like teaching erudite. You said that you were going to teach us erudite, that is not right.

So the choice might sound easy, but I know it is not, because of the symbolic discourse of the Opposition and others, who seek to distract citizens from what is



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right. Wrong can never be right, and when citizens determine in their minds to choose to do the right thing at all times, the vision for the nation—that is it, they cannot respond to vision—to be a developed nation will be achieved.

Mr. Speaker, I have all confidence in the hon. Member for San Fernando East and in my colleagues, that we can and have and will continue to make a positive difference in this country. [*Laughter*] We have very bad behaved persons in here.

We reject the Motion that was filed today. In fact, more than just reject it, I think it has been dismissed already by the Leader of Government Business. So I invite all my colleagues to just recite all the goods things that we have done, because there is really no Motion to address.

Thank you.

**7.15 p.m.**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on a very important matter on a very historic occasion in the life of the Parliament where the Member for Tabaquite has presented the national community with a very timely opportunity to discuss and pronounce on the performance of the Head of Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is timely, it is relevant, and I think this nation would express gratitude to the Member for Tabaquite and the United National Congress for putting this matter on the national agenda. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how to begin to respond to the last speaker. I want to tell her, as a Hindu with a big “H”—[*Interruption*] I do not want to discuss the big “C” at all, that might be unparliamentary as well.

Mr. Speaker, in the Hindu religion, we believe in the power of what is right, we also believe that one should have courage to do one's duty and it is in the *Bhagavad Gita* that when Krishna is speaking to Arjuna, in fact, I would invite the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment privately of course, to attend a Ganesh Yagna with me in Oropouche East, anywhere in Barrackpore or Penal. The Minister may learn a bit of the Hindu religion which would complement her wider knowledge clearly.

Krishna is telling Arjuna that duty requires courage and courage requires that one should search their soul and find the moral authority to do what is right regardless of the consequences to you. [*Desk thumping*] I thought I would introduce that aspect of aradhama before I begin my contribution.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Because they are so narrow minded.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And as a Hindu with a big “H”, I believe strongly in the power of dharma and my duty, and this is why when I present in this House, I speak without fear or favour; it is because the power of Hinduism is within me.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Therefore, you are a visionary.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment found herself in a position where she sought to defend a lot of things; the ministry, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Calder Hart. The Minister made some remarks about the administration of the United National Congress, but admitted she was not here. And it is not necessary for me at this time to respond to all the matters raised by the goodly Minister.

I will tell the Minister the vision of the UNC, but I want to tell her to search in her heart and do what is right and treat the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago on the basis of equality, fairness and justice. [*Desk thumping*] And tonight I want to speak about love, a topic I seldom discuss.

The Minister raised this matter of love but there is the issue of compassion, and breaking down people's homes is not an example of compassion nor love. You can hide behind a law book, you could hide behind a policy and you could hide behind the Land Settlement Agency, but breaking down the homes of citizens of this country particularly on a Friday says nothing of your capacity to love or show compassion. I wanted to say that.

The Minister also had some remarks about the UNC administration and I want to tell her with great respect that you are here today and gone tomorrow. That is the nature of this business. I had a sad observation earlier, when in the Public Gallery I saw a very distinguished former Minister who acted as Prime Minister on several occasions and was now relegated as it were, to the gallery of strangers.

**Mr. Speaker:** You must not refer to members in the Public Gallery. I know you are referring to a former Minister, but if she is in the Public Gallery, you should refrain from that.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I am not referring to any Member; I am saying the former acting Prime Minister was in the Public Gallery. I think you understand that well. It reminded me of that important lesson that in political life, you are really here today and gone tomorrow. And as the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, you will one day have to look back and ask: When I was the Minister how many houses did I build? Did I give them out on the basis of equality, fairness and

justice? When I was the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, did I demolish people's homes? Did I cause human beings like myself to weep? Their tears do not go down in a drain, their tears and their blood fall on you.

I have met citizens of this country and from Oropouche and other areas who are crying because the LSA sent by the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, authorized by the Government would destroy their humble dwelling homes and take their furniture—and they have the gall to seize their furniture and go back and sell you it later in the evening. That is what they do, and they do it under the very distinguished Minister Dick-Forde.

Mr. Speaker, eventually the Minister has to face her conscience. The Minister made a reference sent by the distinguished Member for Siparia and said the Member sent a letter with 100 names for homes, but they complained that they were not getting applicants from areas in our constituency.

*[Sen. The Hon. Dick-Forde stands]*

I will give way in a moment. I was saying that the Minister made a statement that the Member for Siparia sent a letter with 100 names, but the Member for Oropouche East sent a letter with eight names and I got the same response the Member for Siparia got, which is nothing.

**Mr. Ramnath:** I sent with one name and I got no reply.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** So whether it is 100 names, eight names, or one name is not the issue.

**Hon. Dick-Forde:** Will the Member give way?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I told you I will, you do not have to push me, you do not have to rush me. If you have somewhere to go you can go. Mr. Speaker, it matters not how many names, the issue is the action.

I have known citizens who were evicted from their homes, their landlord threw them out with their children and baggage and I have written to the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment begging—not for a house—for a temporary apartment unit for such persons. The distinguished Member for Oropouche East, elected by over 10,000 citizens in Oropouche East, and in this Parliament representing over 50,000 citizens, the good people of Oropouche, and that certifiable lunatic is talking about—Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that, I withdraw that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Not only must you withdraw it, you need to apologize to the House for that one.

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**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I apologize to all certifiable lunatics.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I apologize to the Member.

**Mr. Speaker:** You can do better than that, please.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** It is much too early in my contribution. I apologize to the Member for Diego Martin North/East for referring to him as a certifiable lunatic. I am sorry.

Mr. Speaker, so the Member for Oropouche East, elected and representing over 50,000 citizens is not here by any senatorial appointment or high-handed manner as the Member suggested.

Madam Minister, you wanted to respond, you may do so now please.

**Hon. Dick-Forde:** Thank you for giving way long after, but thank you. Mr. Speaker, it was not houses that the Member for Siparia sent for, it was subsidies which is very different, and with respect to his eight names; when we get names from Members of Parliament, even on this side, we have to make sure that the people are indeed special or emergency cases and then we pursue it. And we contact the persons whose names we receive, and eventually when we come to some decision, we would contact the Members. And I do not recall getting any names from the Member for Couva South. I just want to correct those things that are being put out as if they were truth.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I really do not want to engage the Minister in that matter, but I hear you.

The Minister also raised the issue of the vision of the United National Congress, and we are here today to look at the performance of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, but they stand and talk about 1995, 2001 and the UNC.

The UNC had a vision which was for Trinidad and Tobago to become a quality nation with a knowledge-based economy that brings prosperity and opportunity for all, and I repeat for all not for some and not for party-card members. That was our vision. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, you know if it were in my power to give Members of Parliament the job of a Hansard Reporter I would do it because the Hansard Reporter sits in the middle and has to take what the Member is saying and there is a lot of crosstalk.

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I want to alert all Members of Parliament on both sides that there is a power in the Standing Orders that you can only speak if I call upon you to speak and if you behave in such a way whereby you speak seated, when you want to speak standing, I could refuse to recognize you. So please, have some respect for the Hansard Reporter, have some respect for the House, and to the public.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was merely responding to the Minister's critique of the UNC and its vision, and I will continue on that line briefly.

The United National Congress had a vision for this society to develop as a knowledge-based one with a globally competitive technologically driven and diversified economy that will sustain full employment, growing prosperity, equal opportunity, a secure life, social cohesion and the highest standard of living for all citizens. That was our vision.

But people speak as if you are here today and the PNM has a vision and nobody else has a vision. We spoke of a diversified economy of social cohesion. Our party is founded on certain fundamental pillars; national unity, social justice, prosperity for all. That is what we are about. That is why we passed an Equal Opportunity Act that the Privy Council had to sanction so that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago can get equality. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we did it. That is why we passed freedom of information legislation so that all citizens, whether PNM or UNC, can access Government information. You have the right for information because we believe information brings power, it empowers citizens.

Your administration came to Parliament and through Orders and other legal avenues closed doors to getting information, it exempted certain institutions. In Parliament, the entire Government is before the Privileges Committee for failing to give information to the national community and answer questions. So your democratic credentials are extremely weak, and they were rediscovered today.

### **7.30 p.m.**

I have in my hand here a memo and I do not want to read all but just to put into the record a few points. It is dated Friday, September 12, 2008. It is a direction sent by the political party that organized the mobilization today. It says:

“The following directions should be noted. All constituencies are required to mobilize members; minimum 1,000 members per constituency. Supporters are required to wear red. Constituencies who have requested PTSC buses are expected to pay. Buses must reach Port of Spain by 11.30 a.m. Constituencies

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are responsible for organizing Maxi Taxis. All Maxi Taxis must drop passengers at Queen's Park Savannah. Persons must walk to Woodford Square from the respective drop-off points."

And hear this: I find this to be brutal. This is a serious democratic issue.

"Members of each constituency are required to stay overnight in support of the Prime Minister and the Government."

But you have to bring pajamas, pillow, toothpaste and toothbrush.

"Members are encouraged to come to Parliament throughout the course of the proposed 48-hour debate into Saturday and Sunday."

In Hindi they say, "Hari Bap". It means "Oh my Father; oh God." But they did not tell us that we had to bring pajamas and stay for a 48-hour debate.

"Security and entertainment will be provided. Each PTSC bus must have a captain with a contact number. Each captain must write the number plate of the bus and each captain must list the name of each person on the bus."

When I was coming here, Members would notice I was a bit late coming to the House—and, thankfully I was not kept back by the police or anything, but when I was coming here I saw some people who I know at Woodford Square and I quickly sought to exchange greetings. The few people I know who are from Oropouche came up to me; they were clad in red and the first thing, of course, is they asked me for some money to buy soft drinks, and so on, which I always give, so I gave some money to buy water and other refreshments, and so on, and they told me they were happy to see me and to go inside and give them licks. I said: "What do you mean?" They say: "But, you know, we come here because if we don't come here, the URP programme coordinator will not give us employment next week." [*Desk thumping*]

And they have their attendance register: "name; department; gang. Woodford Square, Friday, September 12, 2008." Put your name, department and gang. I do not know which organization in the world asks you: "Give us your gang number." What kind of organization are you running? Where is the PRO of that party? Yesterday, the PRO said he knew nothing about this! Today look at this: "Attendance register: name, department, gang."

I want to ask your colleagues on the other side, the Member for Tunapuna, what gang did you bring up? The Member for La Brea, what gang? San Fernando West, which is your gang? At a time when we are talking about gangsters and criminal elements and outlawing gangs, they are promoting! So name your gang!

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Put your gang number in one time! Name, department and gang. What manner of madness is this? Who is the gang leader? You have to be careful. That fellow met 41 gang leaders; all dead, “eh”. Be careful.

This strikes a very important note I want to speak about and it is not a joke at all; a very serious matter. When a political party that has been operating since 1956, when a political leader who has been in public life for over a generation has to pay members of the public—not supporters—to come to a ground to support him, that leader has lost all moral credibility and has lost integrity. [*Desk thumping*] I have never had the golden opportunity in my life to meet Mr. Mandela, as the Members for Tabaquite, Chaguanas West and Couva North have met Mr. Mandela. I can put my neck on the block and say I do not think Mr. Mandela ever paid anybody in South Africa to come to a rally to support him. I do not think Mr. Mandela would ever do that; and to overnight in Johannesburg.

When a leader reaches this stage when you have to declare your gang, he has collapsed in office. The political leader of the People’s National Movement has collapsed, when he has to go outside and lasso people all over the country; when you have to go to women and beg the women, “Please, come to Woodford Square; wear a red jersey and come there and we would pay you for the day; sign your gang number; you will get entertainment, security and food and stay overnight” to support a leader. No, no, no.

In our democratic tradition, in the free world, when leaders have enormous personal and charismatic power, when they command their followers and their supporters, you just have to announce: “The leader would like your support”, and they will come; they will drive; they will walk; they will run. In India, I am told, the former leader of the BJP, the former Prime Minister, Atal Lal Beharry, he was a great leader in his part of the country. I am told by colleagues there that when he is delivering a speech, addressing a rally, they will travel 12 hours on a train just to hear him speak. That is the power of leadership. The power of leadership is not, “Come, sign, put your gang number and get pay, or lose your job.”

I want to say to the national community tonight—we are on television and radio—that if any worker comes to the United National Congress and reports from Monday that a CEPEP contractor or another employer is either failing to pay them or refusing to give them work, we will take up that matter at the Industrial Court [*Desk thumping*] to ensure that they are not victimized; they are not brutalized because they exercised their conscience. They had the courage to defend their dignity; they had the courage to stand up and tell you in a most decent and humble way: “I will not participate in this sham.”

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This is unbelievable, and with state money; taxpayers' money; public servants' money! There are policemen here; they pay taxes. Their money is paying the gangs; the food, the drink, the tent. But this is madness! You are seeking to prostitute the working people of Trinidad and Tobago! People should not live in this condition of slavery! What kind of political leader and party would do this? I am not saying that people should not support their leader and their party; we understand that. Whatever party you belong to, you may have people who support you and your policies and they have a right to assemble anywhere to support their leader and their party. That is their democratic right. But it is a wrong when you do this and use taxpayers' money.

You see, this is a serious matter. There are legal implications to this as well, which in the coming days we will speak about, because this is a violation of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. It cannot be taken lightly. This is slavery and the people I saw from Oropouche this afternoon at Woodford Square, all of them would vote for the UNC. I tell you. I know these people. They will all vote for the UNC, but they are saying that they have been brutally treated. They have been told that if they do not show up today and sign this gang number here, that they will never, ever see a URP ten-days in their life. And these are poor people who need a bit of income support. Where is the Social Development Minister who is always pretending to be sincere? Where is he now? These are people who need that income support. If you take away that, they cannot buy milk for their babies and you forced them to come in Woodford Square to sign up: name, department and gang.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** But they had to sign too.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Members of Parliament participate in their own degradation. They are willing participants. Their wings are now their chains.

I thought I would bring that to the national attention. I want to go back to the speech made by the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment who is breaking down houses. The Minister spoke about the UNC and civil disobedience. What is that we saw today at Woodford Square? What is that?

**Mr. S. Panday:** Violence and disobedience!

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** That is the highest level of slavery with breaking the law. The Government today is accused of breaking the law when you take taxpayers' money to pay for party support in this naked and obscene manner! Oh God! We did not talk much when you took all the state boards—all the state boards had to buy tickets to go to the breakfast with the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister "come one morning for egg and bread" at the Crowne Plaza, and all state boards



needed to buy a ticket to go and hear the Prime Minister make a speech. Again, the office of the Prime Minister is making a speech; state boards come—\$1,500; that is how they raise money for their party. But today, you take taxpayers' money, funded through the Ministry of Local Government and go and pay outside for this type of political corruption.

I have to respond to the Member for Diego Martin North/East. I would take a minute or so, really not much. He is always raising this matter of myself and my previous employment record. I want to tell him that when the distinguished Member for Caroni East and Chaconia Gold Medal recipient, had the distinction of serving as chairman of the North West Regional Health Authority—in those days you could have got a bed at the hospital, incidentally—one of his more enlightened actions was when he appointed me as industrial relations consultant to the North/West Regional Health Authority. It is a job that I am very proud of.

I want to tell the Member, our good friend—and I will say no more on this—it is not Roodal Moonilal; it is the will of God. By the grace and blessings of God I am endowed with certain education talents. It is not my doing. My blessing is that I would have a BSc, an MA, a PhD and LLB, but you do not want me to get a J-O-B. That is my blessing. It is not my fault that I am over-educated. It is my dharma.

Today I came back 12 o'clock from Guyana where I am also doing some work at the moment, representing the sugar workers in their tribunal. So it is not my fault. It is my blessing that I can serve this way. I want to tell the Member for Diego Martin North/East, just to clear the air because it is an industrial relations matter as well, when you are on contract, you have a contract job and you would like to work elsewhere doing consultancy or whatever, you can do that with the authorization of your employer. I was employed by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, in case you all do not know. But I say no more on that because—*[Interruption]* Listen, this is not O level business we are talking here; this is something else. Let me move on. I just thought I would respond. I do not want to get back to that. I am not a man comfortable speaking about myself that way. Let me move on.

I want to get back to a few points. So when the Member speaks about civil disobedience, and so on, I want to tell her that is a legitimate form of protest against tyranny and oppression in several democratic regions of the world. Nothing is wrong with that. In fact, when your very good friend, Selwyn Cudjoe, marched from Woodford Square to the President's House to remove the Basdeo Panday government, that was also his form of civil disobedience and on that day, he did it without permission from the Commissioner of Police. I thought I would remind you of that.

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We are assembled this afternoon here to debate a very critical issue, the capacity of the Member for San Fernando East to continue as head of government of the Republic. That is a very serious matter. This is not a debate to be taken lightly. As the Member for Chaguanas West said, in many countries of the world prime ministers and governments have, indeed, fallen at this obstacle, and they were not all coalition or consociational democracies. So it is a very critical moment to discuss this.

I want to say at the beginning that I make no statement this evening with any malice or ill will towards the Member for San Fernando East. This, certainly, is not a personal matter for us and the Member for San Fernando East. We are dealing with his capacity, what he has demonstrated; his capacity to govern this plural, complex society in a difficult time.

**7.45p.m.**

I begin by saying that to be a Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, I do not think theoretically that you need much qualification, at least according to the Constitution. You are a Member of the House, you command the majority. There are qualifications that are required to govern this society. A leader must show concern and compassion. Begin at that point and ask yourself. The Member for San Fernando East expressed outrage one day when the price of chicken went up, but will never visit the families of victims who were kidnapped or murdered. The Prime Minister and head of government will never visit the home to express compassion, solidarity or to embrace a loved one in tears and who is bawling and wailing to say I understand; I am here and I am trying to do as much as I could. You will never do that.

Earlier in my life I did not know the importance of that, to be honest. The Member for San Fernando East has been in office for 30 years or more and he still does not understand that. When the family of a victim sees you as a political leader; a Member of Parliament and Prime Minister, that would give them some hope and encouragement, that you are taking on their problems and trying to bring relief. The Member for San Fernando East has never once expressed compassion to the victims of crime.

I am reminded of a most tragic incident, when the child of a Member of Parliament was brutally kidnapped and murdered. The very Prime Minister could not find in his soul the compassion and love to express concern to a fellow Member of Parliament. I say that in all sincerity.

When I read in the newspaper that a Member of this House had contracted dengue, as soon as I reached in the House, I asked the Member, "How are you feeling? How are

you going? Everything okay?" He said that he was fine. I was concerned about that. I quickly enquired how the Member was feeling. That Member is not a colleague in the United National Congress. There is humanity in us that transcends politics. The political leader of the PNM, regrettably, has not shown that humanity in him. I do not know where he may have shown it, but certainly not in the affairs of the nation.

That is the first point and it is bigger and more significant than the fact that this Prime Minister during the Christmas season called a former commissioner of police and gave him his appointment letter as if it were a hamper and undermined the role of the Police Service Commission.

You do not want to talk about the Prime Minister who interfered with the appointment of Feroza Ramjohn and who sought to interfere in the placement and promotion of Marlene Coudray. These are matters on which the court decided. This is a leader who has been fingered and implicated as interfering with the justice system by seeking to fire and lock up Sat Sharma, the former Chief Justice. Former Chief Justice, Satnarine Sharma, spent five years trying to stay out of jail, when he could have been presiding over enlightened judgment; doing his writings; developing the Judiciary and ensuring that we deal with the problems at the Magistrates' Courts. He spent five years staying out of jail because he was being persecuted and hounded down by the Member for San Fernando East and sidekick attorney general at the time, John Jeremie. They were also implicated in a matter involving the sentencing and conviction of the Opposition Leader and former prime minister, Basdeo Panday. Sometimes we forget that, but that is an important point to put on the record. They talk all they want about the UNC and their governance.

In this country that is looking forward to developed country status, a former prime minister was jailed and the courts of the country pronounced that that former prime minister received an unfair trial. There was bias. In that matter the political directorate led by the Prime Minister was involved. [*Interruption*] But was it bias and unfair or not? You know the judgment from the retrial. Tell us. "Yuh know dat already?" The man is innocent and he was subjected to an unfair and bias trial. That is the point. Madam Minister of Finance, I am sure that you may know already what the court has decided. I do not know. The way that you responded suggests that you may have a sense of it. This is a former prime minister. If this happened to a former prime minister, what can you expect for an ordinary member of the national community?

**Mr. Speaker:** When you indicate that the Minister may be aware of the result of a retrial, I do not know if it is ongoing, you are bringing the Judiciary into it. You ought to be very careful about that.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I will be very careful. Today the Government is here to defend the Prime Minister and the record of this Prime Minister. I know that some of my colleagues have read widely and some wildly, but Colonel Schultz had it easier to defend himself at the Nuremburg trial. His job was easier than to defend the Prime Minister's record today.

The Prime Minister stands accused of defending Calder Hart. Calder Hart made a statement in which he admitted that the sum of \$300 million spent at the Brian Lara Stadium was a mistake. Things went wrong. He said that there were some problems and things went wrong. The Prime Minister defends that. I want to bring this story up to date. This is the hot news of the week. On Wednesday last, I am informed that Calder Hart approved an investment decision to invest US \$73 million in UdeCott in which KWH—he is involved. I am also informed that that decision bypassed all their rules, regulations and organizational structures. It did not go through the investment committee of the NIB. It came directly from Calder Hart to the board. Just like that. They also took a decision to support the Housing Development Corporation to the tune of around TT \$100 million. That is NIB's money supporting the HDC and UdeCott. This is pension money of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. That is not from the Treasury. I am informed that that decision bypassed all their structures, checks and balance and accountability system. That is the latest.

The point I am making is that by the failure and delay to act on the UdeCott enquiry, this man has continued his deeds or misdeeds. The Prime Minister facilitates these deeds or misdeeds that are taking place today, while we speak. That was a matter of Wednesday last at the NIB board. This is the crisis we face of continuing with a mode of governance that pours scorn on accountability, transparency and democracy. Almost every institution in this country has collapsed. You do not want to talk about flooding. When it drizzles in the international financial centre of Port of Spain, it floods. You get frightened. As soon as you hear it starts to rain you get frightened. Where am I parked and what time am I leaving Port of Spain? You think it would flood.

It is not just the mismanagement of key sectors like water, drainage education and health about which my colleague for Caroni East will speak. It is the Prime Minister influencing the level of governance. This leads to another point.

Today, many people in the national community believe and say that many of the new Ministers, not all, I must say, carry about themselves with a certain level of arrogance, and pomposity. Is that the term? You ask yourself, how did this happen in such a short space of time? It may well be the culture of leadership in the PNM and the Government, where the Member for San Fernando East has

convinced himself that he is the leader of the Caribbean. When he started in 2002, the first thing that he said was that he was going to build a gas pipe up the islands. Whatever happened to that, we do not know. By 2007, political union.

Between Chavez and the Member for San Fernando East, we are presiding over the death of Caricom. Always the political union. Any time you miss him he is travelling to some of these islands. The Member for San Fernando East went to Grenada to see their victims of hurricane. He wanted to go to Jamaica, but this fellow cannot find himself in Claxton Bay, San Fernando or Caparo where people are crying. That is why we are here today. Is the Member capable of managing this country by such decisions to protect Calder Hart to continue to preside over crumbling utilities and departments that are not working? When we talk Members on the other side jump up and start talking: unemployment down. Do you know why unemployment is down? Because of what you saw today in Woodford Square.

They ask: What did the UNC do? So much the UNC did when the price of a barrel of oil was \$9 a barrel and so much we did. Am I wrong? Schools, bridges, a millennium airport where some of them go and live. There is a car park in front of the airport and this is unbelievable. In front of the airport there are parks for chairman and MPs. Two days ago they painted Minister of Works. The Minister of Works and Transport wants a place by the airport to put his car permanently. What craziness is that? When you go you are a Member of Parliament, can you not park in an empty space? *[Interruption]* That is why Conrad Enill had to tell you what he told you. Let me move on. That is why Mr. Enill spoke to you in that way at the airport.

The Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East is on record several times making statements in this country. On October 17, 2005, during the period when there were four bombings in Port of Spain, the Prime Minister indicated that they knew who was behind it, "Mr. Big." To this day, they have not been able to lay their hands on "Mr. Big."

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**8.00 p.m.**

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker and all my colleagues on both sides of the House. Monday July 11, 2005, front page *Newsday*, "PM Manning promises security net over TT". A few hours later a bomb went off in Port of Spain.

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The Prime Minister said at a family day on May 20, 2005 that crime was temporary and today, three years and almost 1,500 murders later, crime is not temporary.

Desmond Allum, Senior Counsel, President of the Criminal Bar Association, in 2005, in the aftermath of the Lester Pitman matter, said:

"It seems to me clear that at the present time the Government does not seem disposed to adhere to the law."

That is a serious condemnation on the administration.

The Prime Minister, speaking at his party function, told us on September 12, 2003, that Trinidad and Tobago is a very secure country. Imagine! This was reported in the *Guardian* on page 8, and on the front page there was a picture of the Roopnarine family bawling in horror as Vernon Roopnarine was being cremated at Mosquito Creek.

I remind the country of these issues because this is the opportune moment to pronounce. I want to tell the Members on the other side that we know they will be dutifully silent at best. The vote of no confidence today on the Prime Minister really is not to be passed by them; it is to be passed by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And this is the moment when the Member for Tabaquite has brought the issue to the Table for us to speak about the management of the country, the corruption and the lack of leadership and vision.

We speak about developed country status. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take all the time because colleagues would want to respond. I want to end by talking about vision and developed country status. Some of us have had the good fortune, by the blessing of God, to live in developed countries. In a developed country, you can walk the road in the evening. I just came back from Georgetown, Guyana, and you can walk the streets in Guyana. They had killings a few months ago; they found the people who did them—two people were responsible; they dealt with them. Guyana is safer than Trinidad.

In a developed country, you do not put on the news and see London under flood waters; you do not put on the news and hear about a crisis. The Member for Diego Martin North/East, a very interesting Member, on August 27, there was a massive rain and Claxton Bay flooded. The Member for Diego Martin North/East and Minister of Works and Transport said that it was bizarre; that that level of rainfall occurred once every hundred years. He was fighting the Meteorological Office at that time. By September 07, it rained again and Claxton Bay flooded again. I want to know if in these two days a hundred years went by. Mr. Speaker,

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although we are focusing on the Prime Minister today, we have to bring under the microscope their mismanagement of those key sectors.

I want to say that developed country status implies that citizens are free. They live in security; they can walk the road; they have water and electricity; they live in a condition of decency; the education system is working; the hospitals are working. That is what developed country status means. It is not two tall buildings in Port of Spain. Caracas, Nigeria, India and Pakistan have tall buildings. Can you say they are developed countries? Developed country status is quality of life. Our educated people are leaving this country to live abroad; people with human capital that we need to build our country. When you ask why they are going, they say that they cannot take the crime. Many of us have relatives abroad and they will not come back here once the PNM is in power because they believe that the crime is so bad.

I ask the Government to reconsider what is developed country status. It is not economic indicators and macroeconomic “ol’ talk”. I have a quote here I will not bore you all with, but I read the budget speeches of 1977, 1978, 1979 at the tail end of the last oil boom. Do you know that they are saying the same thing their Minister of Finance was saying? “We managed the economy so well. All the economic data is so sound.” They were saying that in 1977, 1978 and 1980 and by 1981, there was a crash. By 1986, Minister of Finance, Hon. ANR Robinson, said that the Treasury was empty and that they had bankrupt the country.

All of this talk; been there done that. From 1976 to 1979, if you read a budget speech, you will hear that same talk about this great macroeconomic management as a result of the oil boom. That is not development, saying that you shall have full employment but 10 per cent of this labour force is in make-work government programmes. That is full fooling.

You are supposed to release people to the productive sector, not import them from Grenada, Guyana, Malaysia and China. Nationals of Trinidad and Tobago, vulnerable nationals, must go to Woodford Square to get paid while you bring labourers from all over the world to take up jobs and that you call great developed nation status. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that they really do not know what developed country status is at all.

I want this House to consider the final matter I will raise. Quite recently, the Government, through regulations pursuant to section 28 of the Civil Service Act, issued a regulation that extended the working life and services of permanent secretaries or heads of departments past the compulsory age of retirement. This is another issue where persons in the civil service will be smothered and will not be

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promoted because the Government has decided to pick and choose whom they want and keep critical heads in the civil service. This was done without the knowledge of anyone. It came to us because one of our members was prudent enough to monitor these matters.

The Prime Minister said to the National Convention at Chaguaramas recently that he went to Belize and met a young woman—correct me if I am wrong. He said: What are you doing? She said that she was a permanent secretary. He said: “But that sounds like a good idea. In Trinidad, we should get rid of all the permanent secretaries and hire them from the political party.”

They do that in these communist-type countries. They bring permanent secretaries, undermining our own democratic traditions and our way of government. [*Interruption*] I called you a certifiable lunatic already and you made me apologize. Please do not let me continue on that route. You are a nutcase, you know that. [*Laughter*] You can fix anything; you are the "Minister of Nothing Works."

You said that on August 31, there would be a water taxi. I went to the San Fernando Wharf, looking for a water taxi and there were two stray dogs down there. It floods, you say it is bizarre and that happens once every 100 years. One hundred years went by in a week; it flooded again. That is your tenure whether it is rapid rail or you pull a piece of iron across the road in eight years and that is a big deal.

You hire Junior Sammy to fix the runway in the airport, mash up, how many million dollars gone? The sum of \$37 million under you, and it is only a matter of time, as a former colleague of yours told me, before you are fired and gotten rid of. When you come on this side, I assure you that there will be no friend here.

With those few words, I thank the House for its attention and the Member for Tabaquite for raising this Motion engaging the attention of the House and the national community to reflect on the Prime Minister's performance and his capacity to continue to lead this country as head of Government.

I thank you.

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Karen Nunez-Tesheira):** Mr. Speaker, I want to join this debate with my contribution on this Motion by first making a comment on the statements made by the Member for Chaguana West. I know he was a teacher in another life just as I was. Perhaps he taught at secondary level. I had the privilege and honour to teach at post-tertiary level at the Sir Hugh Wooding Law School for several years, so I think that I can say that I am a teacher and a lecturer. I think I am in a position to make a judgment and assessment of someone's teaching and ability to present.



The Member for Chaguanas West promised that we would see erudition. What I saw was the art of circumlocution—[*Desk thumping*—meandering around and around in circles. I was really surprised because he promised that his contribution would be tight, structured and focused but he spent about 15 minutes—I looked at the time—giving a preamble about what he intended to speak about and went on never to speak about it, but seemed to have a fixation with Genivar and Transcorp.

We heard so much about Genivar and Transcorp. It was a list of all the things—I did not know how he was going to do it in the time he was allotted, but I listened and I prepared myself to respond. I was disappointed because all I heard was about Genivar and Transcorp.

I know we are babes; I am a baby in Parliament; you have made that point many times—and you can say it to many of us because we have not been here that long. However, I can assure you that when it comes to lecturing and assessing someone's ability to present, I do not think I qualify to be considered as a babe and certainly with respect to your contribution, with the greatest respect to you, I was very disappointed.

There was so much promise that was never realized. However, I did not come here today to spend my limited time making comments on the contribution of the Member for Chaguanas West. We are here this evening to speak about the no confidence Motion in the Prime Minister of this country.

The intention in many contributions is to bring to this honourable House and by extension the national community, a record of a man who has been bold, courageous, visionary and a man of integrity; a man who is taking Trinidad and Tobago to developed nation status. There will be no doubt in anyone's mind at the end of this Motion, by contributions made on this side, that the Motion was ill-conceived and baseless. Even the contributions that we have heard, with all due respect to the other side, I have listened with bated breath to hear what new things would be said and I was happily disappointed.

### **8.15 p.m.**

Nevertheless, one of the things I think we all respect the Prime Minister for is that he is a visionary man. He is someone who does not see today, but can see down the road; tomorrow. Because of that, you hold yourself up to ridicule to those whose vision is limited to the present.

I want to start my contribution with a statement made by, at that time he was in opposition, the political leader, Hon. Patrick Manning. It was a presentation and acceptance address at the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the People's National

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Movement. It was way back in December 1987. It was headed: PNM's perspective in the world of the 80s and beyond. The reason it was very instructive and very relevant to this debate is, in the last dispensation the Prime Minister held the portfolio of Minister of Finance. As Minister of Finance, he had a responsibility in terms of charting the future and the economy of the country. He played a very important role, not only as Prime Minister, but Minister of Finance.

I went back and read this speech and it was very revealing and instructive. What is really important about it is that a lot of what was said in that speech really sowed the seed and laid the foundation for what we have today. We have an economy that is resilient, impressive in its performance in the Caribbean and stands out second to none in the English-speaking Caribbean. Why do I say that? The Prime Minister at the time as opposition leader understood that the days of the commanding heights of the economy were over. He understood it was right in his context. He understood that the time that we—post colonial Trinidad and Tobago, as is true for all the countries in the Caribbean and the African countries—had come out of an era where we were now experiencing, for the first time, what it was to be independent, not only legally, but independent mentally to grow as a people and a nation. Therefore, in those days, the idea of nationalism, after coming out of a colonial experience, was important.

He understood then that those days were over. He made that point. He said:

“The achievement of local ownership and control of the economy, that is economic independence, was to be pursued, but the overall process of economic independence was also meant to involve a nationally-oriented private sector and the new people sector, the individual and small entrepreneur. It was an attempt to create a new class of businessman and entrepreneur from the group which historically had been dispossessed and brutalized by the colonial economy.”

He understood too and he said in his speech, by the time he left office in December 1986:

“The commanding heights of the economy have been brought under national control. The people sector, however, had not yielded the positive development results envisaged for it. The goal of full participation and eventual ownership of the Trinidad and Tobago economy by the self-motivated citizen had not been completely realized by December 1986.”

He understood that a new world order was required. Today, when we talk about globalization, we understand it. It seems that it is so obvious that we are

living in a globalized world and the world has changed. In 1986, that was not so. That is why we talk about vision. In 1986, many people could not see that new world order. Many people could not see that we as a people needed to take off the shackles of colonialism to understand that we had to move on and we had to embrace globalization, or we would be trampled by it. That is why the Prime Minister, at that time, as opposition leader, spoke. This is the inkling, the start of what we call the trade liberalization policy.

I heard the Member for Oropouche East talk about what was the Prime Minister's contribution to the economy. When I am finished we will understand that when they were in power in 1995—2001, much of their "success" had a lot to do with the good and solid foundation that had been laid by the PNM, under the stewardship of Patrick Manning.

Speaking of the PNM's perspective, this is what the Prime Minister had to say then in his position as opposition leader. He said:

"The PNM will continue to adopt the approach of locating our perspectives in the local and international context. There is no doubt, ladies and gentlemen, that we in Trinidad and Tobago find ourselves interacting in an international economic environment where the concerns of the 1960s and 1970s remain valid but newer and perhaps more far-reaching concerns have arisen in the decade of the 1980s."

He went on to talk about the tremendous importance of the removal of preferential entry arrangements once extended to the developing world by the developed world. He said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we all know we live in an interdependent world. One result of this interdependence is that whatever happens internationally, directly or indirectly, impacts on our society."

When he spoke of investment, the Prime Minister, as opposition leader at the time said:

"The PNM recognizes that foreign investment has a role to play in the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago."

Today we talk about Vision 2020. We speak of it as if it is a new order, a new thought coming out. It is a good thought and it has been embraced. We did a poll and I do not think that there is anyone in Trinidad and Tobago who may not understand fully, Vision 2020, but they understand basically what it speaks to. As far back as 1986, the then opposition leader and now our Prime Minister spoke

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about this new society. When we read about his vision of this new society, it really is articulating Vision 2020. This is what he had to say:

“The PNM’s vision”—the word “vision” is used—“for Trinidad and Tobago, as we look towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, is a modern society characterized by peace, prosperity, stability, evolutionary and orderly change, economic equality, participatory democracy, high moral standards and a social and religious harmony; the kind of society to which we of the PNM are committed, one in which our citizens will be well fed, clothed, housed, educated, and meaningfully employed. Avenues would be open for all citizens to use their talents creatively for their own benefit and for the benefit of the national community. The senior citizens will be respected and their contributions recognized. The aspirations and ambitions of the young can be adequately realized.”

It goes on. The point I am making is that the Vision 2020 that we hear about today is the seed of that Vision 2020 that was sown a long time ago. It was sown in December 1987, by a visionary leader. That is the point.

When I talk about the vision of the Prime Minister, Hon. Patrick Manning, he was the Prime Minister and political leader of the People’s National Movement in 1991 when the PNM was restored into government. The Prime Minister then, leading the Government, got the opportunity to implement and put into action the vision that he had for Trinidad and Tobago; a vision that embraced globalization and understood that trade liberalization was the only way to survive in the national and international economy. He understood that to continue to operate in an insular way, a way that you continue to talk about nationalism in a very narrow sense, you were in fact making sure that you were spelling out the recipe for political and economic suicide.

What are the initiatives that the Prime Minister, as head of the PNM and as Prime Minister of this country, took? He took initiatives that started that vision while in opposition; that which has now gotten the opportunity in Government and in office to bear fruit and blossom.

The first one is the energy sector. Many of us, I understand it, talk about Trinidad and Tobago is an energy-based economy and oil economy and that we have plenty money. I know there are many other countries in Central, Latin America and Africa that are very rich in natural resources, much in the same way that we say Trinidad and Tobago is, but they are not at the level of development that Trinidad and Tobago is.

**Mr. Manning:** Nigeria.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** Nigeria is an example. We always want to underestimate the importance of policy, direction and vision. Why do I say that? We always speak about Trinidad and Tobago as an oil-based economy, but I think by now we should know that whilst we are an energy-based economy, we are really a gas-based economy. It is not by any chance that Trinidad and Tobago today is a gas-based economy. In fact, it started as early as 1960 and 1972, under the leadership of the then Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, with the decision to monetize the natural gas and downstream industry: ammonia, urea and methanol. We know that Trinidad and Tobago is the largest exporter of methanol and urea in the world.

To speak of this Prime Minister and what was his contribution—the decision to convert commercialized gas into LNG—For the first time in 25 years, under the stewardship of Patrick Manning with his vision for Trinidad and Tobago, the first Atlantic Basin LNG plant was located on this side of the hemisphere. Coming out of that decision, Trinidad and Tobago, in 2007 gross revenue from gas was \$28 billion. Just in case you think that was by happenstance, the Prime Minister spoke about Nigeria, a country with lots of natural gas. Trinidad and Tobago has only 0.3 per cent of the world's natural gas. Many countries cannot understand. They marvel that a country with so little gas can do so much. I see the Member for Couva South nodding in agreement. I know he works in one of the oil companies. He knows that what I speak is true. In fact, if one has any question that it started under the administration of the PNM, what we see, the takeoff of the economy and, of course, when the UNC began office, is that they were able to benefit from the foundation laid by the People's National Movement under the leadership of Patrick Manning.

In 1992 Cabot LNG, a relatively small Boston-based LNG importer and owner of Evert LNG stock, came to Trinidad and Tobago and approached the Government of Trinidad and Tobago about developing a new LNG export project. Attempts had been made in the past, but this is the first time that it reached to fruition. Out of that approach, a memorandum of understanding was signed by Amoco and British Gas with Cabot. Today, history is clear, that decision and memorandum of understanding was signed in 1992. A feasibility study was done in 1993, under the People's National Movement administration under the leadership of Mr. Patrick Manning in a joint venture company in 1995. What I want to say on the point of the first initiative of the Prime Minister is the decision to monetize natural gas to LNG. Today we are reaping the benefits of that.

The second major initiative again, under the leadership of Patrick Manning the then Prime Minister during that period 1991—1995, was trade liberalization. I mentioned that in the beginning of my contribution, alluding really to the People's

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National Movement, the perspective. The Prime Minister, then in opposition, alluded to the fact that we needed to embrace globalization that it was here to stay and, therefore, we could not fight the natural order. The consequence of that were two major decisions of the People's National Movement under the leadership of the Prime Minister. First was the removal of the common external tariff; reducing the common external tariff to a range of 0—20 per cent, reducing the maximum tariff on industrial goods from its previous 35 per cent level. That was trade liberalization, by the removal of the common external tariff.

Another major decision, again by the Patrick Manning government, under his leadership, was the decision to manage the float of the TT dollars. Previously to that it was a fixed currency, but the decision was made to manage the float of the currency. Those were the two decisions: the decision to manage the float of the TT dollars and the decision to remove CET. What were the results of those decisions? Some of the benefits today are cheaper export prices; foreigners are encouraged to purchase local products; more export revenue, especially for the manufacturing sector; and more reserves of foreign exchange.

If we have any doubts about that, the facts are clear. Between 2002—2007, the growth of the manufacturing sector grew on an average of 8.5 per cent. Today, Trinidad and Tobago is still the major trading leader in the Caricom region.

### **8.30 p.m.**

Remember, I spoke about vision. I said that some persons can only see today. A person with vision sees beyond today and sees for tomorrow. Those who could only see today cannot see the vision and then they criticize it. They cannot embrace it. A good example of that is the trade liberalization and the managed float of the dollar.

When the Prime Minister, hon. Patrick Manning, in that period made that decision, the manufacturing sector went up in arms and this is what they said. I am quoting from a speech from the Prime Minister:

“Many used to also protest when we took steps to develop our manufacturing sector. Remember 1993 when we were liberalizing the economy, what was said? A campaign was run against us by the manufacturing sector, you know—television, radio, newspaper—culminating in the argument, ‘Write your MP’. You remember it? Well, I didn’t forget it because I was at the centre of all that controversy.”

This is what the Prime Minister had to say:

“Look at it today. And we are proud today of our manufacturers and just proud of the fact that we contributed significantly to their development. From

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the protection of the import substitution era to the effectiveness, to the efficiencies developed in the competition of the liberalized era and now to the time of expansion and diversification, it is the PNM policy that has led the way.

Today, Ladies and Gentlemen, our manufacturing sector is the strongest in the Caribbean and it is a key factor in sustainable economic strength of this country. This Government has provided a very facilitative environment and generous fiscal incentives and this sector expanded by 54.9 per cent between 2001 and 2005...”

So, when I speak about visionary leadership and the contribution of the Prime Minister, we see that during that period the implementation of that vision has borne fruit for Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that the economy grew from strength to strength.

So, when the UNC government came into power at the end of 1995, I know they had a saying that performance beats “ol’ talk” and other statements such as that. You see, that is real self-devolution, because I am dealing with facts. I am not making up things along the way. I am dealing strictly with facts. If you would come and say what I am saying is wrong, I do not mind, but I am dealing strictly with facts.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak about facts, there was an IMF report when the UNC came into power at the end of 1995. One could say for all intents and purposes it was 1996. That IMF report consultation said—this is the background:

“Since emerging from a decade-long decline in output and international reserves in the early 1990s, the Trinidad and Tobago economy has expanded at a steady, if moderate rate underpinned by growth in oil, gas and the petrochemical sectors. More recently, the economy is experiencing an acceleration in growth owing to the strength of investment in the petrochemical sector. Extensive structural reforms have substantially liberalized the external and financial sectors and downsized the public sector.”

What I am saying is that with all the so-called successes, if your foundation is not strong, your house is going to crumble. In 1996, for all intents and purposes, when the UNC came into power, all of those visionary decisions were implemented and they started to bear fruit.

I look now at the legacy of the UNC. I really did my research and I really have to ask: What did they do when they were in power? I know all the negative things that they did, but I really stretch myself to see what did they do? The other Ministers are going to touch on their portfolios, but I just want to touch briefly on the things that they did and to make a contrast. I want to understand what they

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were boasting about. They cannot boast about how the economy developed. In fact, the major contributor to the strength of the economy was the Atlantic LNG Trains 1, 2, 3 and 4, and all of that was under the PNM. The genesis, the planning and the foundation was done under the PNM Government under the leadership of hon. Patrick Manning.

We know about housing during their time. They built 461 houses and they want to say that the Prime Minister is not caring. How could they talk about not caring! One of the major things, if you look at Maslow's law, the basic things that human beings want are food and shelter. That is a basic human need; not self-actualization!

When they were in Government, what was their record in housing? They should be ashamed of themselves! I really mean it. As Sen. The Hon. Dr. Emily Gaynor Dick-Forde, the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, stated, 32,500 houses have started and a record of over 11,200 homes have been distributed. That is a record to be proud of. You should not talk about performance beats "ol' talk". That is performance that has to beat ol' talk. [*Desk thumping*] It has to be. I am dealing with facts, and I try to do my research and I try to be fair.

With respect to the John John Towers, we know that the PNM built the John John Towers for the people of Port of Spain and environs. They tried to auction off the John John Towers to—

**Hon. Member:** Jack Warner wanted it.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** Jack Warner wanted it? I do not know about that. Well, I cannot say that. I know I have parliamentary privilege, but I am not saying that. All I know is that those houses were built for poor people and they wanted to auction them off to the highest bidder. They did not build those houses.

**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** They were for the fire victims.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** Now, I am going to look at the Aranguez apartments. They did not build those apartments, but they were completed under the UNC. You know many persons who should not be living in those houses—you talk about nepotism—rented and leased them and so on. Those houses were built for the owners. You know, in terms of the Aranguez apartments which were completed, the point about it is: Who were the beneficiaries of those houses? That is their track record in housing, and it was not a good track record. You cannot talk about caring for the people if you do not care about giving them basic shelter.



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I heard the Member for Oropouche East say that our administration is breaking down people's houses and we are being heartless. Again, that is a lot of dishonesty. I have to use the word "dishonesty". What is the fact? You must tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Half a truth is as good as a lie. [*Desk thumping*] What is the whole truth in this? The fact of the matter is that it was under your government that Act No. 25 of 1998, the State Lands (Regularization of Tenure) Act, 1998 was passed. What was it intended to achieve? It says so in section 3.

What it did was that persons who were squatting in designated areas—they identified designated areas on a Schedule to the legislation. What you have said is that those persons who were squatting in actual occupation of state lands on which there is a dwelling house—you have the actual occupation, you must have a dwelling house and it has to be in a designated area and it has to be before the appointed day. What was the appointed day? It was sometime in January 1998. It does not give you a right of ownership, but it gives you a right not to be evicted.

The point I am making is this. You well know that it is true. Many of those persons who have gone and built houses, first of all, they are building them in non-designated areas. You passed the legislation. Do you know why you did it? I hope that part of the reason, if not all, was to restore some law and order. You wanted to contain it and you wanted to make sure that you had this appointed day in those designated areas. If you could show actual occupation in a dwelling house, you would have been able to apply for a Certificate of Comfort.

As far as I am aware, there has been no house that has been broken down. Now, I have a point. I am relying on information from my colleague that says that during the UNC administration houses in Dookiesingh Street—that was in the Schedule, and that was one of the designated areas—were broken down by your administration. That is the facts I have here. You must not say that the PNM is heartless. You are encouraging lawlessness.

What the hon. Senator said is true. You talked about civil disobedience and there is a thin line between civil disobedience and encouraging lawlessness. [*Desk thumping*] You passed the law. Why did you give it a cut-off date? Why did you say it must be a designated area? You wanted to contain it. How can you encourage people to break the law? That is what you are doing. The houses you are saying that they are breaking down are persons who were not in occupation on the appointed day and, perhaps, not even in designated areas. So, to go about on television and parade and talk about the PNM and so on is dishonesty. That is encouraging lawlessness in the society. That is what you are encouraging. You are telling people that what they are doing is right, and they could disobey the laws

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and have no regard for the laws of the land. You cannot have it both ways. If you are saying that people have to be law-abiding and you want to hold us to high standards and talk about transparency and accountability, it cuts both ways. You cannot encourage people to break the law and then go on television and talk about a heartless Government. You are not speaking the truth and you are misleading the national community. That is not the way to do it.

Having spoken about your record in housing, I went and I really tried to find what you did. What did you do? You know, when I went up as a candidate for the election, I did my research in order to have an understanding of at least what the PNM record was and what they have done during that period before 2007.

The statement I made at the beginning about when hon. Patrick Manning was in Opposition and his commitment to the youth, that commitment was realized and given expression in the number of programmes that were implemented under the PNM. Do you know what they did when they were in power? This is what I do not understand! They said that we are heartless and we are uncaring, and I am showing them that they built 461 houses in six years. That is shameless and they had a Minister of Housing. [*Desk thumping*] That Minister of Housing should have been fired a long time ago.

They talk about encouraging lawlessness, but look at what they did. They closed down the Civilian Conservation Corps, the youth camps in Mount Dor, Tobago and Chaguanas. They also closed down the On the Job Training Programme, the Geriatric Programme and YTEPP. All of them were casualties of their government, and they want to come and talk to us about caring! You have to be joking. This Government restored every single one of them and more. [*Desk thumping*] When we say we care, we mean that we care. As the Member for Diego Martin North/East said and he is right—perhaps, I would not put it as he puts it, but he said that things cannot happen if the Prime Minister does not support them, but I would not put it that way.

We are all part of the team and we would not be here if we did not share the vision of the hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] I would not be here. So, it is not a question of if the Prime Minister does not support something it would not happen. The point is that we are all here working as a team. When decisions are made, the decisions that we make are because we support the Prime Minister's vision, because his vision is something that he is committed to and it is not words; it is action.

**8.45 p.m.**

When you see the kind of allocation that this Government has made to young people, to encourage those who have left school, to people to get technical/vocational

training, on the job, MUST; how could you sit there and say that this Government is not a caring Government. [*Desk thumping*] How could you say that? It is under the leadership of Patrick Manning. You cannot say this is not a caring Government.

So, I looked at your record and the only thing I saw was the airport, but I want to leave that to the end because that is your legacy. I looked at your contribution to the economy, to the national community and tried to be fair and see what you had done. Then we came to our period in office and I do not want to speak on the other portfolios of my colleagues, Ministers, so I will speak as the Minister of Finance, and I have the distinct honour and privilege to have inherited such a post from none other than our political leader and Prime Minister of this country.

So, much of what I speak about has very little to do with what I have done; I have been here for a short nine months; much of what we have done is a continuum of what had started under the Prime Minister in his capacity as Minister of Finance. So, what are those macroeconomic indicators you say you do not want to hear about? You have to hear it, because if they were not good I would have heard about it. If unemployment was high I bet you would have something to say about that problem; you would see it as a problem, but when it is low something is wrong; 5.3 per cent. You know why 5.3 per cent? That is almost full employment and the reason it is treated as full employment is because in every society, there are going to be those who are unemployable for whatever reason and there are some persons who will not, shall not, cannot work; and in every society, you make that allowance.

So, for a country to boast and be able to say all its citizens can find a job, that is a great thing to say. [*Desk thumping*] Any country would aspire to that, but it is not only in employment, the economy has grown at an average rate of 8.4 per cent between 2001 and 2007, every sector. We looked at the public debt, that is a good measure, because one of the things people are wont to say is this Government is reckless with the public purse; nothing could be further from the truth. One example of that is the way that you manage your debt. This Government and under the leadership of the Prime Minister as Minister of Finance in that portfolio, over the past eight years, public debt with an expanding economy in terms of real GDP, has moved from 52.2 per cent in 2000 to 28.3 per cent at the end of 2007.

We talked about the surplus. I looked at your figures, three years and you know when the last year was? You had three years of deficit and the last year of deficit was the last year when you were fighting the election. I do not know if it had anything to do with TIDCO and the \$1 billion you spent in road paving; I do not know. All I know, that year they ended in a deficit. We have never had a

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deficit for this administration. It is not only that, the foreign reserves, over 10 months of import cover. We looked, too, at the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and I heard the Member for Chaguanas West talk about the Norway Fund.

What he did not say in terms of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund was, and I would like to be fair, under the UNC administration a fund was started and it was called the Interim Revenue Stabilisation Fund, and the intention of it was to act as a cushion against the volatility, because our economy is based on gas and oil, in the event that there was a downturn in the economy because of the price of oil and gas. That was done, I commend you for that, but we went further.

We do not have an interim revenue and stabilisation fund, we started the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, and it went one step further, not only dealing with this cushioning the impact of a downturn, but we care and because we care, we included this heritage aspect. In other words, to provide a heritage for future generations when the oil and the gas had been depleted. This Government did not just make a policy decision—because we could have left it as policy—we made it the law. In April 2007, we passed the legislation, and by law any surplus of revenue over whatever is the price projected—you base your budget and you should take a conservative approach, as to what you anticipate the price of oil will be in that particular fiscal year—any surplus beyond that, a minimum of 60 per cent must be put into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

I want to tell you, I was going to save it for budget, but I am very proud to say, because someone asked me: “Have you saved more this year than any other year?” I said yes, we did. For 2008, we have put nearly \$5 billion into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. [*Desk thumping*] That is correct, nearly \$5 billion, and you want to tell this country that this Government does not understand the importance of saving. Nearly \$5 billion has been put into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

I want to concentrate at this point in time to show the performance of this Government under the visionary leadership of Mr. Patrick Manning. In the context of my portfolio as Minister of Finance, I just want to speak very briefly of some of the measures that have been implemented and the results, because you are going to have a measure but the real test of that measure is the result that you obtain from that measure. I just want to speak very briefly of some of them.

Under taxation and tax administration, some of the things that we have done were innovative, visionary and power thinking: reduction of individual income tax on the first \$50,000 of income from 28 per cent to 25 per cent; reduction of individual income tax on income exceeding \$50,000 from 35 to 30 per cent in

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2003; increase in personal allowance for all individuals from \$25,000 to \$60,000 in the 2005/2006 national budget. As a result, persons earning \$5,000 per month or less are not liable to the payment of income tax, and you say that this Government does not care. How could you say that? That is personal income tax.

We look at improvements now, some of the measures implemented under this Ministry in the system of tax collection. The use of more aggressive enforcement action with respect to tax revenue collection. A one-stop shop for registration was established with the aim of reducing overall turnaround time. Because of those measures, what is the result? Overall turnaround time was reduced as follows: turnaround time for registration is 10 to 15 minutes; approvals of TD1s, five minutes; and completion of an income tax return, 15 minutes. [*Desk thumping*] Revenue collection has been improved in the first year after the implementation of the measures identified above. In fiscal 2006, there was a surplus of actual collections over projected collections in the amount of over \$2 billion. Is that not impressive?

Then we put in specific measures to deal with the large taxpayers, a new innovation and under the stewardship of Patrick Manning, who was then Minister of Finance, a petroleum and large taxpayer business unit was launched in June 2002. The unit became fully operational in September 2002. In 2003, the unit introduced a one-stop shop to provide its clients with a variety of services including education, as well as to foster working relationships with taxpayers. What is the result of this? There has been improved efficiency now that the auditing function for large taxpayers is no longer under the purview of a field audit and VAT Compliance Unit.

Additionally, the workers have shifted from auditing taxpayers to monitoring, resulting in increased compliance and revenue collection. In fact, a VAT monitoring unit was set up and as a result of establishing this VAT monitoring unit, the number of requirements was reduced from approximately 16 to 4. VAT collections have increased from \$2.1 billion in 2003 to an estimated \$5.6 billion for 2008. [*Desk thumping*]

Financial sector reform, all under the stewardship of the then Prime Minister in his capacity as Minister of Finance. Establishment of the office of the financial service or ombudsman to facilitate independent and prompt resolution of complaints. International financial reporting standards for the banking sector have been adopted. The regional credit rating agency, CariCRIS, commenced operation in 2004. The automated credit bureau commenced operations in 2004. Electronic trading on the Trinidad and Tobago Stock Exchange commenced in March 2005. The takeover bylaws have been enacted and facilitate the capital market by instituting an enforceable takeover code in accordance with international best

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practice. The Insurance Act was amended in July 2004. The others I will leave for my contribution on the budget.

The last thing I want to mention in terms of the People's National Movement's administration—and under the, as I said, visionary and fast-forward thinking leadership of the Prime Minister, in his capacity again, as I said as Minister of Finance—is poverty and that is a sad thing. The *Bible* said that the poor will always be with us.

**Mr. Ramnath:** "Doh abuse the *Bible*, nah."

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** I am not abusing it. Is that an abuse of the *Bible*? This is what the *Bible* says. The fact of the matter is what has the People's National Movement done, under the leadership of Patrick Manning, to address poverty? We know in the 1990s the poverty index level was approximately 30 per cent, now it is 16.7 per cent. I want to say this: when we measure poverty we measure it by calories, how much is the caloric content, and I know that we may have to reconsider that. In fact, we looked at the United States and they are looking at changing the way they measure poverty, and the reason for that is that in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago and the United States, there is something called non-cash benefits.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt you. Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Finance has expired. Before I move the Motion for extension, I call upon the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

#### PROCEDURAL MOTION

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding Standing Order 10(6), I wish to move a procedural motion that in accordance with Standing Order 10(10), the House continues sitting until completion of Motion No. 1 on the Order Paper, under Private Business, notwithstanding the fact that the usual time for this procedural motion has passed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, hon. Members we were so engrossed in the debate that I omitted to bring to the attention of the House the procedural motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given I have limited time left I was about to go and wax poetic on the number of non-cash benefits that this Government has given to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the list is long. Under health, shelter, housing, but because I have limited time left, I really want to concentrate on the last part, the real legacy of the United National Congress to Trinidad and Tobago, and that they should question the leadership of the People's National Movement and the leadership of Patrick Manning is nothing short of amazing.

Why do I say that? Because I heard the Member for Oropouche East, who is no longer with us, talking about things like accountability, transparency and so on and about the lack of—I do not want to misquote him, but I certainly got the impression he was talking as though we live in a totalitarian state and a sort of dictatorship. That is truly amazing because I am going to deal with the facts. One of the measures of whether you live in a democracy is the independence of your Judiciary. Once the independence of your Judiciary is undermined—*[Interruption]* Yes, but I want to show you; you see you say that all the time, but I am going to read the facts to you and then I will let the national community say who and which government impugned; which government attacked the independence of the judiciary of this country, and I am going to read it out. *[Desk thumping]*

**9.00 p.m.**

“In practice, the Trinidadian judiciary fiercely safeguards its independence and attempts to give full effect to the constitutional rights of accused persons in both civil and criminal proceedings.”

We saw an example of that with the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago when he wanted to misrepresent as though he was acquitted. I do not know his apparent bias—but if there was no basis for the charges there would not have been a retrial, there would have been an acquittal, and he was not acquitted, a retrial was ordered and there is a big difference. That is because our Judiciary is truly independent and ascribes to that. *[Desk thumping]* I quote:

“Unfortunately, judicial vigilance often leads the courts into direct conflict with authoritarian executive and legislative tendencies. By way of example, at an opening address of the 1999 Law Term, Chief Justice Michael de la Bastide”—who now, by the way, is the President of the Caribbean Court—“accused the Attorney General, Ramesh L. Maharaj, of seeking to reduce judicial independence through an effort to control funds disbursed for judicial travel expenses. This conflict was situated within a larger debate concerning the proposed creation of a

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judicial Chancellor's office that, under the direction of the Attorney General, would perform a judicial administrative function...Chief Justice Bastide perceived the initiative as an attack on judicial independence through a stratagem to emasculate the Chief Justice's powers without abolishing his office. Receiving the support of all but one of the Trinidadian judiciary, this conflict continued through two Commissions established to mediate the dispute. In February 2001, when welcoming a new Judge to the bench, Justice Wendell Kangaloo warned that—and I quote—“when a Head of State hints at signs of creeping dictatorship, alarm bells should ring out loudly to the population.”

We well know that was from the former President of this Republic. A President that was appointed under their administration, accusing a UNC administration—you are dealing with the President not the person, you know, the Office of the President accusing the UNC Government of a creeping dictatorship.

“The political ramifications emanating from the judicial independence conflict became all the more serious in March 2001 when Attorney General Maharaj threatened legislation to fire judges for not delivering judgments with sufficient dispatch, stating that”—and I quote—“if a judicial officer cannot give a judgment within a given time frame he must be considered incompetent”—461 houses but they are not fired—“and the Constitution should provide for his removal, as the justice system must not accommodate incompetent and inefficient judicial officers’. Further undermining public confidence in Trinidadian judicial institutions, the strongest warning for the judiciary to bow at the feet of the executive was delivered by”—the then—“Prime Minister Panday, when he assured UNC supporters that his government would defend itself ‘with full force’ against judicial meddling in governmental affairs. This concerted effort by the government to erode judicial independence and de-legitimise and stigmatise the judiciary, seems to stem from allegations by the UNC that the judiciary is biased in its treatment of the Indian-supported political party.”

But, it did not stop just at attacks on the Judiciary; it included attacks on the media, and it started very early—it did not take too long—very early in their office and we all know about that famous headline:

“1996... ‘Chutney rising’ angered the PM”—you all want to talk about dictatorship. You want to talk about dictatorship. The then Prime Minister Panday—“and he refused to speak to the newspaper until it got rid of Jones P. Madeira. As a result, Ken Gordon as CEO of CCN and publishers of *Stabroek News* and the nation of Barbados met with the PM to prevail upon him to back away from his position.”



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But do you think Gordon was spared? Not at all, and no one can question the status and the integrity of Ken Gordon.

“Ken Gordon opposed the Government's consultation document on media reform. In that context, Panday delivered an address in Chaguanas on Indian Arrival Day, May 30, saying”—and I quote—“And I call them pseudo-racists, because they are not real racists. Real racists are people who look after their race. Pseudo-racists who have divided society to maintain political power and even now are doing so in the hope of political survival. The Ken Gordons who want to maintain his monopolistic advantage over his competitors in the media. My brothers and sisters, they come in many shapes and sizes.”

Well you know we know the outcome of that. We know that went all the way to the Privy Council, and we know the Privy Council overturned the decision of the Court of Appeal and upheld the decision against Mr. Panday as Prime Minister for making that statement, stating that it was in fact a slanderous statement and saying that to call a person a pseudo-racist and whatever arguments were used were baseless and in fact the Privy Council upheld the decision. I even have the judgment of the court with me here. But I move on, Julien Rogers.

**Hon. Member:** Thank God.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** Why are you saying thank God, because you do not want to hear the truth? Because if anything I said is not true, tell me I am not talking the truth. I am talking the truth.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Irrelevant.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** How is it irrelevant? You come here and move a Motion to say that you have no confidence in the Prime Minister of this country and when I show your track record—you are bold to bring such a Motion because you are in no position to do that.

I have never heard our Prime Minister at anytime tell the media, “anyone attacks my Government”—is that the words he used?

**Mr. Imbert:** Unscathed.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:**—“will not get away unscathed.” That is the word. I have never heard the Prime Minister use that language. Never! I have never heard him tell a reporter, “It is insulting, it is insulting.” I have never heard that. I have never had our Prime Minister having to face a court, a sitting Prime Minister for action for slander. [*Desk thumping*] Never! You are not in a position to criticize the Prime Minister. [*Interruption*] and do them for—I cannot remember

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who said that so I did not want to use that quote. I did not want to use that quote because I was not sure. And talk about corruption. Talk about corruption, I have it here from none other than the Member for Tabaquite, on December 27, 2001:

“Maharaj told *Newsday*”—his favourite newspaper, yes—“yesterday that he was”—hear this you know—“pleased with the appointment of People's National Movement (PNM) Political Leader Patrick Manning as Prime Minister”—[*Desk thumping*—“and felt Manning's appointment presented an opportunity to ‘re-establish and deepen good governance in Trinidad and Tobago.’” [*Desk thumping*]

And he has moved their Motion. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

“Regarding the political future of the UNC, Maraj agreed with former Attorney-General”—and this is the other Maraj, must have been Ralph Maraj—“Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj that Panday's refusal to tackle the corruption issue has resulted in the party occupying the Opposition benches in Parliament once more. He added that at this time the UNC”—and I think they should do this still, take the advice it is good advice—“should do a deep analysis of their situation”—deep, deep analysis—“in order to decide where the party goes from there.”

So that is part of their legacy.

I just want to make one other point before I wind up my contribution. I mean, I looked at the contributions that were made by the United National Congress and I thought, well, what infrastructure did they do? Did they build any highways?

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Testeira:** Did they build any major new roads?

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Testeira:** Did they build any major new hospital?

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Testeira:** But do you know what they built? An airport.

**Hon. Member:** Do not go there.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Testeira:** That is what they built, an airport. This is just what I want to say about that airport and this is a report:

“Former Government Minister Brian Kuei Tung appeared at Port-of-Spain Magistrates’ Court yesterday for the second time, to answer 16 corruption charges involving \$1.6 billion, arising out of the second phase of police investigations into the Piarco Airport development project.”

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It goes on in another report:

“The investigations into corruption at the billion-dollar tax-payer-funded Piarco Airport led to the arrest yesterday of a number of prominent persons associated with the UNC Government. At least 12 persons and six companies are to be arrested for conspiracy under Section 34 of the Larceny Act.”

I am reading from the report:

“One former official was seated with his wife in the BWIA first class lounge awaiting the boarding of BW900 to London when the OCNU (Organized Crime and Narcotics Unit) officials arrived.

Another former official who had left the country some time ago and had obtained citizenship in a Latin American country had slipped back into TT on May 13. He was due to leave last night when he was picked up, also at Piarco Airport, shortly after checking in. His bag tags had to be cancelled as he was whisked away by OCNU officials.”

So, that is their contribution, “The Airport”. Then I thought about Tidco, because I was a director of Tidco for sometime, so immediately when the People's National Movement under the leadership of the hon. Patrick Manning came in the Government and the first thing I came up to was the frenzy of spending, not one new highway, not one new major road, but you spent \$1 billion paving roads in a very short space of time. Coincidentally, when did this happen? Coincidentally? Was it the election?

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** End of 2001; just so happen to coincide with national election, and, by the way, it is in that fiscal year there was a deficit. My understanding is—I was not there in Government at the time—it had a lot to do with this irresponsible spending for—I have to assume—political purposes. [*Interruption*]

So, as I end my contribution this evening, I just want to say that—as I started in my contribution—this Motion is ill conceived; it is baseless; it is spurious, and it is—I will use the legal term—null and void and of no effect, because what I have shown here this evening is clearly a leadership of a man as the Prime Minister, in three now, a caring Prime Minister, a visionary Prime Minister. That is what his record has been, and as one, who in spite of the four times they took him to the Integrity Commission and every single time he was acquitted. [*Desk thumping*] But we know that a former Prime Minister of this country has been charged under the legislature—brought by the Member for Tabaquite—Integrity in Public Life Act. So, what we know is that our Prime Minister, the Prime

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Minister of this country has shown himself to be a man of visionary leadership and a man of great integrity. However, I am sad to say—because I am sad to say as a Trinidadian—that I cannot say the same for those on the other side when they were in Government. [*Interruption*]

I just want to say one thing as the Member for Oropouche East has joined us, and I would rely on the information that I was given and I believe it to be true. One of the things that the Member for Oropouche East wanted to, I guess, bamboozle us with is his understanding of industrial relations, the Industrial Relations Act, labour law, contract law and so on. My understanding was that when he had two jobs, one of them was as Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. As a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, you are not under contract and therefore—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam, please do not embarrass yourself further. [*Laughter*] At no time in my life was I ever a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. I beg you, you are new to public life, do not embarrass yourself; [*Interruption*] take the chit of paper and return it to whoever you got it from, please. I just guide you; I was never at anytime in my life a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. Not of Mr. Panday, not of Mr. Manning and not of Mr. Robinson. Thank you.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Testheira:** Member for Oropouche East, one of the things I know you were very careful to say, is that you were not a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, which is not to say that you were not a Minister at all.

**Hon. Member:** He was Minister of Labour and Cooperatives.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Testheira:** You see, that is the kind of half-truth I talked about. If you were not a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, were you a Minister?

**Dr. Moonilal:** In the Ministry of Labour and Cooperatives.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Testheira:** You see, that is a good example of what I am talking about, the half-truth that equates into that, because you are playing with words.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What is the point?

**Hon. K. Nunez-Testheira:** The point is, as a Minister—I do not know of anywhere; I do not know if the rules were different on your side—you cannot hold down two jobs.

**9.15 p.m.**

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, I am begging you not to embarrass yourself. When I was Minister in the Ministry of Labour and Cooperatives and served under the

distinguished leadership of the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, I was not engaged in any other matter. I could help you, but this is really not my role to help you. You could figure out your own business, but when I was a Senator in the Parliament and Minister in the Ministry of Labour and Cooperatives, I was not engaged in other work. It is not my business to help you through this problem that you face.

**Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira:** All right. One of the things that I want to say though, you are saying that you do not want to embarrass me further; it is your colleague on your side who made the allegation against you. It is not me; it is your colleague who made the allegation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wind up my contribution and thank you for the opportunity to defend the Prime Minister of this country, and to say that the Motion is destined to fail, not only because you are outnumbered, because there is no merit in that Motion.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member for Couva South.

**Hon. Member:** The moment has arrived. A signal moment in the debate has arrived. The debate now start. Oh yes! Waxing up now.

**Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (Couva South):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first of all congratulate the Member for Tabaquite, for his eloquent articulation [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*] in presenting the Motion before the House, in the manner in which it was presented and the precision with which it was presented.

What we were talking about before we had the interventions that had very little or no relevance to the Motion, was that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago became aware as a result of information supplied to him by two senior Ministers, that there were activities taking place in UDeCott that were not in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, which amounted to corruption, and the criminal profligacy was denying the citizens of the country. The criminal profligacy by Calder Hart and his associates would have the effect of denying the citizens of the country, opportunities for which taxes were collected.

The Member for Tabaquite sought to explain, Mr. Speaker, that you had a former Minister, who was only recently the chief defender and spokesman for the PNM, making public pronouncements that the Prime Minister knew of corrupt activities of public officials, and having known that, sought to cover it up. That was the issue that was raised by the Member for Tabaquite and he also supported his argument by referring to the former Minister, Camille Robinson-Regis, who

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also had a serious problem with Calder Hart, and the way in which this foreigner was doing business with the people's money, the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

What we have been subjected to as a result—I should deal with the last speaker first, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara in a speech that included 27 times, praises to Patrick Manning, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. I believe it is perhaps even more than 27 times. I would have thought that had she not been a Minister of Government, that the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara in some other capacity would be making these statements because she wanted to become some high official of the PNM.

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

All that was said today by the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara was to ingratiate herself in the eyes of the Prime Minister. I want to warn her. You have gotten a “10 days”, you should try to conduct yourself properly in the job that was given to you. The Prime Minister must have had very high consideration for the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, or knowing him as I know him for the last 25 to 30 years, he could very well be setting you up, as Rowley was set up, Roberts was set up, Valley was set up and as Imbert will be set up. If you look at this great Prime Minister, you would see that apart from my colleague, the Member for Tobago West, I do not think there is a single other Member who has survived this Prime Minister. I did not serve very much in the Government because I had a short stint, but I do know the stuff of which leaders are made.

So, we have been treated to a litany of praises on the Prime Minister about what a great leader he is and so forth. But that does not prevent us from continuing to ask the question—did he know that Mr. Calder Hart, in whom we have entrusted massive amounts of money and billions of dollars—I do not know the exact figure—in projects that the Member for Chaguanas West enunciated earlier, that this gentleman has been given power that no Trinidadian has been given, not even Professor Kenneth Julien, about whom much has been said? The question is, did the Prime Minister know that Minister Rowley was asked to have a private meeting with Hafeez Karamath, when the same Hafeez Karamath who they criticized in the worst way, the worst form, as being a UNC contractor—Minister Rowley was asked to interview Mr. Karamath although he lost the bid, or he did not qualify. That is the main issue before us this evening. And if the Prime Minister is not guilty of those things, we are not here to listen to what he did from 1971, the “No-vote” campaign which plummeted him to prominence and power.

I remember him in the period 1971 to 1976 as a young enterprising, ambitious man, who did not get much recognition from Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams at the time. I understood his frustration and the reason he aligned himself with Karl Hudson-Phillips against Dr. Williams. I understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the consequences of such behaviour, not necessarily the Prime Minister, but all of us who have had difficulties with political leaders—

**Mr. Manning:** The wages of sin— *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** The wages of sin is political death. The Prime Minister and I are both reincarnated in public life, and I am happy that today we are able to discuss in this manner an important issue.

When I heard the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, it gave me the impression as though she was practising for the budget debate.

**Mr. Manning:** That is right.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** So this important discussion here is now a practice session for the budget debate. That is wrong. If she wants to practise, go to Balisier House or probably go into one of the conference rooms here and practice, but you do not compare an expenditure which occurred 10 years ago, with something that is happening today at a price which is 10 times the amount of money. So, if they claimed that in the airport project there was overexpenditure, their justification for the Tarouba Stadium and for all the projects controlled by Mr. Hart and others, Waterfront projects and so forth, you would see that the issue is not really a defence of what is happening today, but it is an attempt to smear the Government of the day, by claiming that there has been a lot of corruption.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that matter has been ventilated throughout, and just as they claimed that they have discussed and dispensed with a lot of important matters, that is a matter that is before the court today. Speaker after speaker has spent their time in heaping praises on almighty Patrick Manning, Member for San Fernando East, as if they were singing for their supper. There is a limit to which you shall bow, scrape and ensure that you maintain your integrity, manhood and womanhood. I do not want to bring you into the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I have to congratulate you for the stand you have taken and I also want to take the opportunity to wish you a Happy Birthday, today. *[Desk thumping]* So as an experienced Member of Parliament, you find yourself in a situation probably having to listen to those who wish to continue in office.

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I have no intention to talk about Boysie Prevatt and John O'Halloran, but when I hear the kinds of comments being made on the other side about Basdeo Panday, Kelvin Ramnath and those of us who have been there for a long time, I wondered whether they knew or they have bothered to research what the Chairman of the PNM was involved in. There was a warrant for his arrest. He could not come back into the country. In fact, he slipped back into the country just to die here. If you raised these issues, the first thing you would be told is, that is history. What we want to discuss today is, whether the Prime Minister has spoken the truth; whether he knows the facts; and whether he has done nothing about them. That is the issue.

**9.30 p.m.**

What I could tell you is that we do have a Prime Minister who suffers from megalomania.

**Mr. Manning:** Do not say that; that is not nice.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** That is not an insult; that is a description of a state of mind. [*Desk thumping*] I will not insult the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Manning:** I will never say that about you.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Well, I am not a megalomaniac.

He does not suffer from delusions of grandeur; he suffers from grand delusions. It appears that Trinidad and Tobago has become too small for him. Beyond his wildest dreams and, perhaps, nightmares, he never thought that prosperity would have come to this land, not as a result of efficacious programming by the Government, but as a result of a gift from above. When you can get \$158 a barrel for crude oil, even for a short period of time, and even though that has been reduced to about \$101 a barrel this morning, I do not remember the figure, you should count your blessings. You should not go around bragging and boasting that it is as a result of the conduct of Government that this country has become wealthy.

I am not prepared to take away any credit from the Government for any programme, but they speak as though they are a gift to the nation. They speak as though they are doing the nation a favour. If you listen to the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara—

**Mr. Manning:** I thank the Member for Couva South for giving way. The point has been made before that, notwithstanding the price of oil, or gas for that



matter, we cannot capitalize unless we have the production of either oil or gas. Is it, therefore, that the Member for Couva South is saying that the levels of production that we have today have absolutely nothing to do with the policies of the Government? Is that what you are saying?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I know that he would get into trouble. I also know that he enjoys having a little conversation with me, from time to time, but if he needs advice from an expert he could summon me. [*Laughter*] I am prepared to give that advice as a worker. I work for a state enterprise.

**Mr. Manning:** An itinerant worker.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** The production of oil in this country is at its lowest for a very long time. The reserve, according to Ryder Scott, is 13 trillion cubic feet. Last year our finds equaled the utilization. We have been fortunate with some exploratory drilling; we have not been able to totally evaluate the reserves; at least that has not been made public. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** The reserves—the production last year has equaled the amount of gas discovered. In fact, we discovered a little more gas than we produced, so the reserves have gone up marginally. The reserve to production ratio now is 13:1 instead of 12:1 of last year. But we have argued consistently that this country has always been operating on a relatively low reserve to production ratio. In fact, the Trinidad and Tobago magic, as we describe it, and as it has been described elsewhere, is precisely that, that we have been able to do so much with so little. The question, therefore, is this: In the face of all the suggestions that oil and gas are likely to run out, the fact that has not yet happened, are you saying it has nothing whatever to do with the policies of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago at this time? What is responsible for that?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I could now understand the difficulty that his Ministers face. It is the same point I was making earlier; let me repeat myself. You have been placed in a position in 2008; you cannot expect to be using Stone Age technology; you are aware of the technological advance in observing reservoirs; you have seen the technology; you are a geologist, perhaps you are a bit stale, [*Laughter*] but the Prime Minister knows the technology that is available.

All I am saying is that if you do not produce an amount of gas that equals your consumption, your reserves are going to continue to drop. I am also of the view that we are measuring our reserves to production ratio; we are too optimistic. Other countries have very much lower reserves to the production ratio.

**Mr. Manning:** Not lower, higher.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** No, the US is less than 13:1, and they justify that—

**Mr. Manning:** Is the US a gas exporter?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I think there is a conspiracy here to take me off track. Let me just say: The reserves to production ratio, if it is low you are running out, but there is an optimum reserves to production ratio.

**Mr. Manning:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sorry. The Member for Couva South knows that the minute he starts to talk he is going to engage me.

What he said is described in other countries as conventional wisdom, of which the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is not guilty. In fact, we have moved away from the conventional wisdom, and have been increasing our production and use of gas, therefore, our revenues, on relatively low reserves to production ratios. The implication of that is that we must constantly have an aggressive exploration programme, which is a function of Government policy, and if we are able to discover enough gas to offset the rate of production, in any given year, it is only because the Government has put a policy in place that has led to that. I can tell you, that policy was not always there, because I was the Minister of Finance between 1981 and 1986, and it was not there at that time. It is there now, and it is only now, as a consequence, we are able to do certain things. Just in the event that it was not clear in your mind.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Let me answer that and I will get back to the substantive Motion in a little while, because I think he is trying to take me off track.

When we found substantial quantities of gas in this country, we were not drilling for gas; we were drilling for oil. Then we discovered that the basin contained a lot of gas reserve. At that time, it was imperative that something be done, because the companies were bringing pressure on the Government for them to do something to utilize this important resource.

**Mr. Manning:** That is not true.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You could not have left the gas there, while you were seeing a decline in oil production. The highest oil production we have reached in this country was in 1979, when we produced 228,000 barrels of oil per day, 240. Today, we are marginally above 100,000; yet we are being told, in the absence of any major finds, that our gas reserves are also dropping off.

I have no problem with increased utilization in order for us to continue to become competitive internationally. People are not going to come here and set up

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steel mills, and they are not going to set up petrochemicals plants if we cannot guarantee them a reliable supply and price of gas. That is not a reason for the Prime Minister of today to misconduct himself.

I am not saying that he has misconducted himself. I am saying that there has been sufficient evidence to show that he has not taken any action; that he has information which resulted in the disappearance of two senior Ministers of government who have spoken after they have left government or after the Government has left them. Action was taken when the Member for Tabaquite came to this House and raised serious questions about the Malaysian connection, the Chinese connection and so forth. It was the Opposition's action that resulted in the Commission of Enquiry.

The flippant manner in which this Commission of Enquiry has been handled, leaves much to be desired. I read the papers yesterday that Prof Uff said, "We will start some time in January." In the meantime, serious allegations are being made about the conduct of UDeCott and members of the board of UDeCott. We are talking here about large sums of taxpayers' money.

If I were the Prime Minister and my friend from Lopinot—I saw him on television gallerying in the square, [*Laughter*] I have never heard the name "Patrick Manning" called so many times in my life, not even in a general election we have heard that name called so many times. [*Laughter*] If I was in their position and had such a dismal failure, in spite of mass mobilization, that they could not bring 5,000 people to Woodford Square—I am accustomed speaking in Woodford Square—having utilized certain coercive measures to bring these people.

I saw them in Couva this morning. I am not making up any stories; I know as a fact that they went to all the gangs and instructed the people that they should not work, if even they were not going to Port of Spain. This is a Prime Minister who told me in this House that the reason URP workers were getting \$8 an hour and were not going to get the \$9 an hour, which was the minimum wage, was because they did not work eight hours. The Prime Minister said in this Parliament that they do not work for eight hours.

Yet when it comes to a crisis, which could impact negatively on his career, he summons the same people to come to Woodford Square to support him. It was better that he and the treasurer of the PNM and my friend, the Acting Leader of Government Business, had publicly said, "We are inviting all our PNM supporters to come to Woodford Square." Nothing is wrong with that, but I think that they had serious difficulties with that, because PNM supporters know that in spite of all the macro economic data produced by the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, the

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Minister of Finance for the time being, that things are bad in the country for persons who are working in the URP, CEPEP, stores and low level jobs.

Those people have no medical plan; those people have no pension plan; they have no permanent employment. They work for the minimum wage and yet they are being called upon, and literally threatened with their jobs, if they do not show up to support the Government. I do not think you should treat human beings that way. You are quite capable of defending yourself in this Parliament.

A lot will be said after this debate about how human beings have been hustled into Port of Spain, bundled together and placed on buses. I was admiring the buses, actually; not the people in the buses. I like the buses. I have always asked why do we have these 50 passenger buses going through small streets in Trinidad and Tobago, all through the rural areas and through the cities. I saw them in numbers; I did not realize that they were all heading to Woodford Square. In fact, the 75 buses' maiden voyage was to Woodford Square. [*Laughter*]

**9.45 p.m.**

I will file an appropriate question to determine what payments were made to the Public Transportation Service Corporation with respect to the utilization of those buses. I am quite sure if I do not file it—because filing questions in this Parliament as you know does not produce much.

Let me say that we have a leader in the country who is being given a lot of praise for his vision, and today I heard the word “vision” so many times but I understand very well that if the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for St. Ann's East—a very distinguished Member—and the Member for Arima, a distinguished lawyer and experienced politician, could have been relegated to the Back Bench then I do not expect anybody else in the Front Bench to do anything other than praise the Prime Minister, I do not expect anything more than vision talk and high praises.

I want to say this is a Prime Minister who has committed some very serious offences against the people of this country and the State, and his leadership is in question. I do not want to get to the Norway situation. I was in Norway recently, I was in Malaysia recently—and I will be going to Peru in a few days—discussing oil business, and I do not want to get into those details of how the Stabilization Fund works in Norway, but if you go to Norway, you will not see any high-rise buildings, you will see stavanger. And if you go to Norway, you will see farmers, and you will discover that they refuse to join the European Union, and you will see that they took a decision not to change their currency from the krone to the euro.

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It is not that they are narrow in their perspective, but they recognize that if they had to subscribe to the rules of engagement in the European Common Market that their farmers would have been experiencing great difficulty and it is worth looking at the experience of countries like that. Somebody raised that matter on our side and a reply was given.

So my Prime Minister goes jet-setting across the Caribbean. He got up one morning and said, I think Trinidad and Tobago is too small, I must merge with Carriacou, Gouyave and Bequia because now we become a big nation and then I will make my friend from St. Vincent—he comes here often and I will tell you privately what he does as well. He is a happy-go-lucky fellow.

Dr. Mitchell lost the election in Grenada because they were strapped for cash, they could not have delivered, and the Prime Minister recognized that these people are in deep trouble and really need our cash. He was so Mr. benevolent to send troops to Grenada when they had a problem and people were in four and five feet of water in Claxton Bay and Penal but they did not send anybody.

They have an ODPM that has no value in the country, they do not have any resources, they are just a paper tiger that says they are to co-ordinate emergency responses and if you need advice on emergency response, you can talk to an expert, the Member for Couva South.

**Dr. Moonilal:** They give you a tin of corned beef and crix.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** So Madam Deputy Speaker, here is the Prime Minister going around the Caribbean. Belize says we really do not want to have too much discussion, Barbados said—

**Mr. Manning:** Were you there? They did not say that.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I read the newspaper and if it is wrong—and you do not make any statement in Parliament about it, the Prime Minister has no respect for this institution. The first thing you should have done after all that travel, was come and make a statement to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] There is an item called “Statement by Ministers”. And if there were any unfair criticisms of your initiatives, you would have been able to clear them up.

**Mr. Manning:** Just for the record, Madam Deputy Speaker. We laid in Parliament the memorandum of understanding and we were just looking for an appropriate time to debate it. It is our intention to fully air all the issues involved in that.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I welcome that, and I am glad that I actually coerced him to become democratic. I could understand the Prime Minister and his Cabinet making policy as far as the local economy is concerned and as far as Trinidad and Tobago is concerned, they have a duty to do that, and having made such policy, if legislation is required they come to Parliament and bring their bills and so forth.

When you begin to speak on behalf of the sovereign people of Trinidad and Tobago, let me remind you that this is not a monarchy. This is a sovereign nation, in which the people are sovereign, and you do not have the same power as Her Majesty. You will be surprised to know that being as civilized as she is, she does not interfere with the legislature, but she did remind Margaret Thatcher that it was a monarchy and not a republic. You know what I am talking about. I am getting to the point. I am saying that the Prime Minister has gone across the Caribbean, when he realized that there is a foreign Minister he says in hindsight, maybe I should take her and they went to Belize and met in a VIP room at the airport and said no how, no way.

The Minister from Barbados said he did not have a mandate to commit Barbados and for those who know David Thompson, I can assure you that Barbados has no interest in any political union with Trinidad and Tobago, not to mention Jamaica; Jamaica is a republic all by itself almost to the northern hemisphere. It was purely accidental and coincidental that they were part of this British Empire and we have some commonality, but as far as they are concerned they do not want to have any part.

Why is this necessary? We have a Caribbean community. We have an organization of which the Prime Minister is the Chairman or was the Chairman of Caricom. He is in charge of security and goes off on a tangent all by himself and comes up with this brilliant idea of political and economic union. I thought that the ultimate goal of the Caribbean Community was having a single market and economy. That was it, and there were opportunities for discussion on political union, but suddenly we are talking about the OECS.

Let me tell you something, there will be no economic benefits to Trinidad and Tobago from Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia, absolutely none. Their market is infinitesimal. What will happen is that we would see an influx of all the unemployed and underemployed people from St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada coming into Trinidad and Tobago and threatening the stability of this country.

Our housing deficit is over 100,000 and I read where the Prime Minister said we are going to get labour, there is a shortage of labour, but we have full

employment. Businessmen want employees and we cannot find them, we will find them in the Caribbean and that to my mind, to go that far and commit this country is gross dereliction of duty and there are serious concerns about—I would not say the mental health of the Prime Minister—his policies and whether he is fit to continue to govern.

I know there are many on that side who recognize that he may not be fit to govern in a short period of time, that is why they are all speaking in the way they are speaking. Then, of course, you have the situation with Guyana. Mr. Chavez—I want to say that the Prime Minister of this country has not disassociated himself with the President of Venezuela, Chavez and his thinking and Mr. Chavez is claiming one-third of the land mass of Guyana, and I have not heard this Prime Minister, who is encouraging Guyana to become part of this economy and political union give any support to Guyana against the dictatorial tendencies and behaviour of Hugo Chavez.

Do you know what is even worse? President Chavez is engaged in a most provocative act against the Western hemisphere countries, particularly the United States of America and Canada. They are moving in jets and all kinds of maritime equipment into the Caribbean Sea in order to provoke the United States of America and I have not heard a word coming from the Prime Minister of this country criticizing such a military exercise which is nothing more than being provocative.

**Mr. Manning:** Madam Deputy Speaker, just for the record, that information came to our attention today and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now carefully considering what response, if any, we will make to it; what intervention, if any.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I have had two concessions so far. I want to make it clear that the point I want to emphasize is that as leader of this country, you have a duty to lead, and while you may consult Cabinet Ministers, the way these Cabinet Ministers are behaving, like the Minister of Finance behaved today, you cannot depend on their advice. They are only here to praise the Prime Minister; that is all they can do and talk about 1981 and the vision of Patrick Manning and so forth.

Patrick Manning disassociated himself from Boysie Prevatt and O'Halloran and all those crooks who dominated the PNM. I am sure he has made statements to that effect, and yet Ministers come here to talk about what happened in 1971, and the vision and transformation of the society, but I do not want to get into that. I want to make the point however, that if you are going to lead Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean, this Parliament must not be treated with the contempt with which it has been treated.

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**10.00 p.m.**

I heard the Prime Minister say what he is doing is policy and “we are now exploring options and policies will be made and then they will come to Parliament.” My view is that when you embark on such an exercise, that what a leader of a country must do is to consult with his Parliament and make a statement and say: “I am going to explore these possibilities for the following reasons.” And I think that any leader will have the maximum respect when something like that is happening. There are people in this country who are frightened by that proposal. I would not postulate that there are ulterior motives and that having regard to the fact that he was out-voted by the UNC, then there was a tie and then they got back into government. It is quite reasonable to presume that he is worried, having accumulated all this personal power, that he is likely to lose it. But I want to assure him that no matter what initiatives he takes, he is not going to be there for very long.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thanks to hon. Members. I would like you to note the injury time that is due to me as a result of the number of interventions.

I am talking here about the attributes of a leader; I am not talking about what he does in his private life and so on; I think that is demeaning to enter into such a debate. Let me then go to the next point. It is a disgrace to the Caribbean that there has been a conspiracy to remove the Leader of the Opposition from this House. [*Desk thumping*] It is a disgrace, and no amount of procedural excuses, no amount of procedural documents, and so on or precedence and circumlocution, could justify that the Leader of the Opposition in a democratic country, one who has been the Prime Minister of this country, is pushed out of this Parliament because of using an electronic device. That is not an excuse; that is not anything reasonable; that is a matter that could have been settled very—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** It is a disgraceful stain on the democracy.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** It is a disgraceful stain on the democracy and I am quite sure that they must be ashamed to be telling countries in the Caribbean: “Come join us in a political union. We are a democratic country,” and your Leader of the Opposition is languishing somewhere at Charles Street in Port of Spain.



That is a reflection of the leadership of the country. The Prime Minister should have taken steps to ensure that such a frivolous action was overturned. But, you see, when you are preoccupied with power, when all that matters to you is being monarch of all you survey, then you ignore the basic principles of fair play and democracy.

Then I read that in some PNM convention, a gathering of these poor and helpless \$8-an-hour employees of the State at Chaguaramas, the Prime Minister is introducing a new Constitution. You do not amend this Constitution that we have fundamentally without a special majority. They do not have the special majority and because of the manner in which they are behaving they will never get a special majority once I am here. But do you know why? Who authorized the Prime Minister to have a new Constitution presented? The PNM? The Prime Minister should have come to this Parliament and say, "Listen, the present Constitution is not working and as a government we intend to make some changes; we are going to hire some experts; we are going to consult with the people of the country and we are going to come back to the Parliament with our findings."

Not at all! It is some round table with unknown people; not only innocuous, but unknown. The public does not know who are these round table people. And do you know what gets me? He stands up in Chaguaramas and, like the Minister of Finance: "Vision of Patrick Manning! The greatest leader in the world, Patrick Manning! Patrick Manning, how great thou art!" You know, you must not grovel; you must earn your position on the basis of your intellectual capability and merit. [*Desk thumping*] And you are a bright person.

**Mrs. Nunez-Tesheira:** Thank you.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** My friend, the acting Leader of the House, will never do that. He is very well trained.

So you know what happened at the convention? At the convention: "You like it?"

**Dr. Moonilal:** He say "yuh like it?"

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Yes. While these proposals are being read by the Prime Minister: "All yuh like it?" What else would they say? Their jobs depend on bawling: "Yes, My Lord." And as though that was not enough, we begin to read again that the leader of this country—Patrick Manning is the leader of this country; he is not the leader of the PNM only; the leader of Trinidad and Tobago and has to conduct himself and behave as a leader and that is what this Motion is all about, that all the things he has been doing are not consistent with leadership.

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So having done that, he says: “Well, we have some amendments.” The public was not asked to comment; the Parliament was not asked to debate, but, “We have some amendments. So what will happen is I will be both Prime Minister and President.” You know, we will have a kind of hybrid between the President and Prime Minister. That is symptomatic of megalomania. That is what it is. And these people on the other side do not know what they are getting involved in.

**Mr. Warner:** They do not care.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** They care but they do not know, and we are here to educate and we are here to warn. We do not want to usurp your functions, but leaders must conduct themselves in a certain way. It is leaders who have caused major catastrophe in democratic societies throughout history—poor leadership.

So a new Constitution is in the making. Then we look at his behaviour with respect to the Judiciary. I heard the Minister of Finance today—and I understand she is a lawyer; I do not get in these people business—talking about Ramesh Maharaj SC, the Member for Tabaquite making statements about legislating against judges who do not give judgments. I tell you, the number of Chief Justices that have complained about the laziness of certain people in the Judiciary, it is voluminous. In fact, disciplinary action had to be taken. It is not fair to a citizen of this country to wait years to have a judgment given.

But do you know what I want to say? Assuming that was perceived as an attack on the Judiciary, when you call the Chief Justice to your office and say, “You resign or I will lock you up”, what is that? The Chief Justice was exonerated by a commission of enquiry. The commission of enquiry took evidence and you know the people who were involved in the conspiracy to get rid of the Chief Justice refused to go before the commission of enquiry. That fellow—what is his name?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Jeremie.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Jeremie. He is the man who was selling land recently. He was an agent for HCL. The Prime Minister is calling the Chief Justice of the country and saying to him—and you know something? It made headlines in this country. And why I am not surprised about the treatment of Basdeo Panday is because there has been precedence set. Sharma was a good example of contempt for the Judiciary and contempt for people in high office.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I listened to the comments of the distinguished barrister, Russell Martineau, and Justice Stanley John who were in the Chief Justice’s house in Maraval, about the way in which the police

behaved—you know they came to drag him out of his house; they came to take him from his house and take him to the police station and humiliate him—I have little sympathy for you all when you are treated that way, because you are going to be treated that way. Once you have the propensity to take advantage of people under your control, you will do it to the highest and the lowliest.

Chief Justice Sharma was exonerated because all of those people who were involved in the conspiracy to get rid of him were afraid to go before the white man. You know that no Prime Minister in the country could have treated Michael de la Bastide like that. They would have been afraid to even raise the issue. But they went after Satnarine Sharma. Probably he got the wrong name, you know. He should have been named John Paul, or something, and then they would not have done anything against him—or Jack Warner.

So we have Caribbean integration which is a failure; this new Constitution of the PNM—and nobody on the PNM side is saying anything about this new Constitution. They do not even care whether the new Constitution will affect their children because it is designed to give maximum power to a leader. Also, in making a judgment about the capacity to lead, you have to understand how the Prime Minister became Prime Minister. ANR Robinson, who was my Prime Minister at one time—I was in the coup; I was a hostage with him for seven days in this Parliament—made a public statement that the PNM and Patrick Manning were involved in the coup to get rid of the NAR government. He has never retracted that remark up to today. And ANR Robinson, on the basis of moral and spiritual values—where he got them from I really have to question myself; I do not know if it was obeah or voodoo or something from some part of Tobago—denied the UNC the right to govern this country after we got more votes than the PNM and we had equal number of seats and we were the incumbent government.

That was morally wrong; it was wrong in every regard. [*Interruption*] Do not worry about Tabaquite; I will come to that. You all do not have the vision of the Member for Tabaquite. You do not have what it takes to criticize what is wrong.

**Mrs. Nunez-Tesheira:** You do not start groveling, eh.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I do not have to grovel. I am senior to everybody here. I am the third longest serving Member of the current Parliament in the country. [*Desk thumping*] I do not have to grovel. My independence has caused me a lot of pain and trouble in the past.

While I am advising you not to grovel, do not try to be too independent either.

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**10.15 p.m.**

Let me go back to the point I was making. The ascension to power was fraudulent. As a result of being of a correlation, you had a government now in power that could not summon Parliament because there was no Speaker, but they had a budget. The focus at that time was to spend as much money as they could. And nothing has changed.

Because of the correlation by ANR Robinson and Patrick Manning, he became the Prime Minister. I do not want you to lose sight of those facts. It is not about the great vision; the admiration you have and the policies that plummeted him to power. We would have been in power for a very long time, if we were not cheated. We were not defeated; we were cheated. All those neophytes who have groveled and become Ministers will soon discover that they too will be victims. You have to look at your colleagues who are now sitting in the back bench. I am not accusing them of anything.

I am seeking to establish that the Prime Minister as leader of the country has failed as a leader on several counts, not only on the issue of the perception that he is protecting people who are—you know when I hear about corruption and talk about the UNC in corruption, the police in this country has been under the control of the PNM. They do not have any independence. That is nonsense! That police instructed by John Jeremie would go down with 20 policemen with submachine guns at Panday's house at 7 o'clock in the morning to arrest his wife. That police will go with Osley Francis and his gang of thugs from LSA and tie ropes unto people's houses and pull them down with a four-wheel drive, then tell me at a meeting with the Minister of Housing sitting there, that he has every right to do so.

Interestingly, he is supported today by the Minister of Finance. I thought that she was a woman of compassion. I thought that she had a heart. You talk about legislation. Legislation is a dynamic and organic thing. When legislation no longer applies you change it.

When a certificate of comfort was issued, it was to deal with the present situation. The Minister admitted to me and everybody that there have been several instances where people should be entitled to certificates of comfort because they have been there, but they were not counted or did not apply and in such a situation she was going to speak to the Prime Minister.

In the presence of this Minister, this pompous and arrogant retiree, Osley Francis in some kind of imported accent said, "We have a duty under the law." Do you know what that duty was? Do not allow the people to take up their pitch-

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oil stoves, blankets, cover and pillows. The police moved them out of their little shacks; tied ropes on them and pulled them down. The matter is before the court. Yesterday, Justice Jamadhar issued an interim injunction saying that you cannot break the houses. My distinguished friend for Siparia was the attorney in the matter. I congratulate her publicly. You should not wait for a judge to say that you should not tie a rope to a house and pull it down in the rainy season.

I want to tell you something. You will not believe that people are living in the places that the LSA went to break down. You will never believe that people could live there and yet they find them. They pulled them down. In the presence of the Minister who was telling me that we have to talk to the Prime Minister; we may need to change the legislation or extend the period to cover those people who would have been covered under the certificate of comfort. This man who retired from the Ministry of Labour and is a geriatric demonstrated no respect and said that he had to obey the law.

On several accounts we have enough justification to question the credibility of the leader of this country and we have every right to do so. We do not have to wait for a budget debate. I will wait for the budget debate to criticize the Minister of Finance, if there needs be. I do not know what will happen. I will read the budget and speak. I will not want to use the budget to criticize the Prime Minister. This is the most appropriate forum and mechanism that we should use to question and have the Prime Minister answer for his stewardship or lack thereof. That is what we have been doing. No amount of economic jargon—do you think that everybody wearing red shirts understood what you were saying? *[Laughter]* You think anybody who came there for a bus ride and who was forced to come there has any interest in what the Minister of Finance was saying? You talked about the energy policy.

In conclusion, the Prime Minister has failed to provide leadership by attacking the Judiciary, the Chief Justice; humiliating the people of Trinidad and Tobago and attempting to destroy an institution of the Judiciary. The Prime Minister has been involved in a conspiracy to remove the Leader of the Opposition from performing his function in Parliament. The Prime Minister has without any sanction or permission from Parliament gone on a frolic of his own to develop a new Constitution for Trinidad and Tobago.

Finally, 100 persons failed to file their declarations to the Integrity Commission. A Member of this House was named. The minister was named. Do you know what was the response of the Prime Minister? When I heard it I felt ashamed that he would be associated with some remark that if you agree to exempt members of boards of directors, I will give you back Panday. My leader is

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a person who will give you the most appropriate response. “I am not a beggar. I will never crawl,” he said. One hundred persons failed to declare. The Prime Minister and Members of the Cabinet know very well. In fact a Cabinet Minister failed to declare. The attitude of the Prime Minister, instead of saying that you must obey the law—they talk about lawlessness. The Minister of Finance was saying that people who live in shacks are lawless. If you live in Couva, Esperanza, Basta Hall, Windsor Park and so on, you do not get NHA house. The Minister came to Couva by Nal Ramsingh, a defeated candidate of the PNM and had private discussions with PNM people to allocate houses.

The Minister went to Agostini Settlement in Couva North and held private meetings for housing. I have written hundreds of letters to the Minister about desperate cases. It is only when I went to the media they granted me an interview to discuss the breaking-down of people’s houses. They are not lawless people. They are people who cannot do better. You cannot build house now even if you are working for a minister’s salary. For those who are Ministers and have houses, you are lucky. On a Minister’s salary you can never live in the house that you are living in today at today’s prices. You talk about lawlessness.

Look at what has happened. When she came here the Minister of Finance was such an innocent wonderful woman. The Member for Siparia told me that they were doing MBA and she comes here today with this arrogance, that people who are squatting are lawless. I want you to tell the people in Woodford Square—they have all gone home now: they have served their eight hours. Tell them that they are lawless because they are working for \$8 an hour and cannot afford to pay rent and pay for medicine.

You have Ministers in your Cabinet who are lawless and refuse to file their returns to the Integrity Commission. I do not want to call names. There are senior people who manage billions of dollars of state assets, who not only have failed to file, but who have made it abundantly clear that they are not going to file. The response of the Prime Minister is, let us work out a deal. You give me the constitutional amendment to exempt them and I will give you back Panday. Panday for sale. That is the lack of respect that they have for the Parliament.

These are the points that I wish to cover where the Prime Minister has failed the country. He has been a poor leader and failed to take an active role in investigating corruption. There is every reason and justification.

In the couple minutes left I do not want to respond to my friend for Diego Martin North/East. He needs the services of a professional. He needs to have his

head examined. Clearly, we agree in this Parliament that something is wrong with him. Like former Ministers Valley, Beckles, Roberts, Achong and Dr. Rowley, your turn will be sooner than later. No amount of groveling and crawling on your belly will cause you to remain when the Prime Minister feels. He does not have to have proof; any proof. He just has to get up one morning and feel that you are a threat. The attacks on the Member for Tabaquite.

Let me make something clear. It appears to me that the Government has a problem with people who stand up for principle. If you see something wrong you must turn a blind eye. If there is corruption in the UNC, we have a right to expose that corruption. If there is corruption in the PNM as there is, there is a right and we have a duty to expose corruption, because it is not your money. It is the people's money.

**10.30 p.m.**

You know we all pay the price for saying things that do not please people, but we must never lose sight of the fact that our paramount duty here is to protect the public purse and ensure integrity in government. No PNM in the history of the politics in 1956 has ever criticized Johnny O'Halloran, Boysie, Prevatt and all the corruption that took place under the PNM, but they criticized those of us who said that where corruption raises its head, we must deal with it. Imagine being criticized for talking, without any allegations against anybody. All the allegations here today are about the Member for Tabaquite, who will not sit idly by and not investigate allegations of corruption.

I now understand that we have an epidemic. We have a Prime Minister who is so obsessed with power that it is now passing on to the rest of them. If they know that there is corruption, they must not talk. You fire Dr. Rowley because he said that he is not going to sit and allow Mr. Calder Hart and the conspiracy with the Malaysians, Chinese and Canadians. I am going to speak out; I cannot do that. All of you should take a lesson from that and where corruption raises its head make sure that you do not bury it, but expose it in the interest of the people who put you there.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not what you might describe as a long-standing Member of Parliament. Indeed, I have been a Member only for about seven years. I know there are others who might have been here many years—38 years in one case and twenty-something in other cases. It is critical for me to describe it as seven long or short years. You can pick whichever one you choose, depending on your perspective.

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In those seven years, long or short, I must confess that the Motion moved today by the Member for Tabaquite has to be the most ridiculous motion in which I have the opportunity to participate. Madam Deputy Speaker, even the presentation was pathetic. Even I was disappointed. It amounted to an anti-climax. We had all this hype for weeks being generated and arrived here expecting to hear some bang.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** We were expecting. We thought you had something to add. It fell flat. It was a total disappointment. It was a disgrace and that in the context of only seven years and I am sure there are others who might have a lot more to say.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the basis of this Motion causes me to ask myself whether someone is not crazy. We just had an election and I imagine that is where the explanation is. There was indeed an election some 10 months and I imagine they had in their own minds great expectations. They certainly spent a lot of money and the expectations might have been generated in their stomachs that they were indeed moving into government somehow. It must have come as a shock and I imagine the explanation for the quality of the presentation and the basis for the Motion in the first place has something to do with the fact that in the last election perhaps they were moved to this state of psychosis, perhaps because they were beaten to a stupor and it is in that condition that they were able to manufacture this worthless Motion of no confidence.

I also imagine that part of the intensity of that psychosis might be as a consequence of some of the “licking” they might have gotten in some constituencies where they had not expected it. I imagine that the “licking” they got in Pointe-a-Pierre or Chaguanas East might have hurt them particularly badly and that I am sure would have contributed in no small measure to the fact that they are today such a weak Opposition despite the fact that they have boasted to the contrary on many occasions.

Today, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have some parts of the country they consider a great prize; they now reside within the PNM fold. Lange Park is a part of a PNM constituency. That is a great source of pride and joy for them, but it is now within the boundaries of a constituency that is represented by a PNM Member of Parliament. Warrenville is part of the PNM family. Cunupia is part of the PNM family and we are working hard servicing the interest of our constituents to ensure that those communities remain part of our family. [*Desk thumping*] Even over the last week we have been active doing construction work on Ali Trace in Cunupia,



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Kaloo Trace, Ghanny Trace, Hazrath Extension, communities that have and are being part, more and more so, of our family and we are very proud.

We have a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East. In 2001, we had an election. In 2002, we had another election. In 2007, we had a third election and on each occasion, increasingly so, the population spoke resoundingly and expressed their lack of confidence in the Members opposite. That is not without reason. The population is an intelligent one and the decisions it has made are as a consequence of careful consideration. Just like us, the population knows them. They have come to know them collectively and individually and it is that familiarity that allows the population to make an informed decision.

There is one particular characteristic of many Members opposite; not all, but many, which stands out and it is largely as a consequence of that characteristic that the population has continued to reject them. That characteristic is hypocrisy.

Today, when I saw the Member for Chaguanas West waving a book called *Political Hypocrisy*, I could not see very well, but I thought I saw *A Guide to Political Hypocrisy* by Austin Jack Warner. I only realized that that book was written by someone else when he announced the name. He is a classic case of political hypocrisy.

Just before I get to him I want to point out, on individual levels why the population has no confidence in that team and why it has demonstrated election after election that it is not prepared to accept the Members opposite and grant them the opportunity to govern this country.

The hon. Member for Oropouche East, who is walking out now as he walked out before, preached a sermon and in it he quoted scripture, I imagine. I am not familiar with the scripture, but he did say that duty requires courage, attempting to imply that he was a man of courage. Yet when the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East began his presentation and midway through it started to quote from the *Hansard* the words of the Member for Tabaquite, the Member for Oropouche East knew what was coming. After the first sentence, he walked out like a penguin walking out of a sauna, hustled out of the Parliament and he has only come back now because I have challenged him. He has come back under duress in an attempt to prove that he has courage, but he has already demonstrated to us and to the population that he is without such quality.

The minute the Minister started to read the *Hansard*, he found it reasonable and suitable to take himself out of the Chamber because he could not face what he

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knew was coming. It is a rare occasion that I will compliment the Member for Caroni East, but he had the guts to sit and take it. He took it and that says something about the Member for Oropouche East and his willingness to be part of a team and share in the “licks” when “licks” are sharing. This is not the first time he has demonstrated those qualities.

I will take him back to when he contested a seat on the Progressive slate against the Patriots. Some time ago, he was on the Progressive slate competing and contesting against the Patriots. They all remember it very well; there are some closet Progressives here still. The Progressive slate, led by the then Member for St. Augustine, got a resounding licking. Do you know what the position of the Member for Oropouche East was? He timidly, with the wetness behind his ears, a little boy as he was described, went back to the Patriots and declared: “We were of the view that Dookeran in the recent past—this meant the last two or three hours—appeared out of alignment and seemed apart from the politics and activities of the UNC.”

That is a coward. That is the behaviour of a coward; the same behaviour we saw today. That is what we saw today and that is why the population has no confidence in him and any of his colleagues. [*Desk thumping*]

Do you know what was remarkable today and ironic? He boasted about his qualifications, not understanding what he was saying. Perhaps he was sitting too close to the Member for Caroni East. The Member for Caroni East has a long tradition now in boasting about the length of his resume. Perhaps some of that may have rubbed off on him. He boasted about his B.Sc.s and Ph.D.s, et cetera, the accreditation of which some have questioned. But even in boasting about his qualifications, he reported to this Parliament that he got a job—he was employed by the hon. Prime Minister—as a consequence of the intervention of the hon. Member for Caroni East when he was the Chairman of the North West Regional Health Authority.

**10.45 p.m.**

Qualifications or not, he was roped in/lassoed, to use his words, into being an industrial relations consultant. It was a political favour that was granted to him, which allowed him to get this job; more than that, the job he now holds. He owes that first job to the Member for Caroni East, the former Chairman of the NWRHA, Dr. Tim Gopeesingh. The job he now holds is as a consequence of an intervention made by Dr. Bhoë Tewarie who was the past Principal of the University of the West Indies. It was a favour. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Minister, please, I am hearing you with your talk. It is acceptable, but, please, I have absolutely no interaction or business with the former principal of the university. I would have tolerated the first part of the comment. That is fine, that is part of the thing, but, please I have absolutely no link with the former Principal of the University of the West Indies, Dr. Tewarie. But, please.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** You spoke for an hour and one-half, do not interrupt me for “dotishness”, please. He owes his job, because of the intervention of Dr. Bhoew Tewarie—they have a clique at the University of the West Indies. That is why the Member for Caroni East constantly attacks the University of Trinidad and Tobago, because he would like all the funding to go to UWI so that they can make mas in UWI. The country knows that.

Dr. Bhoew Tewarie owes his job to Mr. Ganga Singh. Do you understand what is happening?

**Dr. Moonilal:** This is Ramadan “why yuh doh not stop lying?” It is against the month of Ramadan. Have respect for your religion!

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Well pray “fuh meh”.

Neither of his two jobs can he credit to his qualifications. Instead, both can be credited to political intervention. I wanted to point out that particular irony in the context of his boast today. [*Interruption*]

We are debating. I have no confidence in the mover of the Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister. I am demonstrating that the population has no confidence in them and that is why the population is rejecting the Motion and rejecting them. I am providing proof and explanation as to why the population has rejected and will continue to reject them.

The hon. Member for Chaguanas West—let them come. You may not know, but the rules of the university do not allow a Pro-Vice-Chancellor to campaign, express political inclinations or views yet, on my campaign trail, I am “bouncing up” Dr. Bhoew Tewarie in Enterprise together with me—campaigning against me. I am just telling you how you all have no ethical standards; none of you. That is why nobody likes you.

The Member for Chaguanas West, with some kind of sanctimonious buffoonery, as is normally the case, made a statement criticizing Sunway; describing it as having family ties. Again, I come back to the point of hypocrisy and why the population has no confidence in the Member for Chaguanas West and those opposite. He criticized Sunway for having some kind of family ties. He did that just after 4.00 p.m. today.

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How can you criticize family ties, when the Member for Chaguanas West knows that as Vice-President of FIFA, his son was selling packages, trips and tickets to go to Germany. When FIFA caught up with them he said: “That is meh son business, yuh know. I doh know anything about that.” There is no issue of family ties there, but there is an issue of family ties here. The word I mentioned earlier is hypocrisy. Constantly we have to deal with hypocrisy. The population is seeing straight through all that they are saying.

We also had a case. I could not believe it. There is something that would have come up over the last two years, the special purposes companies. It is a marvelous creation that allows for the implementation of government policies and projects and a level of efficiency that is impossible within the public service. Are you aware that when the four stadia were being built—there are two points we need to make. One is that money was available on the international market. I think it was IDB-funded at 4 per cent. That was refused in favour of a rate of 12¾ percent on the local market. Do you know why? It was to allow the first special purpose company to construct the stadia. Do you know what that special purpose company was called? It was called CONCACAF. CONCACAF constructed the stadia on behalf of the government. I do not know what CONCACAF is. The hon. Member for Chaguanas West and CONCACAF are the same thing. Chaguanas West equals Jack Warner, equals CONCACAF, equals TFFF.

Before I am finished with the Member for Chaguanas West, let me pick up something I had here to demonstrate hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is an important word. On Friday, January 18, speaking in the Parliament on the Finance Committee Report, the hon. Member for Chaguanas West had this to say:

“Mr. Speaker, I am saying today that Mayaro has poor people who are deserving of the benefits of a caring government...”

On Wednesday 30, 2008 he said:

“More than one in six persons earn less than \$665 a month, \$22 per day and when they are suffering and hungry and see others filthy rich next to them, they would begin to feel as if they are rejected. Let us lift the poverty bar.”

He nearly broke into tears. This the hon. Member for Chaguanas West speaking.

“Last year, this Government spent \$2.8billion per month, \$1,000 per minute and yet 17.1 per cent of the people are now below the poverty line.”

On Friday 29—this is over a period of time—the Member for Chaguanas West said:

“I asked myself—food prices are skyrocketing almost daily, galloping. Carite \$30 per pound; shark, \$18 per pound; shrimp, \$45 per pound; baigan,

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\$10...food prices are galloping. What does the speech, the 22 pages given by the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, have to do with improving the lives of these people?"

On Wednesday, April 23, this is the hon. Member for Chaguanas West again:

"Thank you. In this country with more than one-quarter of a million people living below the poverty line...less than US \$1 per day and we are spending \$207 million on a court that tries 12 cases over three to four years."

He was speaking of the Caribbean Court of Justice Headquarters. Those were four occasions when he was almost crying for the population on the poverty of our citizens.

Do you recall he gave a nice speech and issued a big bulletin? In defence of local football, when he was defending the prices at the stadium, the TTFF was prepared to charge. The hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs was attempting, on behalf of the Government, to make an intervention that would allow more of the same poor people to watch the football match. That is the intervention he can make as the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs; to allow the same poor people to view the football match. Hear what the Member for Chaguanas West had to say. It turned from poor person to the man in the street.

"The man in the street, the average Joe who bought all the tickets for the English match in one day asked the Minister for help? Did the Minister do a survey of the cost of admission of sports and cultural events in Trinidad and Tobago, vis-à-vis the cost of matches of the Football Federation? I assume so, so let me do a brief survey for him. Carnival fetes cost the average citizen \$600 per person and he goes to almost all."

What he is saying is that the average citizen, the same poor man, goes to \$600 per person fetes.

"Carnival fetes as distinctive as inclusive cost a citizen up to \$200 and he goes to all. International shows, there is one carded for June 28, cost the average Joe \$250. For general admission, he goes to almost all. Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day shows cost the average citizen \$300 and up and he goes to all and I have not mentioned the price for the average citizen for the last Lionel Richie Show which was attended by over 15,000 persons on the night when there were several other shows."

The point I am making is that when it serves their purpose, they come to the Parliament and then everybody is poor and suffering. When they want to "bus"

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charge on the population, the average Joe is rich. Their whole perspective changes. The average Joe, all of a sudden is able to go to fetes. These same poor people are described as those who are able to go to fetes and could pay \$600, \$350 or \$1,500. All of a sudden, they find a way to justify what they would like to achieve. When they are dealing with money in their pockets—anytime you see the Member for Chaguanas looking to cry, it is because he is crying for money. He cries for nothing else but money. He would cry for money. Do not put it past him. He would stand and put down a show and cry. Again, it is evidence of hypocrisy to which I draw your attention.

His good friend, the hon. Member for Mayaro—“all de holy talk dey talk in de Parliament as though they care bout people”. I remember—this is just one incident I want to remind him of; he might have forgotten—within the first week, when he was sworn in as a Minister—it is just to describe to you how they see their role as Ministers. I think the Member for Couva South described Ministers here as being arrogant and that we were here for nine months and had become so arrogant. Within the first week, I think it was, you would correct me if I am wrong, he found it fit to take a helicopter in Port of Spain, “Fly, take ah ride up to de airport to catch a flight to go and perform in some show”. That is what the largess of the state is to be used for. Was it two weeks after you became a Minister? *[Interruption]* If you went on a helicopter, I do not want to hear you. If you did not go on the helicopter you can stand and say: I did not go on any helicopter.

**Mr. Peters:** I would like to explain that to you, Sir.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** No, I do not want any explanation. If you are standing to tell me that you did not go on a helicopter I would hear you. You went on a helicopter. You wait and explain when you are responding.

**Mr. Peters:** But you are misleading the House.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** All right, sit down. They always criticize this Government.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** If you want to—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** If he has a point of order I would be fine.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** If you want to have your—please indicate whatever Standing Order it is.

**Mr. Peters:** Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** What Standing Order?

**Mr. Peters:** Standing Order? “I doh have none.” I have no Standing Order. [Laughter] But I am standing though and I am in order. The Member for—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, what Standing Order is the Member quoting?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, if you are going to raise an objection or so, you must indicate what Standing Order. If it is a point of order, refer to the appropriate Standing Order.

**Mr. Peters:** I would deal with that another time.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** I gave you advice and you would not take the advice. “Ah tell yuh ah was here for seven years. Ah know ah little something.” Relax.

They always criticize. “Ah could see why Big B beat yuh dat year.”

**Mr. Peters:** I have more than one forum to deal with you.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** That is all right. “I eh fraid.” If I was afraid I would not be here. I could sing kaiso too. They always criticize this Government for advertising. This is a small symbolic example of the obscenity in their criticisms.

**11.00 p.m.**

I remember very well all the criticisms they levelled against various Government Ministers for advertising. It is not now that they are doing this. They have been doing this for quite some time. One of the most obscene things I saw when they were in office was—do you know these exercise books that you distribute to primary school and secondary school children for free? They gave them orange pencils and exercise books with Mr. Basdeo Panday's face on them. I am saying that comes from a political organization and that is not advertising, but that is propaganda. You were using the public schools within which to distribute your propaganda. Madam Deputy Speaker, it was obscene to say the least.

Let me say a word about the Member for Caroni East. You know, they have criticized us today for grovelling and rushing to say a good word about our hon. Prime Minister. Normally, if you want to please your Prime Minister, you would say a nice word, and nothing is wrong with that. If he has positive qualities you could certainly describe his positive qualities. There is nothing wrong with that, but do you know what is remarkable? They have criticized us from time to time for being positive about our Prime Minister. I have no apologies to make for being positive about my Prime Minister, because he has positive qualities.

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Do you know how they showed love on one occasion in particular? Do you know how the love of the hon. Member for Caroni East and the hon. Member for Chaguanas West was manifested? They found themselves nearly in a fist fight over who should pay his bail. Do you understand? [*Desk thumping*] They were in a fight over who should pay the bail, and they are criticizing us for saying that the Prime Minister has vision. [*Desk thumping*] That is grovelling. I could have never conceptualized that kind of grovelling. I would not have imagined what they were talking about when they were talking about grovelling—fighting to pay his bail and tripping over each other to see who could get to pay his bail first.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You would have to do the same thing for your Prime Minister. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** I have known the hon. Member for a while, because he was in the Senate with me. Every time he gets a fetish, the Maraval police get involved. He always creates work for the Maraval police. [*Laughter*] Around 3 o'clock in the morning, the police have to go to his house to stop people. He got a national award. He is lucky they did not mash it up. He threatens me sometimes, but I told him that women would beat him and if they cannot beat him they would beat his car. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am talking before the Member for St. Augustine, because I want to give him the opportunity to respond. Remember the theme of my contribution is: “Why the population has no confidence in them”. I am underlining these things for them so that they would know better and change their ways if they hope to have a political future in this country. I really wanted to speak in his presence, but he would read the *Harsard*.

Not long ago, the Member gave a long monologue in this Parliament about what a fantastic economist he was and what a brilliant manager he was. He had everybody chirping and he, himself, bubbled for weeks after that particular contribution. I really want to demonstrate—this is a classic case as to why this population has no confidence in that particular party and in the individual Members of that political party—step by step and ball by ball. I do not want the population to forget.

The Member for St. Augustine joined the NFM in September, 1996 and within two months he was on a plane on a trade mission to India with two persons who are noteworthy and who were present. They were the hon. Member for Couva North, Mr. Basdeo Panday and a gentleman by the name of Mr. Colin Mahabir. Both gentlemen went on this grand trade mission—remember he joined the NFM



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in September 1996, and in two months' time he was on this plane, and not even the chairman of NFM knew about the trip, because you know he was a sweetheart.

He came back enthusiastic about buying rice from India. In fact, it was to be the single largest transaction between the company from India and the company from Trinidad and Tobago. You would know that the common external tariff was in place and they had to apply to the government of Trinidad and Tobago to get a 25 per cent exemption for which they had applied and for which the Government agreed. I do not have a clue of what the Government of Guyana had to say about it but, in any event, the Cabinet would have agreed to it.

In early 1997, they entered into a transaction with a company called Gangadhar Shah. Mr. Vasant Bharath was the CEO at the time and they entered into negotiations for the purchase of this rice. Now, if you are buying anything on the international market you must have a letter of credit. You have to go to the bank and the bank would give you a letter of credit which you could use to pay for your rice or whatever product that you are purchasing. This is a normal part of any transaction.

The first bank that they tried to negotiate with for the letter of credit found it suspicious that Gangadhar Shah was attempting to include a provision for the rice to be paid before it was even loaded on the ship. So, this company, Gangadhar Shah, was asking NFM to make an arrangement or to establish a provision that the rice would be paid for even before the rice got loaded on the ship.

Now, the first bank, I believe it was Scotiabank, advised that ought not to be included in the letter of credit, because that is not normal and it was highly suspicious. Do you know what they did, the hon. Member for St. Augustine? They moved away from Scotiabank because it seemed as though they did not like the advice that they were being given from Scotiabank and they went to a second bank. I understood they got the same advice and they ignored the advice. The letter of credit was completed and it did in fact provide for the rice being paid for before it was loaded on the ship.

**Mr. Bharath:** Would the hon. Minister give way? Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that it is not the intention of the Member for Chaguanas East to mislead the House, and I certainly hope that it is not. In fact, those "facts" are not correct. If you were to read the KPMG report thoroughly and if you were to read subsequently the letter of credit terms and conditions, you would know that the rice was paid for by an irrevocable letter of credit which was the normal terms for NFM. In fact, Citibank did open the letter of credit and the letter of credit actually stated very concisely that certain conditions had to be met before any payment was made and that was exactly what took place. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** That is what your lawyers told the court. You are a politician and you know how to respond. You are going to have your whole time. I wanted to speak before you. I said earlier that I was speaking before you so you have your entire hour to respond. If I say something and that is not your view, you are free to express your views in the Parliament.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they proceeded to allow for the rice to be paid for by the letter of credit and it was, indeed, opened by Citibank and it was paid for before the rice was loaded on the ship. Furthermore, there were to be two shipments. That was the first piece of advice that was not heeded by the hon. Member for St. Augustine.

Why the population has no confidence in Members opposite? There were two shipments and the management advised the hon. Member for St. Augustine to get the first shipment first and to see how that went, and then they would have proceeded to negotiate for the second shipment. The hon. Member for St. Augustine said that he would pay for both shipments. *[Interruption]* You are going to speak. You were the CEO.

**Mr. Bharath:** Madam Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 35(b). The hon. Member for Chaguanas East is obviously misleading the House. He knows not what he speaks and he is just imputing improper motives. Certainly, none of what he is saying is factual and none of it is correct. He is actually misleading the House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** You have not said anything to cause me to rule. Standing Order 35(b) speaks to if you are going to elucidate on a matter. If you are rising on a point of order that is 35(a), but you have to give me some more information. If you say that the Member is misleading the House, you need to at least correct what he is saying so that I can make a ruling. I just cannot rule if you simply tell me that he is misleading the House.

**Mr. Bharath:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am just correcting the information.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** You have to give me the information to correct it. If you are saying that the Member is misleading the House, you have to tell me what he said was incorrect and give me the correct thing so that I can rule.

**Mr. Bharath:** First of all, I did not have authority to rescind any contract of any nature nor did I have the authority solely to make a decision that I would import or bypass any decision of that tenders committee, whose responsibility was to determine when and where the rice was purchased and also when it arrived in Trinidad and Tobago. That was not my responsibility, but that was the responsibility of the tenders committee of the board of NFM. It was not mine.

I was not even a member of the tenders committee who would have made that decision. So, I could not have overridden that decision.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** What you have done is under 35(b), so I imagine that you have given the hon. Member some information and he would deal with it appropriately.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** He needs to check his memory. I am going to leave your name out of this, but the population knows what I am saying. The tenders committee got involved and it was the tenders committee that advised that both shipments be done separately and NFM somehow took a decision to pay for both shipments upfront. The CEO of NFM at the time was the hon. Member for St. Augustine, and he was the same individual who had gone to India months before, and there is where the idea was born. Let the population decide.

The Member travelled in November and returned in January. He hastily proceeded to negotiate a shipment of rice and now he is attempting to put the negotiation on the lap of the tenders committee. Fine! Let the population decide. Those are the facts. The facts are that you are the one who went in November to India and you were the one who came back with the idea to buy rice from Gangadhar Shah. The tenders committee did not—

**Mr. Bharath:** On a point of order. Again, I was not the one who made the determination to purchase the rice from Gangadhar Shah, but it was the tenders committee of which I was not a member.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** The hon. Member for St. Augustine was the one who went to India and first met Gangadhar Shah.

**Mr. Bharath:** I did not go to India and meet with Gangadhar Shah. It was the general manager of marketing who did that and not me.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** I am coming to the role the General Manager of marketing did. Sit down and hush! I spoke about Colin earlier on, but you were not here. I am coming to that and I am coming to the role that he played.

**11.15 p.m.**

There were two shipments and NFM took a decision to purchase both shipments. Whereas the good advice from some within NFM, was to bring the first shipment and then deal with the negotiation for the second shipment, NFM—and the CEO at the time was Mr. Bharath—took a decision to pay for both shipments

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upfront. Second bad idea, second mistake, second reason for having no confidence in the hon. Member for St. Augustine.

They ordered both shipments and both were to be paid for before either of them was loaded, all right. So, he would pay for the first one before it was loaded and he would pay for the second one before it was loaded. Those were the terms included in the letter of credit. There is something in NFM called a logistics manager—he was not there for very long so he may not know all of these things—and the logistics manager was concerned about the distance for the transportation of the rice. They were concerned about the shipping line, because the shipping line was not a line with which NFM was familiar, and they asked to be allowed to play some kind of role in the negotiation, but NFM—interpret NFM how you will—decided to leave that to Gangadhar Shah, that he would make the arrangements for the shipping of rice.

They were concerned as well with the quality of the ships to be used, and they asked about the quality of ships; they wanted ships from ship liners that were reputable, with whom they had a history. None of that was forthcoming, they never did business and they advised that they ought to be included. However, NFM took a decision that the shipping arrangements should be made by Gangadhar Shah, I am not even saying: “and company”. I will come to the status of the company. So, Gangadhar Shah had this responsibility to make that.

In fact, some say that officers who were presenting this view were blocked; let Gangadhar Shah arrange the shipping. That is the third mistake that we can count. When it was time for the ships to be loaded some members of the management at NFM asked for the quality manager to travel to India to inspect the rice.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. The management at NFM wanted someone with technical expertise to go. The quality manager is the person that they asked for, but somehow the management took a decision to send the marketing manager to India. They wanted to send a technical person to inspect the rice, to make sure everything was all right, the quality and so on. It had to be someone with that kind of technical expertise, but a decision was taken to send the marketing manager.

You know who the marketing manager is, Madam Deputy Speaker? It is the same Colin Mahabir, who went on the first trade mission. So, he went back to India to inspect the rice in circumstances where he was the marketing manager and lacked any technical expertise in that matter. His lack of technical expertise was evident in the fact that he brought back a sample that was too small and the lab could not test the sample to determine whether the sample was good rice or bad rice. They could not make a proper determination.

**Mr. Bharath:** Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. It is obvious that the—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to know what is the point of order, please. What Standing Order are you referring to?

**Mr. Bharath:** 35(a).

**Mr. Imbert:** 35(1)?

**Mr. Bharath:** 35(a), A for apple; you understand. Standing Order, page 44, this little green book that your Minister of Housing was referring to earlier on. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is very difficult to sit here and tolerate, I would have to say the garbage that is coming out of the mouth of the Member for Chaguanas East. I very rarely speak in this manner, but I find it quite offensive that he would not just make insinuations, but fabricate these issues, many of them of which have been already cleared up. This particular matter with regard to the marketing manager coming back with a sample that was not adequate has been proven to be incorrect. It was a matter of fact that Mr. Mahabir, when he came back from India, not only took photographs—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member you are clarifying—

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

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, please. [*Interruption*] Yes, you are actually on 35(b). If you are saying a point of order, what is the point of order? You are actually explaining.

**Mr. Bharath:** The Member for Chaguanas East is not speaking the truth.

**Mr. Imbert:** What is the point of order?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** What are you saying, that he is either not speaking the truth about—[*Interruption*] Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, please, I am on my feet. If you are saying he is misleading the House or he is speaking an untruth, could you say exactly what it is.

**Mr. Bharath:** That is what I am trying to explain. I am sorry, forgive me. Mr. Mahabir is not here to defend himself, but the fact is that it was proven conclusively subsequently that Mr. Mahabir did bring back the required sample size and the lab actually misplaced it. It is in written evidence given in Mr. Mahabir's statement, as well as the statements given by the laboratory subsequently. I would like to place that on record, please.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Thank you very much. You see I said that the lab could not test the sample, I was not wrong. He said that they brought back photographs. The lab could test photographs? That is what he said earlier; you said that.

**Mr. Bharath:** In addition to the samples.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Or, in addition. So, he took photographs of the bit of rice. You know what is worse, Madam Deputy Speaker? They also could not say whether the sample of rice that they had was in fact from that particular shipment of rice that was on the ship coming to Trinidad, because they took him to some warehouse somewhere on the port, gave him a sample of rice and he could not prove whether that sample of rice that he had was rice that was on the ship. Get up again!

Mistake number four, because what they were supposed to do was send a quality manager not a marketing manager. What on earth is a marketing manager doing going to get a sample of rice? Get up and answer that! *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Bharath:** He is inviting me to get up and answer, so I am.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** No, please, that is not how we conduct business in the House. That he simply sits and asks you to get up and answer and you get up and answer. That is not how we conduct business in the House. Hon. Member, could you please—

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** “Sit down, sit down, never mind, never mind.” *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Bharath:** So do not answer then?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am on my legs and please, we have been going very good so far, there is no need for us to be addressing each other in that manner, stand up, sit down, I mean. *[Laughter]*

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam Deputy Speaker, if he would stop interrupting me and wait his turn to speak we would have no such interactions like these.

**Mr. Bharath:** You asked me to get up and talk.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Okay, have your seat now. [*Laughter*] The fourth mistake there and this is management, and I am saying this in the context of a wholly—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, I am [*Inaudible*] concluding that this is a debate on rice.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a debate on confidence. This is a debate of the confidence that the population will have in them to manage the affairs of this country, because they are attempting to bring down this Government, and their intention is that they will assume the role of government. The population have demonstrated repeatedly that they have no confidence, and I am demonstrating clearly this evening why the country has no confidence in them collectively and why the country has no confidence in them individually.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Boy, you grovel at Panday feet to get a job.”

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** I will tell you about Sacha just now. Madam Deputy Speaker, the ship left India and you will remember that the management had asked for the ship liners to have a role in the selection of the ship liner. The ship came here four months late, so that when the rice got here we were unable to say whether the rice was spoilt; or whether it was good rice that got spoilt or whether it was spoilt rice that got rotten.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Madam Deputy Speaker, a point of order as to relevance. I did not want to object, if the Member feels that the Member of Parliament has to have a motion of no confidence in them, but this debate cannot be used to attack a Member of Parliament. The only Member of Parliament which could be attacked—under the Standing Orders if you want to attack the conduct, but this rice and everything is totally irrelevant. I have sat here, listening to it, did not object but I think I must formally object now.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am following the contribution of the hon. Member so far, but I am assuming that at some point in time he would move on from the rice debate, so I would let him continue.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am talking not about rice, you know, it could have been rice, flour, peas, I am talking about confidence of the population in the decision-making capacity of the hon. Member for St. Augustine and his colleagues. They are talking about poor hungry people, but the same poor hungry people—the second ship was arrested in Brazil, because of bad

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decisions. As a consequence of that, there was a situation where the country lost \$30 million as a consequence of one bad decision. [*Crosstalk*] The only saving grace in this whole process was that the—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Could you all allow the hon. Member to make his contribution, please.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** —new chairman of NFM, who was appointed in March or April 1997, found it reasonable in January 1998 to suspend the hon. Member from his job as CEO and later he was dismissed. His dismissal is clear evidence of the fact that the country and the board had no confidence in the hon. Member for St. Augustine, as we have no confidence in any of those Members on the opposite side. [*Desk thumping*] They are unfit—

**Mr. Bharath:** Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Mr. Imbert:** What Standing Order?

**Mr. Bharath:** (a), (b), whatever it is, page 44.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Not whatever it is.

**Mr. Bharath:** 35(b), 35(b), I am only following the—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** 35(b) is provided the hon. Member gives way, I assume he has.

**Mr. Bharath:** With regard to the Member's statement that the country has lost confidence in myself and my colleagues, I want to remind him that this matter was taken to the courts of London, the Queen's Bench.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Which matter are you speaking about?

**Mr. Bharath:** The matter that we are talking about, the issue of my termination. The courts determined that the case against the CEO was absolutely baseless and without merit. In fact, right now NFM is at the juncture of making a full and final settlement with me on this matter for compensation for this issue. I want to put that on the record, so in the event that you were not aware of it, Member for Chaguanas East, those are the relevant facts. [*Desk thumping*]

**11.30 p.m.**

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I will appeal for my time and I will also ask you to take note that they have abused—in my view—the privileges in this House by constantly interrupting a Member making his contribution. They made all kinds of contributions—



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**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member, I just want to draw to your attention, in relation to Standing Order 35(b) it is only if you give way; if it is in relation to Standing Order 35(a), if it is on a point of order, and you have been giving way—  
[*Interruption*]

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Oh, thank you very much. You tell me a little late though—

**Hon. Member:** You were not supposed to give way.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:**—but it is all right.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in summary we had a trip in November 1996, we bought rice, we received no rice and it cost us \$30 million. Let the population decide if that is the kind of decision making in which they have confidence. [*Desk thumping*]

From time to time we hear complaints from members of the population who may not have access to electricity, depending in which communities they live and we also have complaints from members of the public who may not have water, depending on where they live. While it is true that the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) has its own development programme, as does the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), it has its own development programme, sometimes it is necessary for Government to make an intervention, particularly in the case of the provision of electricity, because, you see, sometimes we do have situations where citizens may not be able to afford the infrastructure cost of their electricity.

That is because the law is structured in such a way that T&TEC has to operate on the basis of economical costs. So, if T&TEC wishes to go into a community and provide electricity it must undertake its calculations to ensure that it is economic for them to do so. But we know that there are some communities in the country which may not in fact be able to afford the cost of the infrastructure based on the socioeconomic conditions as the case might be.

I recall, it was, I think in 2002, when the hon. Prime Minister led a series of walkabouts throughout this country, went into a number of communities and that was the complaint: “Prime Minister, we do not have electricity; Prime Minister, we do not have water; Prime Minister, we need training”, and a number of reports were made to the Prime Minister and his team. I recall, and I was part of the Government at the time, [*Interruption*] the Prime Minister coming back to the Cabinet and discussing the matter.

Out of that, what we found, one programme among many was established. I want to speak—and this is a programme with which you, yourself will be very

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familiar: the National Social Development Programme. The way the programme is constructed—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I am sure we would like to listen to the contribution of the hon. Member for Chaguanas East, could you please give him some silence so that he can make his contribution.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. The relief that this particular programme was intended to bring—which it did and it has, and I will bring you some evidence of that—was that these communities that may not have been able to afford the infrastructure, the Government would intervene and pay for the infrastructure.

So, if there was a small community, perhaps one of our poor communities, you would find that T&TEC would come in and install the poles, the lines and so on, and bring electricity to the community.

**Hon. Member:** The Prime Minister is responsible for that.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** The Prime Minister, as a consequence of a number of walkabouts that he did in 2002, in his relations with the members of the population came back to the Cabinet and discussed and initiated the development of a programme called the National Social Development Programme, and that particular programme has had a tremendous impact on many citizens throughout the length and breadth of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Citizens have had access to water and citizens have had access to electricity. Just in case you think that these are imaginary citizens, I want to quote for you what Vishnu Boodoo of Boodoo Trace, Claxton Bay—you see they talked about people breaking down people's houses, but I want to tell them there is a side of the story they will never tell, and Vishnu Boodoo will tell the story for you, because it is on behalf of Vishnu Boodoo that we are in Government. [*Interruption*] Here is what Vishnu had to say:

“Before the NSDP came to our assistance we were struggling for water, we had to depend on purchasing water or wait until a WASA truck came by with truck borne water. The NSDP has filled me with happiness, as they have helped me and everyone in my area with getting a supply of water.”

That is the compassion that we are talking about. That is why the country has confidence in those of us on this side and the reasons I have outlined earlier are the reasons why the country has no confidence in you.

**Hon. Member:** Who tell you that?

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Anita Rampat, Boodoo Trace, Claxton Bay, “The water situation was bad before NSDP, we had to depend on WASA trucks. Thank God for NSDP for giving us the courage to keep hope for pipe borne water.” St. Johns, Caparo, “We were in darkness”—this is one talking about electricity—“our children could not do their school work, when night time came our roads were in darkness, we had to use candles and lamps. I feel very great now that NSDP has come. Thank God for the NSDP.”

The point I am making, you see, you must never forget. You were never in Government, Member for Couva South, but you must remember that your colleagues on the opposite side were in Government and they came in and met Mr. Boodoo without electricity and when they left Government Mr. Boodoo was still without electricity. What the difference is, when we came into Government in 2002, Mr. Boodoo was without electricity; today we are still in Government, Mr. Boodoo already has electricity. That is the difference. [*Desk thumping*]

There are thousands of others just like Mr. Boodoo. [*Interruption*] There are thousands of others just like Mr. Boodoo who can claim that this Government has made major positive intervention in the quality of their lives throughout the country.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Calder Hart has electricity too.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And 20 per cent have water. Two out of 10 persons have water in their homes.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** You see, they are interfering with me, I will go back and talk about “Water for all” now. [*Interruption*] If you want me to talk about “Water for all” and the fraud that “Water for all” was I will oblige.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You have to deal with him, he is an embarrassment to you. That is why we have no confidence in you.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Caroni East, you have been going good so far. [*Crosstalk*] Let us hear the contribution of the hon. Member for Chaguanas East. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Members, please! Could we allow the hon. Member to make his contribution?

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam Deputy Speaker, they are traumatized in Opposition, you know. Frustration is indeed a terrible thing, but I am pointing out the contempt they have for Mr. Boodoo, because the fact that I can read Mr. Boodoo’s

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comments in the Parliament is an offence to them, because in their elitist minds, who is Mr. Boodoo. They have no concern for Mr. Boodoo, which is precisely why they never took any steps to make sure Mr. Boodoo had his lights or had his water. But we have taken steps and that is why in large part, today, we are able to boast that we have won constituencies that in the past would have given us challenges. Today we are in a position to say that 26 constituencies in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago have confidence in the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am decent, but do not get me vex.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Member for Caroni East, you should not let anyone get you that vex, you know.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a little late, perhaps his medication might have worn off by now. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Nice one, nice one; I will give you full credit for that.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Nelson Reid—let me call some people, man—Cunapo Southern Main Road, Navet Village, Rio Claro, 63 years old, here is what he had to say: “I am more than pleased, as they say, the giver of light is light. ‘Meh gran’ children and dem could do homework and thing. I am very happy.’ That is an older gentleman, 63 years old. [*Interruption*] Slightly older. Mr. Gladys Charles, Basse Terre, Moruga, 74 years old: “I am glad, I am happy about it; I am an old age pensioner and the way things going these days, I am feeling safer with my lights. I want to say thanks, thanks a lot, and especially the Prime Minister; thank you, eh.”

**Mr. Ramnath:** We will get rid of those “fellas”. [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** Madam Deputy Speaker, we had a major programme for the last couple of years, the street lighting programme—you see when the devil tells me he “eh” like me, I glad. Once the devil “eh” like me I am happy, I am in a good place. [*Interruption*—you will recall, and I can say confidently sitting in the Cabinet over the last few years, that the role of the Prime Minister was considerable in initiating, in conceptualizing and driving the programme.

Over the last two or three years, we have been able in Trinidad and Tobago to provide lighting throughout this country. In central Trinidad we were able to install 16,059 new lamps; in east Trinidad 21,286 new lamps; north Trinidad 10,985 new lamps; in south Trinidad 25,756 new lamps; and in Tobago 3,590 new lamps. Sometimes we hear talk about this part of the country and that part did not

get light. Madam Deputy Speaker, north, south, east, west and Tobago; the entire country has been perfectly well lit, so much so that we have installed 77,676 new lamps in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

More than that, we have upgraded lamps, because in some cases we felt that the lamps were older and needed to be changed.

**Mr. Ramnath:** How much money Calder Hart—[*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Imbert:** None.

**Hon. M. Abdul-Hamid:** In central Trinidad—these are upgrades now—6,777 upgraded lamps; east Trinidad, 9,613—[*Interruption*] You see, for you, street lamps might not be important, because you do not understand the priorities of the people and that is why the people have no confidence in you. That is the point that we are making. [*Desk thumping*] In north Trinidad, 10,157 upgraded lamps; south Trinidad, 14,753 upgraded lamps; Tobago, 2,785 upgraded lamps. Upgraded lamps, 44,085.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we replaced street lamps, north, south, east, west as well as Tobago; a total of 4,271 lamps. All told, we have been able to achieve just over 140,000 lamps ensuring that the population now has a positive and an enlightened experience—if you might call it that—in the public space.

More than that, once we got to some of these communities we took the decision to help our citizens, because once we get to some of these poorer communities, again, the compassion keeps showing. Once we brought electricity to some of these neighbourhoods, we realized that—and it shows the compassion has no bounds—some of the people did not have the wherewithal to wire their homes, to run electricity lines in their own homes, and so the Government made a very generous intervention, and the Government opted to provide house wiring services to the citizens of this country. A number of our citizens were able to benefit as a consequence of that.

Just around 3,000 citizens were able to benefit from the house wiring programme, and that has been done throughout the country. If you ask the Member for Fyzabad he will tell you the good work that has been done among some of his constituents. A number of the Members here—even some of them may know, some of them may not know depending on the level of their involvement in their constituencies, but, this Government has served this country well. This Government has served this country well in various aspects of Government, and it is for that reason, that on November 07, we were in a position

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to report to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and have the people adjudicate on our tenure in office, and as at the end of the period of the day of adjudication the population resoundingly declared that they had every confidence in the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and they had every confidence in the People's National Movement to continue to govern this country.

And the reason they are here today filing this Motion, is because up until now with the "tabanca" in their heart, they have great difficulty accepting the will of the people.

**11.45 p.m.**

It is the fact that they deeply lack democratic values. They are uncomfortable and disturbed to be sitting on the benches of the Opposition and it is that distress and trauma that they are experiencing at this point in time, that inspires this Motion of No Confidence. The Motion of No Confidence is inspired by nothing, but a "tabanca" for Government. The people of Trinidad and Tobago have made their point, and they have made it repeatedly, resoundingly and clearly, they have every confidence in the Prime Minister. And I, the Member for Chaguanas East, speaking on behalf of the people of Chaguanas East and speaking now comfortably, the Government can speak on behalf of 26 constituencies and the hundreds of thousands of citizens of this country we have, regardless of what the 13 or 14 of you might say, we have confidence in the Prime Minister, the hon. Patrick Manning.

I thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Ramesh L. Maharaj SC** (*Tabaquite*): Madam Deputy Speaker, the contribution of the last Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Chaguanas East, has demonstrated what the strategy of the Government has been for this debate. The Government realized that it had no defence, none whatsoever, so what it decided to do was to try to cover up the issue involved, have personal attacks against Members of the UNC and the UNC, hoping that the population would not see that it has no defence for the debate.

I want to make some general comments and then I will deal with some of the individual contributions, but may I say that the hon. Member for Chaguanas East should be the last person to talk about contempt of the people. [*Desk thumping*] He does not even service his own constituency. His constituents come to me. He knows that there were murders in his constituency. The victims' families called for him and he refused to go. He did not go, I had to go and talk to the people. I had to service his constituents. He is a lucky man today that the UNC and the COP did not unite because he would not have been here today. [*Desk thumping*] So what is he talking about contempt and democratic values?

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Madam Deputy Speaker, democratic values are the essential part of democracy. In democracy, you have the formal democracy where you have elections—a party wins an election; but you have substantive democracy which is the democratic values that involves honesty, integrity and clean government. [*Desk thumping*] That is what it involves. This is what this Motion is about. This has nothing to do with UNC and PNM. This has to do with the people of Trinidad and Tobago; [*Desk thumping*] with the future of this nation; the soul of the nation; and we sit here today and allow the Government to trivialize this Motion.

Imagine a Member of Parliament, who has taken an oath to uphold the Constitution has come here today and said that this Motion is ridiculous, when two senior Members of the Government said that there was bid rigging and there was corruption in the award of contracts. They do not understand what corruption is. When a government is corrupt, it is thieving the people's moneys. It is taking money from the people and putting it in the hands of private persons and public officers. So you cannot be having love for people; you cannot be democratic and you cannot have democratic values, if you are condoning corruption.

**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** No, I feel very strongly about it. I would have thought today, that the Government would show a rational heart—but I said I was not talking in this Motion to “I am a PNM until ‘ah’ dead; no matter what is said”, I am talking to the rational heart of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Talk man. You come here to talk about stand pipe and street lights in 2008.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Madam Deputy Speaker, that gentleman, the hon. Member for Chaguanas East—I appeared for several clients in Trinidad and Tobago—was almost my client after the 1990 attempted coup. [*Desk thumping*] If he were my client, I would have had to rescue him in accordance with the law. So, how could you come and talk about all this—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Abdul-Hamid:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was never, ever, ever—35(a)—nearly, approximately, remotely his client, and one of these days I will have something to say on that matter.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** There was a “fella” resembling you, then [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] who was sent to the airport. When he reached the airport—he hid in a drain in Patna Village. That “fella” resembling you, must be your twin. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

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Madam Deputy Speaker, we are dealing with a very serious issue here and I notice that the Prime Minister has decided not to speak before me, but to utilize the provisions of the Standing Order to speak after me. I would have thought that the Prime Minister in a Motion like this would have decided to speak, answer and then let us comment on his answer, but no, he wants to have the last word. Let it be so. What we are dealing with, and the attitude of this Government has shown, that it is really not interested in the fight against political corruption; it is interested in bacchanal, in bad talking people and in making allegations.

If the Opposition in government, assuming, but not admitting they had faults or had problems and they come now in Opposition, are you saying that a government could be corrupt and the Opposition is disqualified from talking about it? What is the relevance? What is the relevance of attacking each Member of Parliament here? Are you perfect?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** You are perfect?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Well, let me tell you something. The hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East should be the last person to talk about charge because people could make several charges against the individual. They could make complaints against the individual. As a matter of fact, there is a complaint against you before the Integrity Commission involving that there was US \$6 million which you collected in an arbitration, and it is being contended that you did not make a declaration before the Integrity Commission.

Now, I do not know whether it is true or false; I do not know the merits, but when people heard you talking on the television tonight, they sent me a big file. I wrote the Prime Minister about that matter and it was published in the media. Do you know what happened? Even though the Integrity Commission started the investigation, after it was published that I wrote the Prime Minister about it, the Integrity Commission wrote the complainant and said, "We cannot investigate it anymore." What conclusions do you draw from that? Then you see, you are supporting the Prime Minister with anything he does. I think we need to be more mature in this country. We need to be more mature in the Parliament. We have to understand that people outside there are suffering; people are being killed; mothers are crying for their children and their loved ones. Fathers do not have their children anymore. There is human blood on the street, while people in Government are smiling and making a serious matter, a joke.



Madam Deputy Speaker, my colleague from Oropouche East read a document today—the Prime Minister was not in the Parliament—in which the Prime Minister’s Government, where people had much hope, that when you came into Government people felt that you would have been serious about the fight against corruption and about moral and spiritual values, what did you do? The same thing you criticized, the same thing you condemned, you are right in the middle of it with Calder Hart ruling the show, dictating to you. You sat on this side of the House, I was sitting on the other side as the Attorney General and you condemned. You condemned on the basis of allegations. You called for investigations into corruption.

As an Attorney General, I supported the position that allegations of corruption must be investigated, and there was hope for the country because there was a fight for better governance, transparency and accountability. You came out and said yes, you will do it and the President appointed you on the basis of those moral and spiritual values. What have you done? Today, two wrongs do not make a right. We are dealing with people whose moneys are being stolen by public officials. You are happy; you are living in a palace with the people's moneys.

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

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** I wanted to make sure that you do not fall asleep.

**Mr. Ramnath:** What is the cost of the palace, \$2 million?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Let me remind you what political corruption does. What is political corruption?

- Political corruption is the abuse of entrusted power by political leaders for private gain, with the objective of increasing power of wealth.
- Political corruption need not involve money changing hands, it may take the form of trading in influence or granting favours that poison politics and threaten democracy.
- Political corruption involves a wide range of crimes and illicit acts, committed by political leaders before, during and after leaving office.
- Political corruption is an obstacle to transparency in public life.
- In established democracies, the loss of faith in politics and lack of trust in politicians and parties, challenged democratic values—

That is democratic value. You should not talk about democratic values.

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—a trend that has deepened with the exposure of corruption in the past decade.

- In transition and developing stage, political corruption threatens the very viability of democracy as it makes the newer institutions of democracy vulnerable.
- Political corruption is a primary focus of Transparency International's work.

Then it talks about what are the effects of it. It does not make any sense talking about developed status Vision 2020, if people are not having human development.

You could build big buildings, you could build whatever you want, but if at the heart and the soul of the nation there is banditry and corruption, you do not have a nation. You cannot have a Vision 2020. So, therefore, that is why this is important. This Motion is important, and this has nothing to do with the Member for San Fernando East personally. It is a higher cause and it is a greater cause. I could get up and say the worst things about you; personally it does not alter the price of what is the reality of the situation. I am not attacking you personally; I am attacking you as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

### **12.00 midnight**

If you get up and encourage your people to get up and say the worst things about us and attack us personally, that does not solve the situation, that does not make you discharge your responsibility as Prime Minister in this matter. If you notice, I have not gotten up here, because I do not believe in getting up and objecting, because the people will judge. The people will judge whether what you say, which is irrelevant, is important for their lives.

I have gone into politics; position is not important, office is not important. What is important is if you are here and you are doing the people's business; you must do their duty, you must stand up for what is right. But you have surprised this country, you have embarrassed this nation. You have allowed Calder Hart to come under your Government; you have allowed the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to be ruled by someone around which is a web of corruption.

**Mr. Ramnath:** "Yuh still fraid white people?"

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** If you look at all the international newspapers, I am sure you get them, you would see how they are talking about the corruption in

Trinidad and Tobago. You would see that Transparency International and other international organizations have developed an interest in this debate, because they want to hear what you have to say as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. These proceedings here today are throughout the world, because they are following it, the organizations involved in the fight against corruption.

As a matter of fact, I told this Parliament today that in relation to what has happened outside in Woodford Square, an internationally recognized organization would conduct an investigation, something like a commission of enquiry, in Trinidad and Tobago, open, because of the interest in Trinidad and Tobago, to see which direction it is going.

I was very surprised at the hon. Minister of Finance; I was very, very surprised. The hon. Minister of Finance is somebody that I really had a lot of respect for; I really thought that she would understand. She is a distinguished lawyer, and I really thought that she would understand some of the issues that were involved here. She talked about the separation of powers, the rule of law and the UNC government being involved in breaches of that, and she read from Chief Justices of the Caribbean. The UNC administration made several contributions to Trinidad and Tobago, and you cannot deny that. Whatever you may think about it, whatever you may feel about it, it has made several contributions, more contributions than any PNM Government has made. [*Desk thumping*]

For example, in the area of law reform, in no country in the Commonwealth has there been a legal infrastructure in relation to freedom of information and transparency and accountability; no country in the Commonwealth. Since the PNM got back into office, they have whittled away everything that they could whittle away, which gave the people greater rights; as a matter of fact, they have turned the clock back. The people with that legislation got more power; they became stronger, they became more empowered. What has happened? That has been taken away.

You have a situation in Trinidad and Tobago in which you say that you are democratic, that you are committed to transparency, openness and accountability, but your Ministers, to your knowledge and which must be presumed to be a Cabinet decision, are refusing to give answers in this Parliament as to how the moneys are being spent, how taxpayers' moneys are being spent, for who and for what purpose. A question was asked about lawyers and lawyers' fees, who the lawyers were and what fees they collected, and they said, "No, we cannot answer that; that is an invasion of privacy." Who got scholarships? You could not answer that; that was a question of privacy; housing—the criteria, who gets housing; that was also a question of privacy. If there had to be another ground for the Motion of no confidence, transparency and accountability would have been one.

**Mr. Manning:** There is only one ground?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** No, there are many, but the ground I advanced, which I consider to be the plank of it was the corruption issue. What is the defence? The Government did not get up here and say that what Dr. Rowley said was untrue. They did not get up and say that what Camille Robinson-Regis said was untrue. The contributions were, "Well, you have a commission of enquiry." That is not the point. The Commission of Enquiry will not adjudicate on these matters, as to whether there is loss of confidence in the Prime Minister. Would the Commission of Enquiry adjudicate whether there was no confidence in the Prime Minister?

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

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** But that is not disputed; you have not disputed it. Even in the proceedings before the court, the Government did not challenge it; the State did not apply. Are you saying that Dr. Rowley lied? Are you saying that Dr. Rowley lied? If you are saying that Dr. Rowley lied, I want you to do so publicly. Are you saying that former minister, Mrs. Robinson-Regis, lied? Are you saying that what they said about Mr. Calder Hart was not correct?

You have not said that Calder Hart did not have two brothers-in-law in the company that got the contract. You are trying to hide behind technicalities. You tell your Ministers that they must come here and give an account of their Ministries; that is not the issue here. This is not a budget debate or a mini budget debate.

**Mr. Imbert:** What is it?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** If you do not know what it is—[*Crosstalk*]

Corruption of high level officials—let me tell you how it works, if you do not know how it works. I am sure you know how it works. "*Corruption and Government, Causes, Consequences and Reform*" is by Susan Rose-Ackerman:

“‘Grand corruption’ occurs at the highest levels of government and involves major government projects and programs...

Corrupt payments to win major contracts and concessions are generally the preserve of large businesses and high-level officials. The important cases represent a substantial expenditure of funds and have a major impact on the government budget and the country's growth prospects. These deals are by definition the preserve of top officials and frequently involve multinational corporations operating alone or jointly with local partners.

If the government is a buyer or a contractor, there are several reasons to pay off officials. First, a firm may pay to be included in the list of prequalified bidders and to restrict the length of the list. Second, it may pay for inside information. Third, bribes may induce officials to structure the bidding specifications so that the corrupt firm is the only qualified supplier. Fourth, a firm may pay to be selected as the winning contractor...Finally, once a firm wins the contract, it may pay to get inflated prices or to skimp on quality."

Those are some of the things which Dr. Rowley said occurred in the tendering and award of the contract.

Then you had the process with respect to the \$67 million excess, and the contract was given.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

But, that is not important. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister should know that one of his Ministers, the Member for Chaguanas East, got up and said today, "You know, I was expecting a bacchanal; I was expecting something to come; a bang; a lot of criticism has come of this Motion, but there is nothing new." [*Crosstalk*] The question is not whether there is nothing new; there is something new. Nobody knew that you lied; nobody knew that the Prime Minister lied.

As a matter of fact, I do not have to repeat it. He lied when he came in this House and in the Senate. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Withdraw that!

**Mr. Speaker:** Wait, wait, please. You know what to do.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** I am very sorry, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ramnath:** "What wrong if yuh say dat de Prime Minister lied?" If he lied, he lied.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** Nobody knew that the Prime Minister came in this House and was not speaking the truth; he was a stranger to the truth in respect of his not knowing of a specific instance in UDeCott where there was corruption. I showed today that both in the Senate and in the House he knew at the time there were specific instances of corruption, on the basis of what his two Ministers said.

Several speakers who spoke on behalf of the Government got up and gave the impression that everything was good with the Government, "What is the complaint?" As a matter of fact, persons were reading from letters and giving the impression that people were very happy, "Look what is happening." I noticed that

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nobody responded on the issue of crime. They made indirect statements, but nobody said anything, because one of the planks of the Motion of no confidence was on the question of crime.

Mr. Prime Minister, you may be able to say something on this when you get up. Since 2000, we have lost over 2,500 citizens to murder. Many injustices have been brought against our women and children while they are simply trying to live their lives, to be productive, to raise their families and keep them safe. In 2002, there were 172 murders; in 2003, 269; 2004, 261, and it increased. Since 2005, we have had an average of one murder a day. Mr. Prime Minister, you know that large cities across the globe can report that they have less murders a day. The question arises that there was almost a 300 per cent increase in crime in 2008. The Prime Minister has to tell this nation tonight what he is going to do to reduce it. Nobody talked about that. They talked about lamp; they talked about pipe; they even talked about rice; they talked about Boodoo Trace, they talked about all kinds of things.

**Mr. Ramnath:** They did not talk about their role in the coup with Abu Bakr.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj SC:** International human rights groups like Freedom House and Amnesty International Country Reports on Human Rights Practices since 2002 recorded the upward trend in Trinidad and Tobago, which has caused a backlog in the judicial court system, with cases reported to be held up for five years. There are some 20,000 criminal cases awaiting trial to date—the BBC source, September 24, 2006 and Caribbean News. From 2005 to 2008, some \$12.28 billion was spent by the Ministry of National Security in the fight against crime.

**12.15 a.m.**

Mr. Prime Minister, there is no accountability, there is no acceptance of responsibility, and it is frightening that we can hear from what the Government is saying today that what it is doing is the answer. As a matter of fact it seems to think that this vision 2020 is something for cosmetic value.

It does not make sense having a vision 2020 and schools cannot be opened, rivers cannot be dredged and drains cannot be cleaned. People are unsafe to walk the road and to remain in their homes. It cannot be correct and you cannot answer that by criticizing us, and by saying the worst things about us, by saying because the Opposition is “X”, “Y” and “Z” it means that is an exoneration of the responsibility from the Government.

You cannot fiddle with the nation like this, the Government cannot do that and, therefore, the only conclusion I would come to in respect of some of these matters is that the Government does not have any answers. It is aware that it has failed in almost every respect. The institutions in Trinidad and Tobago are collapsing and you know the hon. Minister of Finance talked about separation of powers and I will deal with some of the matters she said, but I want to read from the Mustill Report because it is very damning against the Government, and this is a lawfully constituted authority.

At page 3, it refers to some of the comments which the Privy Council made in the case, quoting what the Privy Council said:

“...there are some features...which are to our mind troubling both individually and collectively.”

And Lord Mustill said:

“This preliminary assessment has been amply vindicated by events. The picture presented to this Tribunal almost defies belief. We find contradictory accounts given by the Chief Justice and the Chief Magistrate... on oath, of meetings between them...”

We see formal complaints made by the protagonists to disciplinary and police authorities within days of the controversy coming to a head. We have heard allegations against the Attorney General, who could have given oral evidence to rebut them, but did not.”

So we have a finding that an Attorney General, who could have rebutted allegations in an important enquiry, chose not to do so. When an Attorney General does that, Mr. Prime Minister, that is wrong. An Attorney General like that, does not deserve to represent a country abroad, and as a matter of fact, when the Criminal Bar Association writes the letter that he wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions and if you read that letter, you would see what part he played, which is not a role which an Attorney General should play.

Listen to what Lord Mustill said:

“At least within this narrow field of view, the concept of the separation of powers seems to have been ignored.”

So the tribunal is saying that the concept of the separation of powers are being ignored. We see the Chief Justice publicly arrested, later ushered three times into the dock in a criminal court to undergo a summary trial on charges based on

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allegations by the Chief Magistrate and then on the last occasion ushered out again in consequence of the refusal by the Chief Magistrate to give evidence against him.

So in the case of the UNC when its allegations were made about interfering with the separation of powers, the UNC caused a commission of enquiry to be appointed. It was a Commonwealth Commission comprising of a representative from Africa, India, a distinguished jurist and it was chaired by a former Lord Chancellor of England—I cannot remember the name. And the commission of enquiry found that the statements of the Chief Justice had no basis and it is significant that what I was accused of by the Chief Justice of separation of powers, in the draft constitution which the Prime Minister has produced, he is saying that the Cabinet must have an oversight of what the Judiciary is spending and must be able to make the Judiciary account for the moneys it is spending.

I heard the comment about squatters and our law and civil disobedience and that was from the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment. The Act that was passed under the UNC administration was one in which the policy and spirit of the Act was to ensure that persons enjoy the right to shelter and I do not think the Government is rightly construing the Act because in it was that you would have a land bank and if people cannot afford shelter, it would be given to them and it would be on the basis of needs.

It is wrong if someone is living in a house and even squatting for the Government agency to break down the house one night. If a person goes to squat and the Government prevents the person from squatting within a short space of time, but persons cannot be living on land, have their home, and the Government can just break it down like that. The court has to intervene and you have to get an Order from the court, otherwise you will be having people's homes demolished at the will of the Government when there is no basis to do so.

Mr. Speaker, there seems to be the feeling on the other side that if we say that there will be an international human rights team coming to Trinidad and Tobago to look at what occurred today and do an investigation and report, that that is bad-talking the country. But that is what human rights bodies do all the time. As a matter of fact, Amnesty International and Transparency International do investigation reports and report on the country. So if such a report is done, or if we criticize the Government, it does not mean we are criticizing the country. There is a distinction between the Government and the country, and if the Government is doing wrong, that is the whole purpose of democracy; that you can criticize the Government.



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There is nothing non-patriotic about that; as a matter of fact, that is what democracy is about. If you had a situation where the Government is doing wrong and you cannot criticize the country because the Government would be offended, then you really have a one-party state, you do not have a democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the Government that one of the elements of the contract which it entered into with the people when it went for election in the last seven months, and I read the PNM manifesto from the political Leader.

“Our goals can only be realized through the most dynamic partnership between the People and the Government, and to this end we are committed to expanding the mechanism for participatory governance.”

So when the Government takes the position as it has done, it did not have to go to the people with the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), or it does not have to have consultation before it gets a draft Constitution. If you are coming up with a draft Constitution and you want to talk about it and say this is the draft which we have agreed to and we will put it out for public comment, it shows that you have made a preliminary decision in respect of what you want for Trinidad and Tobago.

I just want to put on the record what has happened with the African Constitution which the Prime Minister is talking about. As a matter of fact, what happened in Africa, was that after independence, when the countries of Africa and some of the other countries in the East got independence, it was felt that this Westminster system did not suit those countries and they decided that they should opt for a country which had a one-party state.

As a matter of fact, in a special issue of the *International Commission of Jurist Review*, the *Evolving African Constitutionalism* it said: It is to be recalled that at independence, most African countries adopted a Westminster Constitution Model after the United Kingdom. The article goes on to say:

“It was argued that these constitutions were not a suitable vehicle for creating unified States from the different and fragmented nations often mixed in the pre-independence era. Furthermore, a competitive system modelled after that of Western democracies was considered to be unsuitable for bringing about economic development. While Western type democracies encouraged political competition and rivalry, the same was, however, considered to be time wasting and a detraction from economic development programmes set out by these countries. Political parties were themselves often considered to be tribally oriented and said not to be national in character. A multi-party democracy was considered to encourage tribal division and conflict, and was, therefore, undesirable.”

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So what happened was that the African countries opted for a sort of one-party State or a Constitution where the leader, whether it was a President or Prime Minister, would have autocratic powers.

On page 24, it says:

“A review of the political reform taking place in most African countries indicates a return to the old constitutional political order of the independence era. Unlike the constitution order in the one party State, the emergent new constitutional order includes elaborate human rights provisions and attempts to curb the autocratic power of the executive branch of government.”

It continues:

“The guiding principles for support of any government, it has been stressed, should be based on its record of performance in establishing a pluralist government that is accountable to the public and respects the rule of law and human rights. A repressive and corrupt government should therefore not be supported.”

So, Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister is doing as far as I read in the newspapers, and of the draft Constitution, is really to introduce a form of dictatorship in Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, what we are seeing in reality, is a situation where the Government wants more and more power and it is taking away more and more power from the people.

So what this Government is on the road to, is not a road for more power to the people, it is on one where more power would be taken away from the people and more power would be given to a government, in a Head of State, in a Prime Minister who is both President, the power would be concentrated in which it will control all the important institutions of the State.

**12.30 a.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, in conclusion—and I cannot not say what has occurred today—what the Government has done with that meeting in the square has created a dangerous precedent in which, as far as I know, the Port of Spain City Corporation never permitted meetings like what they permitted today, on a Friday. What I want to signal to the Prime Minister is that from now on the trade union movement can come in the square and have similar meetings and show no confidence in the Government. The political parties can follow the same procedure you follow and can go and have meetings.

Otherwise, what you are going to be signalling is this is PNM country, and this is not PNM country; this is the nation of Trinidad and Tobago and it may be that what you should do—managing diversity is one of the important duties of a Prime Minister—is that you should consider an important reform, and that is when you come to the Parliament, or when you are acting in your official duties, take off the balisier tie; put on a tie which represents the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

Which country in the world do you see the emblem of the political party on the government in the performance of public duties? But you are sending a signal—as a matter of fact, you put it on the plane that you wanted to fly. I want to say, the signal that you are sending to the country is that this is PNM country and this is not PNM country.

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

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Patrick Manning):** [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, when news of the Opposition's intention to file a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister first came into the public domain, I advised the Cabinet that no such thing was likely to take place. It is clear that I over-estimated the political sagacity of hon. Members opposite. Even now that the debate is over, I cannot understand why such a Motion was filed and I find it very curious of the timing of the filing of the Motion.

It is not that motions of no confidence are unknown to me or to hon. Members on this side or, indeed, to hon. Members opposite. In my time I have been associated with two motions of no confidence before: One which I filed in my capacity as Leader of the Opposition in 1988 against the then government and Prime Minister, ANR Robinson; and one filed against me by hon. Members opposite in 1995 when I held the office of Prime Minister. At least there was some basis for the motions.

To file a motion of no confidence in a Prime Minister, it is not a question of one or two issues; it is an overall assessment of the performance of the individual and the Government which he heads and of which he is a part. Because you see, in our jurisdiction, there is no motion of no confidence in the Government, but since the Prime Minister is the head of the Government and the Prime Minister is the person, in our case, who is the leader of the political party that forms the Government, if the Prime Minister falls, the Government falls and, therefore, a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister is indeed a motion of no confidence in the Government.

I would have thought that before doing that—before filing such a motion—hon. Members opposite would have carefully considered all that is before us, especially in a situation where this Government has been in office for only nine months.

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How in God's name, on the basis of nine months in Government, a serious Opposition can come to the Parliament and not be accused of wasting parliamentary and national time, and file a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister in circumstances where such a motion of no confidence is indeed a motion of no confidence in the Government?

When I listened to the debate, especially the contribution of the Member for Tabaquite, there were only two issues that he raised, you know, and the second one has been discussed in this Parliament, in this country ad nauseam to the point where I could not see him using it as a basis for a motion of no confidence such as he sought to do today. It is the issue of crime. Not only the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security; we have spoken at length in this Chamber, in the other place, at press conferences, in many public fora on this whole question of crime; the Government's perspective of it; how the Government sees it; what the Government is doing in the context of crime and, therefore, it would not be fair to say that information that is necessary to come to the attention of the public so that they can get some measure of comfort that the Government is on the right track, is not in the public domain. It is there.

Therefore, it is only one issue. The issue is the question of UDeCott and Calder Hart. They sought to make it an issue. Our Standing Orders also call for a motion of censure. There is no government in the world that is perfect. As long as a government is going to be run by human beings, there are going to be imperfections in the way government business is conducted, and in the life of every government, in the conduct of its business, there are going to be controversial issues that will arise from time to time.

Hon. Members opposite will no doubt take objection to some of the methods that the Government will use, and even if we do not come to an agreement and there is a divergence of views, then that is understandable. Our policies are not the same; our perspectives are not the same and, therefore, it is possible for a government to take an approach that is different from the approach of hon. Members opposite purely on the basis of policy. You can see that.

Therefore, if such an issue arises as is bound to arise from time to time, and if hon. Members opposite feel strongly about it, as they seem to feel about this issue of UDeCott and Calder Hart, then the proper course of action—and I do not know that I would have found myself in a position having to give political advice to hon. Members opposite. The proper thing to have done on one issue would have been to file a motion of censure in the Prime Minister, and then it would properly have been one issue before the House to which the Prime Minister would have had to answer.

We have done it before here, you know. I am absolutely surprised that the Member for Tabaquite, who is by no means new to this honourable House, or to the parliamentary system, or to the Standing Orders of this Parliament—he was an Attorney General—would have made the error of going the route of a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister as opposed to a motion of censure in circumstances where there is one issue and one issue only that he has raised.

Therefore, since he is a man who prides himself on being one of tremendous skill and one of tremendous force that he can see, I wonder if it is an error that he has made or if there is some deliberacy in the actions and if, indeed, there is deliberacy in the actions, what are the reasons for it. And you put that together with the timing of the Motion; the Motion coming at a time when the hon. Member for Couva North and Leader of the Opposition is not sitting in the Parliament.

**Mr. Ramnath:** He is not allowed to sit.

**Hon. P. Manning:** He is not allowed to sit in the Parliament by his own malfeasance.

**Mr. Ramnath:** No, no. Nonsense!

**Hon. P. Manning:** When in 1988—and I am coming to that in a minute. No amount of loud talking; no amount of cross talk can change the facts and if you all wish to go outside and try to convince people that it is a wicked Speaker or a wicked Parliament that has the Member for Couva North or anything about a laptop not sitting in the Parliament today, it is his own disrespect for authority.

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Hon. P. Manning:** That is what it is; it is disrespect that Members of the Government will have none of.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You behaving like Burnham—

**Hon. P. Manning:** You could say what you wish; look at it how you want; cut it how you wish, disrespect for the Chair, and we will have none of it on this side. None of it! I notice you all are coming with a motion to bring back the Member for Couva North. The Government is prepared to accept the motion as long as he apologizes to the Chair.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Member does not have to apologize to the Chair; he has to apologize to the House.

**Hon. Member:** You will not see that!

**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I was in full flight: to the Chair in the first instance and to Members of this honourable House.

**Mr. Ramnath:** What did he do wrong?

**Hon. P. Manning:** They do not even know what he did wrong. Mr. Speaker, you understand? And then they are talking about this side. You do not even know what he did wrong? Please, if you do not know the difference between right and wrong, you have no right being a Member of Parliament. How do you mean you do not know what he did wrong? That is the point, you know, Mr. Speaker; it is double standards.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** People elected me to be here. I have a right to be here.

**Hon. P. Manning:** I have no objection to that, but they made the assumption that you understood the difference between right and wrong. That is the assumption they made. They could appear to be as sanctimonious as they wish, but the fact of the matter is that the Member for Couva North erred and when it was drawn to his attention by the hon. Speaker, he tried to be wrong and strong! And if you all want to endorse that, you are free to do so! We on this side, we will have none of it! We will have none of it on this side!

**Mr. Ramnath:** You have Calder Hart “tiefing” all the money.

**Hon. P. Manning:** We are coming to that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Julien and Utharo Rao—sacred cows.

**Hon. P. Manning:** You had your chance to speak. Mr. Speaker, every one of them attacked me for the evening; every one of them! Occasionally I would get up and make an intervention, but I allowed them to speak. All of a sudden, now that I am having my say, they do not wish me to have it.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You got up and interrupted me five times.

**Hon. P. Manning:** But, Sir, I was trying to enhance your contribution—which was good—by raising issues for clarification purposes. If you had objected to it, you should have let me know and I just would have kept my seat. That is fine with me. I will always have a chance to speak.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You sure that is not demagoguery?

**Hon. P. Manning:** You could call it what you wish. Now ridicule me; ridicule the messenger.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I apologize to the Prime Minister.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Accepted. In 1988 when I moved a motion of no confidence in the then Prime Minister, this is how I started the contribution and, with your leave, I want to quote from the *Hansard*. It went like this:

“Mr. Speaker, none of the learned authors on politics or constitutions appear willing or able to define the qualities which ought to be required of a prime minister. One author would go only so far as to say that beyond possessing a certain vigour of mind, beyond being industrious, beyond an ability to be decisive, a prime minister must require many other rare and imprecise qualities: judgment; patience and courage, and may I add, Mr. Speaker, sincerity, humility and integrity, all qualities which would lead one to repose confidence in the person who displayed them. That is the real test of a prime minister. Is he a person in whom we could have confidence? Would one feel safe if he were the pilot, the captain, the decision-maker?”

I sought to define the issue. When you want to talk about a prime minister, tell me what you are looking for in him. When you want to say: “I have no confidence”, what is the transgression? What is the travesty that was being committed by this Prime Minister to cause you to lose confidence in him? Tell me! Tell me what are the qualities you look for and where the current Prime Minister has erred.

Speaker after speaker on the other side got up, not one of them sought to do that, because they felt that they could get away with obfuscation in the Parliament today. You cannot get away with that! You cannot get away with that! And if you believe that you all are good at speaking, we have enough of us on this side, you know. You are outnumbered and you are out-gunned! Do not try it! Let us do the thing properly.

**12.45 a.m.**

We are trying to improve the quality of governance in the country. Governance, incidentally, is one of the pillars on which Vision 2020 is predicated. We are trying to improve the system of governance. When we talk about the new Constitution it is not because anybody is a megalomaniac. We will be coming to that too.

The Member for Tabaquite talked about that too. I just want to tell the Member for Tabaquite—he talks about Dr. Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West—I wish you to know and all hon. Members opposite, that I happen to know a little more about that matter than any one of you know. I make that clear. I happen to know a little more about that matter than any one of you know; who said what and why.

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You have called for a commission of enquiry and you have it. The position that we on this side are taking is let the commission of enquiry determine the facts. We know what the facts are. We get up and say one thing and you get up and say another thing and the people on the outside are confused. They do not know whom to believe. That is what you try to do.

The Member for Tabaquite said that they are going to beat people in Woodford Square and then he tells his people to go to Woodford Square. It was not until the Leader of the Opposition hung him out to dry that good sense prevailed in the matter. The Member for Couva North had to get up and say, "I forbid my members to go to Woodford Square." In other words, he let the Member for Tabaquite get whoever he wants to Woodford Square as he sees fit. He was hung out to dry, ladies and gentlemen. "We not in dat." The commission of enquiry will decide the facts. I know the facts. I hope that when the facts come you would understand.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in government longer than all of you—I will not say put together—longer than anybody else on that side. I understand political strategy. I understand government more than all of you. I have been in opposition and government. It has been a strategy of opposition not just here, but all over the place, but particularly here to try to prevent the Government from conducting its business. They know that at the end of the day when you go to the polls the people judge you on one thing and one thing only. How did you perform? They do not ask you who you talk to or who you did not talk to along the way. They do not ask you who did you get vex with or who you were not upset with; who you spoke to or who you did not talk to. None of that is important.

When you face the polls there is one issue that is important. It is how you did perform. You ask us, you represented us and you were able to do it. We gave you the authority. In our case we gave you the largest majority that we ever gave any government in 25 years. Therefore, to those whom much is given, much is expected. When we go to the polls in 2012, or whenever it is, the people will want to find out from us, what we have done. Hon. Members opposite know it.

Their strategy is to seek to put every impediment ever in your way to ensure that you do not perform. They tell you for a start that inflation is running high and you must cut back on public sector expenditure. It is as if the only people spending money in the country is the Government. That is the way they behave. If too much money is in circulation, the people who have to cut back are the Government, that is what they say, ignoring completely that there is a private sector. They are not talking about balance. The Government must cut back. They take that position because they know that if the Government cuts back in the way



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that they wish, then, the Government would have less to report in 2012 and may find itself in a situation—particularly where oil and gas prices are high—where it cannot say that it did not have the money, but yet the performance would be substandard. What would the Government say? What can we tell the population further? Their job as they see it is to seek to raise every possible red herring to slow down the business of the Government.

The commission of enquiry in part is designed to achieve that and has achieved it already. Many people who had been contemplating going to work with UdeCott, on the basis of the commission of enquiry that has been called, have decided now to back away from it. Therefore, the resources that normally would be available to UdeCott to conduct their business are not now available. That is the objective. When you hear me say that we are not slowing down, it is not arrogance. It is an understanding of the strategy. They are not smarter than everybody else. One mistake you make is that you believe you alone went to school. We went to school too and we understand the political situation. We understand it as well as you. We understand your objective.

I was around in 1975. I was around when oil prices jumped for the first time in 1973, when oil prices went from \$2.50 a barrel to \$9.50 and the revenue of the country was significant. In one year, I think that it might have been the budget for 1974 or 1975, we had to hide money to prevent the budget from going above \$1 billion. We felt that if the budget had crossed \$1 billion, then, psychologically, the people would have been affected. They would have expected too much from the Government and it would have been a situation in which it was not too prudent for the government to place itself.

In the energy sector we are able to make the strides that we have made because of the mechanism that we used. Everybody knows that the public service was set up as an administration. The error that we have made here and so many countries around the world with the public service, is that we seek to make it an executing agency, a function for which it was not established. You get all kinds of problems. You take the route of the Central Tenders Board. You could reform the Central Tenders Board from now until doomsday. If you are in government you will understand what it means. You would not make any headway.

The PNM has said that experience tells us that that is not the way to go. You will reform the Central Tenders Board and the protocol and procedures, but that in itself could never put you in a position to achieve the objectives that you set for yourself. If you want to accelerate your rate of development, as indeed we must, if we are to achieve the objectives of Vision 2020, new arrangements have to be put in place to

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ensure the execution of government policy. That is the reality of it; we are not circumventing anything. That is what happened in the energy sector. It is not only that.

Somebody virtually had to have plenipotentiary powers. It was Ken Julien in the energy sector. I was around. The minute it started to happen, where the Prime Minister was expressing great confidence in Prof. Ken Julien, every Tom, Dick and Harrilal jumped at him. Every one of them! There were two permanent secretaries. I will not call their names. There were two permanent secretaries in the Ministry of Finance and in the Ministry of Planning and Development who virtually dedicated their lives to the destruction of Ken Julien.

I made a mistake once. I got involved innocently in that one. I took a document from one of them to Dr. Eric Williams. Do you know what he did? He took one look at the document; took a pen and drew two lines through it, most vehemently. I was lucky that day to get away with my life. He understood one thing, that to circumvent all the red tape to ensure that you do not make yourself a hostage to the public service which is always possible, especially when you are talking development, giving the public service a function for which the public service was not designed. When you start to do that and put yourself in the hands of the public servants, your rate of development would be circumscribed. It would not be in your hands anymore.

I could go into the problems that we experienced, but I do not want to do too much of that. I do not want to give the impression that I am attacking the public service. It is a fact. Dr. Williams felt that the only way around that was to set up the National Energy Corporation; set up a task force on energy and Prof. Ken Julien must have the confidence of the Prime Minister, otherwise it would not work.

In Malaysia which is a country that has pursued a pattern of development similar to the one now contemplated by Trinidad and Tobago, do you know how they have done it? Firstly, they gave Petronus, an oil company, a mandate for urban development and redevelopment. Urban development and redevelopment have nothing to do with oil except one thing. Oil makes money and urban development consumes it. By giving Petronus a responsibility for urban development and urban redevelopment, they sought to use the very successful efficient methods of the energy sector in other areas of national development. That is what they sought to do because Petronus is a successful company.

Secondly, they sought to give the urban redevelopment portfolio on which they had placed priority, a separate source of revenue, so that its work could not be constrained by individuals and particularly, a civil service that was operating

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the way the one in Malaysia was operating and could easily affect the rate of development by curtailing the financial resources available.

It happens all the time. Accountability is fine. They did one other thing. Petronus does not report to the Minister of Energy in Malaysia. Petronus reports to the Prime Minister. Solamente! Only! Do you understand what I am saying? If we try to do that in Trinidad and Tobago, the first thing they would say is that the Prime Minister is a megalomaniac; he wants power.

**Dr. Moonilal:** True or false?

**Hon. P. Manning:** That is how you see it. That is what you would say. This is the reality. You were in government, even though the Member for Couva South was in government less than any one of you. How long you lasted?

**Mr. Ramnath:** Do not mind my business.

**Hon. Member:** One day.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Well leave me alone.

At least they were in government long enough to know that and if you want to achieve anything, you have to make special arrangements. We have identified the special purpose state enterprise. That is the mechanism we have identified to get around the strictures in the public service. How long have we been trying to put a one-stop-shop in place? The NAR started to talk that. A one-stop-shop for investment in the country. The NAR talked that. The PNM after you talked it. The UNC talked that. We are talking it again. We know that you cannot do it within the public service. That is what we now know.

We are looking at a very successful model that is done in Singapore. It has to be taken outside. While we take steps to reform the public service to ensure that our developmental objectives are achieved, we have to put arrangements in place outside the public service. That is the reality. If they do not know that, they are not ready for government as yet.

Ken Julien was the successful energy man. We must have some kind of flexibility. When we decided to give priority to the urban development and urban redevelopment, we sought to treat UdeCott—which is the instrument the special purpose state enterprise that we identified—in a similar manner to the National Energy Corporation. We appointed Calder Hart as the executive chairman of UdeCott, chairman of the National Insurance Board and chairman of Nipdec. The clear understanding is that we wanted to free up that organization from the

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strictures that are associated with national development to ensure that our developmental objectives are achieved. The minute we do that we expect what is happening now as has happened before with Ken Julien.

The next one they will attack is Noel Garcia. He has just been given responsibility as chairman of the Estate Management and Business Development Company (EMBD). He is executive chairman of Namdevco and the Agricultural Development Bank. You have identified agriculture as an area for priority development in the national interest. It is not going to be long before they start to attack Noel Garcia. The pattern is known to us. Therefore, let them attack! It has nothing to do with what they believe. They are facing the prospect of opposition in perpetuity. [*Interruption*] It is very frightening for you.

What they are seeking to do, whatever they have to do, they are casting aspersion on anybody and any area that the Government has placed a priority for national development because they are determined that the Government must not achieve its objective. That is the reality.

**1.00 a.m.**

Calder Hart, incidentally, is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. He came here 21 years ago. Genivar had just come. I suppose that is what the Member would have us believe—that Genivar and Calder Hart came at the same time. When you are talking put the facts. You do not have to misrepresent the facts to make your point. We are in search of truth. I sat here and listened carefully. When I was outside this House, I watched on television. I have not missed anything that was said in here. I followed it all and when I left earlier and was being chastised by the Member for Chaguanas West for leaving, it was because at tea time I went to Woodford Square to address the audience there. I spoke vigorously for about 35 minutes, my shirt and jacket got wet and I thought I had to change my clothes to refresh myself to deal with you all. [*Interruption*]

I am not running. I do not run. [*Interruption*] Run? ““Fraid who”? I am not afraid of any one of you. You make your point, I make mine. Let us discuss; let us debate and let us see where it leads.

Mr. Speaker, there is no substance whatsoever in the Motion the Member for Tabaquite brought and I cannot understand why the Member sought to bring that Motion now. He knows that one of the things that I would do is to compare my own leadership with the leadership of the Member for Couva North. I must do it; leader for leader.

Let us compare leaders. He is saying that the Government should fall so that they could come into government. If they are to come into government, one of the things we have to do is to examine who they are. My colleagues began to deal with them one by one. That is what we were doing—examining them one by one.

We are ending this debate too soon. *[Interruption]* You can call it personal if you wish. We are examining you all one by one. We are examining you one by one to see who you are; that is all. This is not the gutter; those are the facts. We are seeking to examine you one by one to see who you are because if the Government falls, it is likely you all will get into government. If you are to get into government, the population has to know who it is dealing with.

Let me deal with the Member for Tabaquite first before I go to the Member for Couva North. Twenty-two years ago, the Member for Princes Town North had not yet come to political consciousness and therefore would not have known—

**Hon. Member:** Oropouche West.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Oropouche West. She had not yet come to political consciousness and I am sure she does not know about what I am going to mention. They would not tell her that. *[Interruption]* The Drug Report.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** You are coming back with that?

**Hon. P. Manning:** Yes. The Member for Oropouche West does not know about it. There are many in the country that age and they have never heard of it.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** *[Inaudible]*

**Hon. P. Manning:** You can say what you want. You can get up and answer.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** *[Inaudible]*

**Hon. P. Manning:** I compiled what? The Scott Drug Report? The first time I saw it is was when you all brought it to the Parliament. You did it. I did not do it. I was part of the government that commissioned it and I never saw it. I was too small to see those things in those years.

Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, paragraph 7.36:

“The Commission was informed”—I am talking to the Member for Oropouche West through you, Mr. Speaker—“that Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj made contact with the criminal element in the first part of last year when he was seeking to have revenge taken on one Spencer who had kicked and beaten him in a restaurant. Maharaj was deeply humiliated and said that he would pay any amount of money

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to deal with Spencer. The man who was to act on behalf of Maharaj was to obtain a car and a driver from Chaitram Gayah to carry out his mission. Subsequently, Suruj Rambachan—a name that you know—“who was described as a big man in the ONR Party and Chairman from Siparia”—the constituency of my good friend opposite—“was said to be insisting that the man be killed.”

Member for Oropouche, have you ever read that? I will read it again:

“Subsequently, Suruj Rambachan, who was described as a big man in the ONR Party and Chairman from Siparia, was said to be insisting that the man be killed. The evidence also disclosed that Ramesh Maharaj had offered the ‘hit man’ a .38 revolver and that he had given him sums of money from time to time and a tour of the area which Spencer lived, but it is not known that the ‘hit man’ eventually received the sum of \$35,000 which he wanted. It would appear that the ‘hit man’ did not complete the job he was offered resulting in the classic case of the biter being severely bitten.”

In other words, he took the money and he did not do the job. Member for Oropouche West, you heard about this? I ask all the people in this country around the age of the Member for Oropouche West: Did you know about this?

If the Government falls, do you endorse the Member for Tabaquite holding high office in this county in circumstances where a commission of enquiry—that is the mechanism in which the hon. Member for Tabaquite has placed his confidence—you called for that; we set it up in respect of UdeCott. He has placed his confidence in a commission of enquiry saying these things.

Maharaj had a scuffle with a man in a restaurant, the man must have clouted him twice and he decided to kill the man. Some rum talk, the talk get hard, two “hand” pass, he could not take that and he decided to kill the man. This is what this is saying.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** You better watch out.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Do not try that with me, you know!

That is what it says and I am asking you, therefore, when this Government falls, when the Motion of no confidence succeeds, whom will we get as Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago? Is it the Member for Tabaquite? Is that something you endorse?

Did he consult you all before the Motion was filed? You knew I was going to raise this. You like to talk about consultation and that the Government must consult every man and his brother before we do anything. Left to them all we will

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do is consult and nothing else; that is why they talk so much about consultation. Do not believe for one minute that they are committed to democracy as they say they are committed. Consultation slows down the process of governance and if we insist on consulting over and above what is required in the circumstances, the upshot of that is, when the time comes for election, you will have little to report. That is the reason. [*Interruption*] Call it what you want.

They were unable to convince people on November 05 that that was so. We got the largest majority in 25 years that any government has been given, so they are trying other methods. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, if the Motion succeeds, then the Government falls. Who will become Prime Minister? The Member for Couva North; not the Member for Tabaquite, mercifully. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is “mercifully”. I do not know which one to take. It is a rock and a hard place; the devil and the deep blue sea.

Member for Couva North: On November 18, 2002, three summonses were issued charging Basdeo Panday with three offences of knowingly making false declarations of his financial affairs in the calendar years 1977, 1970 and 1999. Contrary to section 20(7)(1)(b) of the Integrity in Public Life Act, 1987, the declarations were made respectively on April 09, 1999; December 23, 1999 and March 01, 2001 and failed to disclose sums held jointly with his wife at the Wimbledon Hill, London branch of the National Westminster Bank.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Indicate the Standing Order, please.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The matter is sub judice.

**Mr. Speaker:** Take your seat, please.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You are afraid that the Prime Minister will make you lose your work.

**Mr. Speaker:** If you want to raise the Standing Order, read it properly. I think it is 36(2). Do you want me to read it for you? No. I do not think I need to waste time.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, once they get their backs to the wall, they become disrespectful to those who are put in authority. You need to spend some time in the PNM. Do you know what they taught us in the PNM? [*Interruption*] You can say what you want. They taught us that it matters not who it is, you respect whomsoever is set in authority. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we learned in the PNM; it is never a personal thing.

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I am not going to be sidetracked; not tonight. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. P. Manning:** The sums in the National Westminster Bank, sums respectively of £11,814—at 12:1, how much is that; TT \$130,000?—£37,033 for 1998, that is about TT \$400,000 and £110,452 for 1999, that is over \$1 million. These are charges before the court.

With what have I been charged? They did not charge me for anything. I am charged for nothing, yet the Member for Tabaquite wants to place a motion of no confidence in me, leaving the Member for Couva North completely unscathed. If you are looking to file a motion of no confidence, the person to file it on is not me. It would have been the Member for Couva North.

The Member for Tabaquite knew that I was going to spend some time on the Member for Couva North and that is one of the reasons he filed the Motion. It is in the context of internal arrangements within the UNC of which I have no part. I do not want to have anything to do with it, but I am a student of politics. Why was it done? It defies logic. There is no reason except those I am pointing out.

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

**Hon. P. Manning:** Here is the next set of charges. Basdeo Panday, his wife Oma, former Government Minister Carlos John and businessman Ishwar Galbaransingh are before the court for allegedly receiving a £25,000 bribe from John Galbaransingh to favour the latter's construction company, Northern Construction Limited, in the tendering process on the Piarco International Airport expansion project.

Next charge—

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. P. Manning:** I am naming the charges. You vex with me for doing that. When you all spoke, I did not say anything.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You can come and arrest any one of us. Do you want to come and arrest one of us?

**Hon. P. Manning:** If you do things to get arrested, I have no doubt the police would do their duty. They are not afraid of you, you know. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please! Order!

**Hon. P. Manning:** You hear. Now he brings race into it. [*Interruption*]



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Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member for Caroni East is disappointed in me, it means that I will not get paid next week.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** No.

**Hon. P. Manning:** What does it mean? Feel free to be disappointed in me. For the record, I am disappointed in you too. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. P. Manning:** I said: I am disappointed in you also. Stick break in your ears?

**1.15 a.m.**

Every one of them who spoke, including the Member for Chaguanas West, attacked me. I sat and took it. "I eh fraid." I would take it from now until doomsday, but be assured of one thing, when the time comes to dish out, you are getting it back full measure, press down and running over. "Yuh getting it back." [*Interruption*] We have all the time in the world and if we have to move extra time, we would move it twice. We have the time.

The Member for Chaguanas West is sitting there as though he never did anything wrong in his whole life.

**Mr. Partap:** "Yuh find anything on Hunt?"

**Hon. P. Manning:** No, I have on Partap. The very distinguished Member for Chaguanas East made reference to this. You were building five stadia in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Warner, the Member for Chaguanas West, was not there at the time; and who is Chairman of CONCACAF? Is that what you are?

**Mr. Warner:** President.

**Hon. P. Manning:** President of CONCACAF, which is the Caribbean Football Association. Is it?

**Mr. Warner:** No, the Confederation of North, Central American Caribbean Association Football.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Yes, I want to get the facts right. I want to be sure. Thank you very much. President of CONCACAF. They were building five stadia in Trinidad and Tobago at a cost of \$365 million. Do you know what my friend does? He forms a company called CONCACAF and tells the national community that CONCACAF is building these stadia and, therefore, he is operating on behalf of CONCACAF. That is what he did.

**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. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. P. Manning:** Much obliged, Mr. Speaker, to you and to hon. Members. I do not think that the Member for Oropouche West and people of his age know all of this. They do not know. I am saying to the national community, when the Motion of no confidence succeeds and we fall, as is expected—that was the intent of the Motion—who is going to replace us? The Member for Chaguamas West, President of CONCACAF, formed a company called CONCACAF and said that CONCACAF is building the stadia. It is not CONCACAF, but CONCACAF is building it.

You should not be surprised because they set up a pageant company to run a pageant in Chaguaramas. Do you remember? They did everything wrong under the sun. They disenfranchised all kinds of people. Everybody was sharpening their cutlass to deal with them as soon as the thing was over. Do you know that they did? They dissolved the company at midnight on the night of the competition, which means everybody who was disenfranchised then had no recourse. That is what they did. A government did that. They set up the pageant company to run the pageant, did everything wrong under the sun, and as soon as the pageant was over, at midnight they dissolved the company. They are telling me, ladies and gentlemen, that a Motion of no confidence should be filed in me and not in them. That is what they did. Do not get on as though you do not know all of this. I have said nothing that hon. Members opposite do not know. All this you know, yet you are supporting the Member for Tabaquite. [*Interruption*] No, the national community “doh” remember it. I am saying it for their benefit, not for yours.

The Member for Tabaquite wants to file a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. On what basis? What is the basis? You want to file a Motion of no confidence in the Government, because that is in effect what it is saying. Which government? A government that is responsible for such rapid development of the people of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] Is that what you want to do? The figures show.

Incidentally, the Member for Tabaquite was talking about Transparency International and these international human rights organizations. The Transparency Index is based on—the Corruption Index—[*Interruption*—that is right—is based on the perception of corruption. Do you understand the point? It is

based on the perception of corruption, in other words—it is unfair to countries like ours—what it means is that—[*Interruption*] yes, it is a perception. They come here and pick “fellas” whom he will send them to. They talk to people who may or not be supporters of the Government. Many of them are not supporters and they give you their perception of corruption. The perception is “ah hear, ah believe and ah I think”. Hearsay evidence. If the Member for Tabaquite went into a court with that Transparency International thing, they would run him out post-haste, based on hearsay evidence, not admissible in any court of law, yet you want to use that to condemn the Government and this side. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** I thank the hon. Prime Minister for giving way, but Transparency International reports which deal with the perception of corruption, the formula is that it is the perception, but the way they do it, that perception is recognized by the United Nations and all the international lending agencies. They do not only take what the local people say. They come themselves, verify it and try to get the best perception of what is corruption; not only in Trinidad and Tobago but throughout the world. As a matter of fact, they are on the website and you can know how they operate. I do not think it is right for you to say that it is pure hearsay. It is a scientific poll and you believe in polls.

**Hon. P. Manning:** There could be nothing scientific about hearsay. There could be nothing scientific about hearsay. It is a perception. What are you telling me? Go in a court with that. I wish I—the next time I have to meet you in a court, come with perception let me deal with you.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** The next time?

**Hon. P. Manning:** Whenever, because the way you are going you are heading for that.

Mr. Speaker, in 2001 the size of the economy, when we took over, was \$55 billion. An expert came here shortly after that. We told him that we were contemplating doubling the economy in five years and he said: “Well, I wish you well, but you cannot achieve that.” At the end of 2006, the size of the economy stood at \$14.9 billion. We succeeded in doing what was said to be impossible. We doubled the economy in five years.

**Mr. Partap:** Thanks to OPEC.

**Hon. P. Manning:** OPEC? What you wanted me to do? It happened under our watch. OPEC or no OPEC, did we—that is the reality. It happened under our watch. In five years, in 2006, we doubled it. In 2007, it was \$132 million; and 2008,

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\$145 million. By the end of 2009, we would have tripled the economy over the size it was in 2001. That is the Government they want to condemn?

Unemployment, in 1991, when I first became Prime Minister, for every 100 people looking for a job, 20.3 of them could not find it. I lived in times in this country which were far worse than that, 1971, 1972 and 1973. I was in government and we never used to measure unemployment because the figures were in excess of 25 per cent. We came from that. What is the figure today?

In 1995, when I talked about full employment I was shouted out of this place. Editorials were written in the newspaper about Manning who was living in a cloud, not living the life of reality, he is esoteric and all kinds of things. They could write what they want. They were wrong on that, because in the fourth quarter of 2007, unemployment fell to 4.5 in circumstances where we consider 5 per cent as full employment. It went below that. It means that in 2007/2008, of the 20.3 people who could not find a job in 1991, 16 plus per cent of them could find it today. *[Interruption]* Which quarter? Okay, it was 5.3 per cent in the second quarter of 2008. It has been fluctuating in that area. We are now of the view that the best place is between 5 per cent and 6 per cent. We think that 5.5 per cent is the most optimum. Call it what you want, it happened under our watch. Call it what you want. The OPEC prices could have gone as high as they wanted, if we did not take decisions here to design and stimulate our gas production, we could not benefit from it.

Per capita income has doubled since we came into government; more than doubled since we came into Government. What it means is that the standard of living of the people has risen considerably since we came into government in 2001. That is the reality.

Education, this year Common Entrance Examination, SEA as they call it, over 17,000 persons are going to secondary schools free, but not the three-year schools that had been the case since 1972. We are now able, from this year, to guarantee all secondary students five years of free secondary education. The former senior comprehensive schools now have seven years. Not only that, we have one curriculum in all secondary schools; one basic core curriculum. It is a curriculum that has been carefully studied and drawn up. For the first time, we feel that we have a curriculum that more closely approximates the requirements of society and, therefore, better control on the type of citizen that the education system would produce. *[Interruption]* Mariano Callaghan is like anybody else who could write. Who want to write, write.

Mr. Speaker, if I listen to the Member for Couva South as well as to so many other people, as lot of what we are trying to do, we would never achieve.

When we said that we were going to do the Brian Lara Promenade, what did they say? “You cyah do dat, doh do it. Doh move the Drag Brothers, doh do dis, doh do dat.” The minute we completed the Brian Lara Promenade, it was hailed as one of the greatest interventions in urban redevelopment in the Caribbean. That is the reality.

We going to float the currency, “Doh do it! Doh float the currency, dis will happen and dat will happen and the currency will go up.” We floated it. On the weekend on which we floated that currency our net international reserves stood at minus \$10 million. Do you know what it is today? It is US \$8.4 billion minus the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and minus the reserves in the Central Bank. But, they said not to do it. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Ramnath:** That is a gift.

**Hon. P. Manning:** That is a gift, but we did it. That is the consequence of it. When we moved to liberalize the economy, what did they say? “Doh do it.” Somebody read it out in this debate. They said do not do it because all we would do is destroy the manufacturing sector. One of the companies that was in the forefront of that argument in 2001, posted the highest profits that company ever posted in its history.

**1.30 a.m.**

Today, the manufacturing sector is not only the largest in the Caribbean, but it is so large that the Caribbean is now too small a market to absorb the output of the domestic manufacturing sector, and the companies have to go global which in fact they are doing quite successfully. In other words, the economic policies that we have put in place have taken root.

Let me tell you this. Three years ago we gave a tax concession in this country. We did it at a time when we negotiated for new petroleum taxes. We calculated that there would be a drop in revenue on a straight calculation basis of \$1.5 billion. Do you know that in that year we had an increase in overall tax revenues; part of which was better compliance and part of which was economic expansion?

Things have just been going well to the point where we have a shortage of labour in the country at this time. This is the first time that this has happened, and the Member for Tabaquite is asking this House to express no confidence in the Prime Minister. I doubt he was supported in that venture—well, he was supported by the Member for Chaguanas West—by other Members. In the face of the incontrovertible facts, the Member for Tabaquite feels that the best course of action to take is to file a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister and, therefore, in the Government of which he is a part.

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They play fast and loose in the debate. I think it was either the Member for Couva South or the Member for Oropouche East who talked about constitutional reform. Which one was it? Was it you?

**Mr. Ramnath:** Your memory is failing you.

**Hon. P. Manning:** No, my memory is not failing. I want to see if you are honest enough to own up to it. Did you talk about constitutional reform? The Member gave the impression that there are round-table discussions taking place on constitutional reform at the Prime Minister's office and nobody knows who is on the round table.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I said it.

**Hon. P. Manning:** I know you said it. I am not fishing. *[Interruption]* I am testing both of you, not him alone. Mr. Speaker, a statement was read out in this Parliament indicating the process that the Government is going to use for the reform of the country's Constitution. We came here and we were very forthright and we put it on the table.

There was a draft document by the Principles of Fairness and there was a draft document by Sir. Ellis Clarke TC that we had asked him to do and he did it. We took both documents and we said let us use a method that had not been used before—putting the academics with the politicians—to have a discussion on constitution reform, and to see where it leads. It was never designed to have consensus, but arising out of the discussion, we would put up a document for public comment. That is what we said.

We also said that apart from the Ministers of Government who are part of that round table, also involved would be Sir Ellis Clarke TC, Mr. Tajmool Hosein, Prof. Selwyn Ryan, Prof. John La Guerre, Prof. John Spence, Anslem London and also Prof. Hamid Ghany.

Everybody knows that and yet the Member for Couva South is going to come here and give the impression that nobody knows. There are no secret talks.

This is the latest document coming out of it. This is the fourth working draft. We met on Tuesday of this week and made some further changes to this draft, and the document that we would now get would be the document that is coming to the Parliament. We are ready to initiate discussions with the national community on constitutional reform. We are putting up a document for discussion which is going to be used as a basis for consulting the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This does not necessarily represent the Government's policy. Let us consult. We want

discussion to take place, but not in a vacuum. We want the discussion to take place on the basis of something that was before the national community. Look it there! [*Document in hand*] It is a proper approach. If they do not understand the wisdom of that approach, experience in the Government tells us that on the two previous occasions we have had constitutional reform the method used had not succeeded.

In the case of the Wooding Commission, Dr. Eric Williams, the Prime Minister at the time, came to the Parliament in 1976 when he disagreed with what they came up with. He argued that Parliament and Parliament alone has the authority to pass a Constitution and, therefore, it was the Parliament where he appealed it. He addressed the Parliament for about eight hours that day. [*Interruption*] You could say what you want, but it is the people of Trinidad and Tobago that wanted it so. Do you think I could have done that? The people of Trinidad and Tobago wanted it so, and they gave the PNM 36 seats in 1971. [*Interruption*] You could call it what you want, the fact of the matter is the people of Trinidad and Tobago gave us 36 seats in the Parliament and the authority to change the Constitution which we did.

This document is going to be laid in Parliament and we are going to use it as a basis for consultation all over the country. The Government would then put a Green Paper before the Parliament to say what is our position. We are looking for consensus and we are going to get it eventually—a national agreement on what constitutional arrangements would guide the operations of Trinidad and Tobago in the future. Whether we have the majority in Parliament or we do not have the majority in Parliament to pass what we agree on, the fact of the matter is that there would be an agreement on the kind of constitution that we wish, and the Government will then decide how to proceed to implement as much of it as we can.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Could the Prime Minister indicate to this House—I know he is placing a lot of emphasis on this constitution reform as important—why the population has not been provided with a copy of the draft constitution? I have not seen it published.

**Hon. P. Manning:** The document is not ready for public consumption. I said that we held the last meeting on Tuesday and we used this document. This is the fourth revised working document. Modifications have been made to it, and when that document comes out in about a week's time it would be laid in the Parliament. It is going to be a working draft for public consultation. We are going to lay an explanatory document with it that would explain the issues that are involved in this draft so that people who do not understand law and the legal language as they read it, their attention could be directed to the salient aspects,

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and they could discuss it. We would then use it as a basis to go around the country to hear what people have to say. It is not just going to be “ol’ talk”—I want this and I like this and so on. We have narrowed it down. These are the issues as we have identified them. If there are any other issues that you see then you can raise them. As we have seen it, these are the issues so it is not “ol’ talk”, but there is a basis for doing it.

Mr. Speaker, I have said to hon. Members opposite that one of the most satisfying exercises that I have ever been engaged with is when I was Leader of the Opposition and this is my discussion with the then government over crime legislation. Even now, if hon. Members opposite are so minded, the Government is prepared to enter into meaningful discussions with them as political party to political party to discuss constitution reform.

**Mr. Ramnath:** With Ramesh? You have attacked him and now you want to have discussion with him!

**Hon. P. Manning:** I did not attack anybody. I put the facts on the table. Did I write the reports?

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** I would have thought that since the Prime Minister has mentioned something like that he would have known that in fairness to Mr. Rambachan that there was a prosecution. The State retained Mr. De Lima and the prosecution could not get off the ground, because the alleged witness turned out to be a concocted prosecution. There was a case filed against the State and when I became Attorney General it had to be withdrawn because I could not be the Attorney General and have a case like that. I thought he would have mentioned all of that because he knew that.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, he thought I would have also mentioned the disappearance of witnesses; how that came about and documents. [*Interruption*] You see, do not start that.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Mention the truth.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Do not start that. The Member for Tabaquite is very culpable in certain circumstances. I do not want to get involved in it.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Put the facts on the record—

**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, the Member had his chance to talk.

**Hon. Member:** You cannot be attacking people—



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**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, they are trying to sidetrack me. All of them had a chance to talk. I sat quietly and I listened to them.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** I would bring a committee for you to say whatever you are saying is true.

**Hon. P. Manning:** You could bring whatever you want to bring; you could bring whatever you wish to bring.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, why are they getting so jumpy? Is it because of the lateness of the hour? What is it? [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Your time has run out.

**Hon. P. Manning:** So, that is constitution reform.

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Why do you not talk about Dole Chadee?

**Hon. P. Manning:** And where we find certain files?

**Mr. Maharaj SC:** Yes, on Dole Chadee and the house and the car. Tell us what you know about Dole Chadee's car.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, just for the record, I want to say to this honourable House that in terms of new initiatives in the Caribbean, the positions of certain countries have always been known and those positions have not changed. The position of Jamaica has not changed on political integration; the position of the Bahamas has not changed; the position of Belize has not changed; and the position of Suriname has not changed. Guyana and Barbados are looking at the matter of political integration.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to use one statistic and it is the trade figure for Grenada. I think it was last year's figures. We imported \$3.6 million worth of stuff from Grenada. We exported products to Grenada to the tune of \$636 million. Who is benefiting from whom? When you talk this outside you must give the facts. But that is okay, it is a little late in the night.

Mr. Speaker, the Government completely rejects any assertion that there must be an expression of no confidence in the Prime Minister. We reject it completely out of hand. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, there is nothing that hon. Members opposite has said today to justify a case for expressing no confidence in the Prime Minister. Indeed, what they have done is galvanized the PNM and I want to sincerely thank hon. Members opposite, especially the Member for Tabaquite, for

*No Confidence (Prime Minister)*  
[HON. P. MANNING]

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mobilizing the PNM in the way he did. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, when the PNM heard what was afoot the reaction was spontaneous.

I want to say something else. They should have known what reaction they would get because it happened in 1995. It happened before and the Member knew it. The Member for Tabaquite knew what would happen. If you ask me, the Member for Tabaquite has some questions to answer—that is if he were in the PNM—and how he conducts his business is a matter for him. Why did he do it? He knew what the consequences would be.

Hon. Members on this side have talked about what their ministries have done. They have indicated who they are, the Members sitting on the other side, and I urge all Members of this honourable House, in the face of the way this debate has gone and the fact that it turned out to be a damp squid on the part of the Member for Tabaquite, to categorically reject the Motion.

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

*Question put.*

**1.45 a.m.**

*The House divided:* AYES 14

NOES 19

AYES

Maharaj, R. L.

Warner, J.

Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.

Ramnath, K.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

Gopeesingh, Dr. T.

Bharath, V.

Panday, Miss M.

Panday, S.

Sharma, C.

Peters, W.

Rafeeq, Dr. H.

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Partap, H.

Baksh, N.

NOES

Imbert, Hon. C.

Manning, Hon. P.

Nunez-Tesheira, Hon. K.

Taylor, Hon. P.

Abdul-Hamid, Hon. M.

Ross, Hon. J.

Swaratsingh, Hon. K.

Parsanlal, Hon. N.

Beckles, Miss P.

Mc Donald, Hon. M.

Hunt, Hon. G.

Le Gendre, Hon. E.

Callender, Hon. S.

Cox, Hon. D.

Jeffrey, Hon. F.

Hypolite, N.

Regrello, J.

Roberts, A.

Ojah-Maharaj, Mrs. I.

*Motion negatived*

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, September 19, 2008 at 1.30 p.m. On that day, we will be doing a Supplementary Appropriation Bill, also a Finance Committee Meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 17, 2008 at 1.00 p.m.

*Adjournment*

*Friday, September 12, 2008*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 1.47 a.m.*

**WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION**

**Tourism Development Projects  
(2006 to date)**

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

**169.** With regard to the Tourism Development Company Limited, for the period 2006 to date, could the hon. Minister of Tourism 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 estimated 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 Tourism (Hon. Joseph Ross):** The Tourism Development Company (TDC) was established in 2005 and is mandated to develop and market Trinidad and Tobago's tourism product. The Company is also committed to establishing and implementing standards for the development and maintenance of tourism infrastructure and amenities as well as standards for specific tourism sites and attractions.

During the period 2006 to present the TDC undertook two development projects:-

- Maracas Redesign and Restoration Project
- Enhancement of the Emperor Valley Zoo.

Information with respect to items (b) to (d) of the question is contained in the table.

Written Answer to Question

Friday, September 12, 2008

Project	Estimated Cost	Project Status					General Comments
		Item	Contractor	% Completed	Actual Cost Incurred	Over run	
Maracas Redesign and Restoration	The estimated project cost is TT\$179 Mn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of Master Plan</li> </ul>	Lee Young and Partners	100 %	\$2,026,000	Nil	TDC received the Certificate of Environmental Clearance from the Environmental Management Association in April 2008 and invited tenders for the design and construction phase in July 2008.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site Supervision service for Demolition Works</li> </ul>		100%	\$ 73,312.50	Nil	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of Project Management Services</li> </ul>	National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC)	100 %	\$ 147,846	Nil	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demolition Works</li> </ul>	Zeeton General Contractors Limited	100 %	\$ 955,075	Nil	

Written Answer to Question

Friday, September 12, 2008

Project	Estimated Cost	Project Status					General Comments
		Item	Contractor	% Completed	Actual Cost Incurred	Over run	
Enhancement of the Emperor Valley Zoo	Estimated project cost is TT\$56.8 Mn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of a Conceptual Master Plan</li> </ul>	PJA Architects of Seattle, Washington, USA	100 %	\$US 50,600	Nil	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of schematic Designs and drawings</li> </ul>		100 %	\$US 90,000	Nil	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of detailed designs, engineering drawings supervision and construction works</li> </ul>	NLBA	25 %	\$TT 1,187,394	Nil		