

*Leave of Absence**Friday, November 06, 2009***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, November 06, 2009*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I received communication from the following Members requesting leave of absence from sittings of the House: The hon. Paula Gopee-Scoon, Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, for the period November 04 to November 06, 2009; the hon. Winston Peters, Member of Parliament for Mayaro, for the period November 04 to November 06, 2009; the hon. Mickela Panday, Member of Parliament for Oropouche West, for the period November 02 to November 08, 2009; the hon. Mr. Subhas Panday, Member for Parliament for Princes Town North, for the period November 04 to November 14, 2009; the hon. Kennedy Swaratsingh, Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, for the period November 05 to November 28, 2009; the hon. Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Member of Parliament for Siparia, from today's sitting; the hon. Dr. Hamza Rafeeq, Member of Parliament for Caroni Central, from today's sitting. The leave which these Members seek is granted.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE**(Dana Seetahal SC)**

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, on Friday, October 30, 2009 the hon. Minister of Information and Member of Parliament for Lopinot/Bon Air West, pursuant to Standing Order 27, raised a matter which he sought to have referred to the Committee of Privileges for consideration and report to this honourable House.

The Minister referred to the contents of a newspaper column dated Sunday, October 25, 2009 published in the *Guardian* newspaper and authored by Ms. Dana Seetahal SC, which he alleged may amount to a contempt of this House. Ms. Seetahal SC is also an Independent Senator. Because this matter directly involves the Speaker of the House, in the interest of fairness and objectivity, the responsibility for determining whether under Standing Order 27(4) a prima facie case has been established has been delegated to me.

Hon. Member, I have looked at the article entitled "PNM out of control" in its entirety, and although the focus of the piece was not on the Speaker of the House, there were two statements in the column regarding the conduct of the Speaker in the performance of his functions. It is these statements which the Minister regards as constituting a contempt of this House.

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Hon. Members are reminded that contempt, as defined in Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice* includes:

“...actions or conduct which, though not breaches of any specific privilege, obstruct or impede this House in the performance of its functions or have the tendency to produce such a result.

Included in the list of possible contempts are speeches or writings which reflect on the character or proceedings of the House. May cites serious personal reflections on the character of the Speaker which contain accusations of partiality in the discharge of his duty as a possible occasion for contempt.”

I wish to remind Members of the significance of the institution of the Speaker as presiding officer of this House. The office of the Speaker occupies a pivotal position in any parliamentary democracy. The Speaker is the constitutional and ceremonial head of the House. He is the principal spokesman of the House. It is in him that the responsibility for conducting the business of the House is vested. The founding fathers of our Constitution recognized the importance of this office in our democratic setup and it was this recognition that guided them in establishing this office as one of the prominent and dignified ones in the scheme of governance of this country, and so, indisputably, the Speaker is the final arbiter of the rules of this House. In this he is guided by the provisions of the Constitution and Standing Orders of this House. He may also benefit from the directions issued by his predecessors which are compiled periodically.

Standing Order 92 reinforces the power of the Speaker and gives him the authority to regulate the conduct of business in the House in matters where the Standing Orders do not provide guidance. The Standing Orders clearly state that the decision of the Chair on matters of procedure shall not be open to challenge, except in accordance with provisions of Standing Order 36(10).

This does not mean that the conduct of the Speaker is immune from criticism and comment. Indeed for decades now, Speaker's rulings and decisions, whether by actions or omissions, have from time to time received passionate criticisms by an interested public. Common examples include expressions of disagreement in relation to a Speaker's ruling on Standing Order 12 “Definite matters” and Standing Order 18 “Questions to Ministers”.

Within the House, Standing Order 36(10) provides that the conduct of the Speaker can be the subject of debate on the moving of a substantive motion for that purpose. Through this mechanism, Members are given an acceptable avenue for in-depth criticism and comment on the Speaker in the performance of his duties as presiding officer.

Hon. Members, in my consideration of this matter, I have examined what pertains in the practice in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth jurisdictions, inclusive of Canada and New Zealand. The literature in all instances deems that reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker, particularly alleging bias, can be, and historically has been taken by the House, to be a breach of privilege and has been punished accordingly.

The underlying principle for this approach is that such comments tend to obstruct the House in the performance of its functions or may produce such a result falling squarely into the definition of contempt.

Against that background, my task today is not to conclude whether Sen. Seetahal SC did in fact commit a breach of the privileges of this House. I am only required to decide whether, on a first examination, the issue raised constitutes a matter of privilege or contempt.

I have examined the newspaper article in question and the words complained of by the hon. Minister. In the third paragraph of the section entitled "Disservice", Sen. Seetahal SC states:

"The debate on the Validation Bill devolved into name-calling and bad-mouthing, and the fact that this was allowed to happen must surely lie with the Speaker of the House, who is responsible for regulating the conduct of business of the House."

And she continues in the fourth paragraph to say:

"Standing Order after Standing Order was breached and no one was called to task. One such is that the conduct of an MP is not to be called in question (except on a specific motion), and any Member who does so is out of order."

Hon. Members, these words can be interpreted as reckless and ill-advised, especially written by a person who is a serving Senator of this Parliament. As a Senator, Ms. Seetahal SC is well aware that the interpretation and application of the Standing Orders is the sole discretion of the Presiding Officer and so for a Senator to publicly comment negatively on the Speaker's interpretation of the rules of this House and to assume that her interpretation of what should have transpired was the accurate one, is more than a bit presumptuous.

I would think it similarly brazen for any Member of this honourable House to presume that he or she could boldly question the rightfulness of a ruling by the Chair of the Senate in a manner that is plainly disrespectful of that office. Indeed, the principle that the conduct of the Chair may only be challenged by way of

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substantive motion, has the distinct advantage of preventing the disruption of debate and ensuring that debate is conducted with the dignity that befits the office of the Speaker or President. This principle, I submit, must be considered to apply not just within one House but between the Houses for good relations and civility. Sen. Seetahal SC cannot argue that she was writing here merely as a journalist.

Sen. Seetahal SC is not just a Senator but the second most senior Senator on the Independent Bench, and she ought to know better. To compound her glaring disrespect of this House and its Chair, while all you hon. Members of this House awaited my ruling, Sen. Seetahal SC chose to call a press conference in this Parliament and reassert the rightfulness of her actions.

Before I move on, hon. Members, permit me to remind each and every single one of you that we have the individual and collective duty to uphold the dignity of this Parliament and to avoid actions which may serve only to erode the public's regard for this institution which remains the most potent symbol of our democracy.

I now turn to the question to be considered and that is whether the words used by Sen. Seetahal SC constitute a contempt of this House. Recall that I stated earlier that, today, comments on the performance of the Speaker are not uncommon. They may be unwise, or they may be reckless, as in the instant case, but they are to be expected. Why? Many persons are uninformed and ignorant of the rules of this House. Additionally, today there is a wide public participation and interest in the parliamentary process. But there is a limit to what is acceptable comment, and this is justifiably so, because the House has the duty to protect itself and its dignity.

What is this limit, and the test to be applied? Usually the test is whether the comment alleges that the Speaker was biased, unfair or unjust in the performance of his duties. I have applied this test to the impugned column, and having regard to the definition of contempt set off above, I find no prima facie case of contempt in the matter before me to warrant any further action by this House.

What I have found however, is that the actions by this Senator were preemptive and unwarranted and demonstrated discourtesy to the Chair and to this House. I ask all Members to be more mindful of their actions both inside and outside of the House, since they are reflective on this institution, which we must always hold in the highest regard.

I so rule.

EVIDENCE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Evidence Act, Chap. 7:02, brought from the Senate [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual report of The University of the West Indies for the year 2007/2008. [*The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Christine Kangaloo)*]
 2. Annual report of the Police Service Commission for the year 2008. [*The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
 3. Annual report of First Citizens Bank Limited and First Citizens Mortgage and Trust Company Limited for the year 2005. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Karen Nunez-Tesheira)*]
 4. Annual report of First Citizens Bank Limited and First Citizens Mortgage and Trust Company Limited for the year 2006. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
 5. Annual report of First Citizens Bank Limited and First Citizens Mortgage and Trust Company Limited for the year 2007. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
 6. Annual report of First Citizens Bank Limited and First Citizens Mortgage and Trust Company Limited for the year 2008. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
 7. Audited financial statements of the National Quarries Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2007. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
 8. Audited financial statements of the National Quarries Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2008. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
- Papers 7 and 8 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*
9. Report of the Taurus Services Limited Review of Operations for the year 2005/2006 and Business Plan 2006/2007. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
 10. Report of the Taurus Services Limited Review of Operations for the year 2006/2007 and Business Plan 2007/2008. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
 11. Report of the Taurus Services Limited Review of Operations for the year 2007/2008 and Business Plan 2008/2009. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
 12. Annual report and audited financial statements of accounts of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) for the 15 months ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. C. Kangaloo*]

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13. Annual report and audited financial statements of accounts of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACIT) for the year ended September 30, 2006. [*Hon. C. Kangaloo*]

Papers 12 and 13 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

14. Audited financial statements of National Helicopter Services Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2008. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
15. Audited financial statements of Education Facilities Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2008. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]
16. Annual audited financial statements of the Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended September 30, 2008. [*Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira*]

Papers 14, 15 and 16 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

1.45 p.m.

**STATUS OF CHILDREN (AMDT.) BILL
Special Select Committee Report
(Presentation)**

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Christine Kangaloo): Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the Second Interim Report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on a Bill entitled an Act to amend the Status of Children Act, Chap. 46:07 and to provide for DNA analysis in civil proceedings.

**STATEMENT BY MINISTER
National Security Sector
(Comprehensive Review of)**

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am duly authorized by the Cabinet to make the following statement on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's decision to conduct a comprehensive review of the national security sector in Trinidad and Tobago, with a view of enhancing security arrangements in the immediate to long-term.

This Government and all Members of Parliament are fully aware that crime reduction is a key element of national security, and this is explicitly articulated in Vision 2020, to which the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains totally

committed. The fundamental objective of Vision 2020 is the improvement of the quality of life and the standard of living of all our citizens, aligned to that of developed societies of the world.

As early as 2002, the Government recognized that there was a need to carry out a comprehensive review of the national security sector. In the circumstances, a decision was taken to engage an independent consultant to conduct this strategic review of selected agencies of the Ministry of National Security, understanding that in order to conduct such an audit, it was necessary to find a consultant who could be entrusted with such a critical task, where confidentiality was crucial. [Crosstalk] The process of finding such a consultant had to be managed carefully, as such a review would have necessarily exposed the country's security arrangements. By June 2006, three international companies were considered to conduct the review; none was considered suitable.

Based on a request from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the Government of Canada provided a national defence review expert, Major General, retired, Cameron Ross, to carry out a fact finding exercise. Satisfied with the results of that exercise and subsequent to a series of deliberations by the National Security Council, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago engaged the services of Major General Cameron Ross, President of HCR Security International Limited of Canada, and his team of security experts in the fields of defence, security, intelligence, law enforcement and criminal justice, for the purpose of conducting a review of the national security sector.

The following is a brief overview of the team and their areas of expertise: retired Major General Cameron Ross is the President of HCR Security International Limited, which provides security advice to governments and the private sector. Since retirement from active military service in 2003, he has led strategic security reviews of nine Caribbean countries with a focus on law enforcement, counter terrorism and defence. Recent reviews have been of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and a security needs assessment of Trinidad and Tobago. He is also the senior military advisor for EnCana Corporation and was formerly the President Emergo Security Limited and Vice-President for international relations for Emergo Canada Limited.

Rear Admiral J. D. Fraser is a retired Rear Admiral of the Royal Canadian Navy. He was recruited to be a member of the Government of the Bahamas review team examining all aspects of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force. As an independent subcontractor, he has worked extensively for Calania Limited in their support of Canadian forces exercises. This work has expanded to include

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mentoring senior leaders in an operational command and leading a national level study. He is currently leading the validation team for the exercises preparing security forces for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

Gregory Hogg is a senior consultant with extensive research in project management, training, general management and human resources. He has been directly involved in programme and project management for 20 years, in performance management, information management and technology, transformation, capital equipment, training simulation, research and development and human resource discipline.

Mr. Philip Murray retired as Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1994; a post which he held for over six years. Since retiring from RCMP, Mr. Murray is President of J Philip Murray Strategic Advisors Incorporated, a firm specializing in directional advice in the private and public sectors, including experience as fairness commissioner in complex and major public sector contracts.

Scott Newark is a former Alberta Crown Prosecutor, 1980 to 1992, who served as Executive director of the Canadian Police Association in Ottawa 1992 to 1998, where he championed criminal justice reform, border security, intelligence, national security and immigration enforcement issues. As Executive Director, Scott testified frequently before parliamentary and Senate committees and was responsible for the detailed CPA briefs, which included draft legislation, to accomplish specific legislative reforms.

The end result of the review was a report of the HCR's team findings and recommendations. The report was presented to the Government in March 2009. Let me state that this report is not a crime plan, rather it gives valuable insights on the positioning of selected agencies of the Ministry of National Security and defines specific recommendations with respect to our national security framework and criminal justice system, the improvement of which is a key component in the fight against crime.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the report is the result of extensive interviews of over 150 serving and retired local security experts and the review of detailed local materials and previous recommendations. The team recommended reforms focusing on identifying solutions, with stakeholder support rather than simply confirming existing and already recognized problems.

The report focused on 12 specific modules of the security sector, plus a section on criminal justice reform, arising from its inclusion as an area of importance in the national security plans. The modules covered the entire

spectrum of national security issues, including analysis of the overall national security framework and national security plans; analysis and sharing of information and intelligence; maximizing the effectiveness of the National Security Council, the Ministry of National Security and all of its agencies, including the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, the Defence Force, the intelligence agencies and the Strategic Services Agency.

Specifically, the following key modules were reviewed: The National Security Council; national security plans; the Ministry of National Security; the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force; Intelligence and Strategic Services Agency; the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago; the Defence Transformation and Integration Secretariat of the Ministry of National Security, (DEFTIS); the National Training Systems; Emergency Management and Critical Infrastructure Protection; International Security Corporation; Project Management Course Delivery and the Criminal Justice System.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, over 300 recommendations were proposed in the report that would assist in the transformation of the security sector.

The National Security Council considered these recommendations in detail, in conjunction with the relevant heads of security, in a series of consultations. Mr. Speaker, 275 recommendations were accepted by the National Security Council and subsequently approved by Cabinet.

I will now like to highlight the key recommendations emanating from the national security sector review. However, as can be expected with matters relating to national security, the Government can only provide, at this time, a broad overview of these recommendations.

The National Security Council: The National Security Council is a standing committee of Cabinet which has been in existence since our independence in 1962. The mandate of the council was to exercise control over the security intelligence community, thereby ensuring that appropriate intelligence based actions could be strategically directed.

The recommendations require a modified mandate of the council requiring it to give direction on all matters it determines to be of national importance, with respect to matters of national security, including ensuring implementation of Vision 2020 national security related objectives. It further recommended, inter alia, that the composition of the National Security Council be increased and a

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director be appointed to lead the National Security Council Secretariat to advise the Chairman on national security issues and to support the work of the council.

2.00 p.m.

National security plans: It is commonly recognized that there is an element of security in all the responsibilities of the Government. The review of the national security plans encompasses a multitude of security plans and other plans which directly impact the security environment. It was therefore recommended that Cabinet directs Ministers to establish properly resourced Vision 2020 Evaluation and Monitoring Centres with specific mandate to ensure full ministry participation in goal setting, information gathering and reporting to the National Security Council Secretariat in accordance with the national security framework identified in the report. The report recommended closer collaboration of all national security agencies in order to achieve certain synergies.

The Ministry of National Security: This ministry is responsible for all security agencies within Trinidad and Tobago; therefore it stands to reason that a significant amount of change should occur within this ministry in its bid to effectively administer the said agencies which are as follows: The Trinidad and Tobago Service; the Defence Force; the Prison Service; the Special Anti-crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago; the Fire Service; the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management; the Strategic Services Agency; the Forensic Science Centre and the Immigration Division.

Given the exponential growth of previously existing agencies and the establishment of new agencies, there is now an urgent need to develop the institutional capacity of the ministry. A primary recommendation is therefore the assessment of the volume of work being directed by key administrative sections in relation to the size and competencies of the staff.

Action should also be taken in terms of administrative and operational processes, delegation of spending authority, reform of the procurement system, and improvement of project management skills. Other recommendations focus on the criteria for promotion shifting from seniority to meritocracy with a greater emphasis on trust and accountability. As such, a restructured Ministry of National Security which includes a military presence is recommended.

The Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force: The review recognized that the traditional role of the Defence Force of defending the nation has and will continue to change to the more specific, realistic role of securing the nation. The recommendations focus on ensuring that all formations are aligned to that new

mission. Additional recommendations focused on human resource issues such as career paths for each discipline, reassessment of the retirement age and determination of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force post which could be filled by civilians in order to allow defence force personnel to concentrate on operational duties.

Intelligence and Strategic Services Agency: Intelligence is a necessary tool used by security agencies to determine the possible threats to this country's security. The review recognized that there is a significant need for greater coordination and collaboration amongst agencies. It was also recommended that the Government moves to an intelligence led model for national security and critical infrastructure protection.

The review also recommended that the following be implemented:

- standardized access controls to all Ministry of National Security buildings;
- security clearance vetting and renewal processes for all agencies involved in national security;
- standardized document classification systems;
- random integrity testing of personnel;
- compatible software for all agencies; and
- a single Ministry of National Security National Operation Centre.

Special Anti-crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT): The Special Anti-crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago was established to respond to the growing wave of serious crime and violence in the country. SAUTT has played a significant role in the fight against crime by introducing new training methods, new strategies, advanced technologies and new assets. It was recommended that SAUTT be incorporated by an Act of Parliament.

The Defence Transformation and Integration Secretariat: DTIS was established to provide oversight and manage change specifically within the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force and across all divisions of the ministry. It provided a new technical capacity in the Ministry of National Security and, in so doing, its presence assisted in the realignment of the division's posture and capabilities as they relate to securing the nation. It was also recommended that the Defence Transformation and Integration Secretariat manage the procurement of major military assets.

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The National Security Integrated Strategic Training System: The review recognized that there was a need for integrated training across all the sections, divisions and agencies in the ministry. It was recommended that training and development must occur throughout the career of personnel. This type of training will allow for standardization across the ministry and will lead to increased efficiency and productivity.

Emergency Management and Critical Infrastructure Protection: The intention of the Government in creating the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, (ODPM) in 2005 was to improve the national capacity to respond effectively to emergencies and disasters. The ODPM's objective is to focus on the foundation plans and corresponding Government priorities when planning the management of, or response to an emergency or disaster. Critical infrastructure protection however, is another area of focus and has to be developed as a priority and implemented across the spectrum of private and public sector agencies and corporations.

It was therefore recommended that the critical infrastructure portfolio be led by the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management and that the agency be designated as the national leading agency for emergency and disaster management with defined operational, coordination, policy and accountability roles. Additionally, the CEO of the ODPM should be added to the heads of agencies participating in the National Security Council.

The agency, apart from providing advice to the Government with respect to emergency and disaster management, should be given the authority to monitor, evaluate and report to the Government. It is recommended that ODPM focus on the activities of National Emergency Management Tobago and all Ministries of Government.

International Security Corporation: A sound foreign policy is linked to national interest and national security and, as such, defence and security policies should be closely linked to foreign policy. The Ministry of National Security in recognizing the importance of Trinidad and Tobago's foreign policy and the role of international security corporation has developed an international affairs unit within the ministry working in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to link the issues of security with the development of foreign policy. The following are some initiatives recommended:

The development of a high level of awareness of regional security issues within the senior leadership, as well as vibrant linkages with neighbouring countries to ensure knowledge of their security concerns;

The international affairs unit should be the primary coordinating centre for the ministry's entire foreign liaison as well as the direct contact authority between the ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on military and security matters.

Project management cost delivery: The review underscored the fact that the various divisions of the Ministry of National Security plan and execute a plethora of projects. Given that efficiency and effectiveness are crucial elements of such programmes, it was recognized that a standard delivery of project management training across all divisions and agencies in the ministry was required. Progressive project management training was recommended for personnel with possible career progression where deemed suitable.

Criminal Justice System: Based on interviews and review of stakeholders' reports, the report has confirmed the inherent interconnectivity of the components of our criminal justice system and the necessity of a long-term strategy to reduce and indeed prevent crime. An example of this is the need to convert our existing penal system into a correction system so as to provide constructive alternatives and possibilities instead of continuing criminality. Likewise, it stresses the wisdom in investing in all our communities and young people so as to prevent them from being drawn into the anti-social lifestyles that lead to crime.

Finally, the report builds on the diverse and hitherto unconnected observations and recommendations to improve the efficiency and productivity of the administration of justice. To this end, the report recommended the establishment of a National Crime Commission that will assist the National Security Council Secretariat in creating a criminal justice reform action and implementation plan. The National Security Council Secretariat should report to the National Security Council within six months of the establishment of the National Crime Commission with respect to a criminal justice reform action and implementation plan.

The review team conducted a thorough capability risk analysis of the current national security framework to determine the probability of success in improving the operations of our security sector while achieving the Vision 2020 security objective. It was determined that the framework needed to be revisited to meet changing circumstances and take into account three critical areas:

1. Continued strengthening of the Ministry of National Security interagency coordination and collaboration and ensuring that there is reduced duplication of effort especially in intelligence areas;
2. Ensuring informed policy and responsive operational decision-making with a specific follow-up and accountability mechanism; and

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3. Continuing implementation of targetted crime reduction operations among law enforcement entities.

There is recognition that accountability is a key component of the transformed national security sector. The Government will continue to provide the resources required to achieve its objectives. Accountability will be inextricably linked to responsibility as part of the new performance management strategy that would be robustly applied.

There was also recognition of the requirement for a whole Government approach in revising the security landscape. Inputs of key ministries are seen as crucial in the support of national security objectives. The report articulates a series of recurring scenes which emerge from the interviews of local officials which speak to important priorities for the country's national security sector.

Included among these is the need to increase the delegation of decision-making authority while verifying the propriety of its use, guaranteeing public accountability of public authorities is a foundation principle of this Government and this will continue to be the case as we work to improve the national and domestic security of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has made it abundantly clear that the security and safety of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is its highest priority. This report, the insights provided and its implementation will bring us closer to achieving one of the five development priorities of Government's Vision 2020 plan, that of promoting effective government to which the Ministry of National Security has primary responsibility and its stated sub goal which states that Trinidad and Tobago will be a safe and secure place to live, visit, do business and raise families.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

METROLOGY (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Metrology Act, 2004 be now read a second time.

I am happy to be here today to present this amendment to this honourable House. The Metrology Act was passed on June 25, 2004. The integral purpose of this Act was to make the international system of units the primary system of measurement in Trinidad and Tobago.

The international system of unit is the modified and internationally accepted form of what is commonly referred to as the metric system. This act underscores the need for the development and implementation of standardization of goods and service within Trinidad and Tobago.

2.15 p.m.

In short, when we speak of metrology, we speak of measurements and measurement devices. The original option here, Sir, is that this is critical to commerce and business. Standardization is essential to sharpen the competitive edge of our companies and industries within the global trading arena. It is incumbent upon exporters to be capable of satisfying technical and quality requirements of their customers abroad as well as their health, safety and environmental rules of the importing nation.

International trade is a two-way affair. Quality requirements which are essential components of trade are usually couched in standards while mandatory requirements, such as the rules referred to above, are contained in technical regulations. Under the WTO or the World Trade Organization, barriers to trade have shifted from duties and tariffs to those based on technical parameters with agreements on technical barriers to trades and on sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

This shift of emphasis facilitates the protection of health and safety of the consumers and the environment by the restricting the importation of non-compliant production services. The basis for the implementation of standards which can be applicable to economic development and trade, are founded on the International Organizations for Standardizations⁷—also known as ISO—three pillars of sustainable development, and that is standardization, metrology and conformity assessment.

In Trinidad and Tobago, these three aforementioned elements: standardizations, metrology and conformity measurements are already in existence. Standardization and conformity assessment are established in the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards through the Standards Act, No. 18 of 1997 and the Metrology Act, No. 18 of 2004, which gives the bureau further responsibilities for national measurement standards, measurement traceability and legal metrology.

I must highlight that subsequent to the passage of this Act, stakeholder consultation between the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, the body which is responsible for the administration of this Act, and the energy sector, resulted in some concern being expressed regarding the non-inclusion of the

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British thermal unit, or Btu, as a unit of energy. Traditionally, this is a unit of energy that has been used to quantify natural gas.

This amendment was necessary given the crucial role which natural gas and the trade in natural gas plays in our economy. As such, the Metrology (Amdt.) Bill, 2009 was prepared. The Bill was passed in the Senate on July 07, 2009 and is now before this honourable House. The proclamation of the Metrology Act with the amendments that are before this House today, will translate into trade and trade related benefits for our citizens, including both exporters and consumers.

Exporters derive benefits from certification through securing increased market share, growing their profit margins, significantly reducing documentation and improving organization efficiency, to list a few of these benefits. For consumers, the imposition of standards means value for money, the assurance of quality and generally signifies a more sophisticated standard of living.

I will now take this House through the amendments. Clause 1 outlines the title of the Bill and clause 2 defines the meaning of the term "Act" within the Bill to mean the Metrology Act of 2004. Clause 3 proposes the amendment of section 4 of the Act by repealing subsection (3) and substituting the following subsection to include the Btu or British thermal unit as a unit of measurement of energy to be used specifically in connection with the trade in natural gas.

The new subclause states:

“Without prejudice to the legality of the use of metric units of measurement—

- (a) the barrel referred to in the Fifth Schedule shall be used only in connection with trade in petroleum and petroleum products;
- (b) the standard cubic foot and the British thermal unit (Btu) referred to in the Fifth Schedule shall be used only in connection with trade in natural gas.”

Clause 4 proposes to amend the Fifth Schedule of the Act by inserting the following items after the unit, barrel. This is in tabulation format so I shall just read the contents of the relevant columns. The Name of the Unit, standard cubic foot; the abbreviation symbol for standard cubic foot shall be SCF. The base international measurement unit or "SI unit from which derived", is a metre and the value of the metre is equivalent to .028316847 cubic metres. The unit of energy, the British thermal unit, as defined in ISO 31-4; its abbreviated symbol is Btu; the base unit of measurement "from which derived" is a joule and the value of the joule is 105556 joules.

What this table does is to allow the standard cubic foot for the measurement of gas volumes and the British thermal unit for the calculation of other matters, in particular, natural gas. The effect of this is to legitimize the barrel as a unit of capacity measurement and corrects a deficiency in the original Act which did not contain a unit of measurement for natural gas, now our biggest earner of foreign exchange.

The maintenance of a consistent, accurate, relevant system of weights and measures is important, especially as Trinidad and Tobago seeks to participate fully in the global trading arena and, as such, it is important that our system of measurements is in keeping with internationally recognized standards.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate on a matter before us that has some significance to the bigger issues of trade, economic growth, but also to some people's issues, of discrimination, fairness and value for money.

I want to begin with an observation. The Minister's presentation on this matter was brief and while I will seek to be equally brief—but I cannot assure you—I raise that because the Minister's introduction was brief and the matter before us is a short matter, if not a simple matter. But there is an observation I want to make re that approach.

There is an approach sometimes by Government Members—and I mean absolutely no disrespect to the Minister of Trade and Industry, but from the Government side, when Government Members come to the House to debate issues, particularly amendment bills, we hear the nature of the amendment, the reason for the amendment and we hear no more. We hear nothing of the amendment in its context in terms of its parent Act, in terms of its greater rationale and with this matter, there are several related issues, which regrettably, the Minister in his introduction—really his introduction—did not address as it relates to the trade in natural gas, the economic benefits, or not, to be derived and the issues of measurement of natural gas, but also measurement of the other products which I believe is also an issue here that we can raise.

Apart from that, let me say in introduction, that in 2004 you will recall that I also had the opportunity to lead the debate on the Metrology Act, 2004 and on that occasion we were really taken aback by some of the measures introduced there, and we saw it as a very progressive piece of legislation pursuant to the

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objectives that the Minister raised; our participation in the international trading arena; our economic development and the need to standardize our measuring systems with the international community, particularly our trading partners. But at no time did the Minister today, while making reference to the parent Act, give us an update on what is happening re that legislation and whether or not this amendment will lend any value to the parent Act. When we pass an Act of Parliament, particularly a path-breaking piece of legislation, it is useful when we come for amendments that we hear what is happening with the implementation of the parent legislation, because we may be making amendments, as we are today, which really may be of little value because the parent legislation has not been properly implemented and is not given effect. Those are some of the issues I intend to raise today.

The Bill before us, an Act to amend the Metrology Act, 2004, provides for an amendment to the Fifth Schedule, particularly to adopt the unit of energy, the British thermal unit. But the Minister—and you will agree that a matter like this could at some times descend into very technical terms and complex issues because it is a matter that involves physics, chemistry, engineering and so on. And while I will refrain from dealing with the coefficient of linear expansion and matters like that, I walked with my measurement and calibration handbook, so I am here with my definitions in the event that Members opposite will not understand—well, I walk with it all the time, so we will speak later about *Hooke's Law*. But for now I want to say we are well prepared on this side to deal with the technical matters. That is the point I wanted to make.

The measure today deals with unit of energy to introduce in the parent legislation the use of British thermal unit particularly for the trade in natural gas. Incidentally, unless I missed it, I do not think the Minister even defined what is British thermal unit, assuming, maybe that everybody knows that, because, I mean, who does not know what is that in Trinidad and Tobago? But the most common definition that we can probably find and the one that we use, is useful to just examine the definition of it, but first I just want to put it in its perspective of metrology.

The impetus of facilitating world trade and the associated need to eliminate technical barriers to trade, as the Minister raised, the issue of technical barriers, is leading to a greater awareness worldwide of the role that measurement plays in underpinning activities in all areas of science and technology. The Minister is absolutely right when he makes the point that a century ago our barriers to trade included duties and so on, but today our barriers to trade is really the lack of integration into global systems, not only of measurements but I imagine of other areas as well.

Metrology provides a fundamental basis, not only for the physical sciences and engineering, but also for chemistry, biological sciences, the environment, interestingly, medicine and it reminds us immediately of some of the issues in that area, of measurement and my very distinguished friend from Caroni East will take us on a journey as it relates to metrology in the health sector and the importance of measurements and so on, and quantity and quality control.

Various high level studies demonstrate the impact of measurement to society. And I think for the layman looking at this and listening to this debate, we should really make the point in the beginning that measurement is a very, very important issue for society as a whole and it is a people issue. There is also a temptation today to just run into a series of puns and clichés because it is easy to measure my contribution in that way. I know my friend from St. Augustine is already waning on this matter, but the serious matter is that measurement affects society; it affects consumers and I will come to it later.

2.30 p.m.

Imagine someone going to the back of a grocery and they tell you that they have five pounds of potatoes and pay for it, but there is nothing on the bag and you assume that it is five pounds or two kilograms or whatever and you may pay an exorbitant amount and you do not get the quantity for which you pay. It is a people issue. Apart from the technical thing, measurement affects people, their pocket and spending. That is the approach I will take in this matter.

I begin by asking the Minister to consider whether or not the attempt to put in law and amend, to use British thermal units for natural gas, there is any validity in adopting that approach to other petroleum products. This is for natural gas but one also looks at other products. The gasoline that we sell at the pump and products of the National Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago, are they covered? In a related matter in the introductory statement of the Minister, the Minister told us that this amendment when passed would redound to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and there are economic gains.

The Minister did not tell us the economic loss from 2004 to 2009, if any. Presumably, from 2004 to 2009, we did not have this amendment. Did we have an economic loss and if so, what was it, particularly in a critical product trading natural gas? One believes that natural gas in the context of the fall in the price of oil is quite a significant earner of foreign exchange. What was our loss without this amendment so that we can look at our gain? I suggest that there was no loss because the trade of natural gas continues as it always did with British thermal

units being the units. We would like the Minister to respond to whether or not there was any type of loss.

Another complicating matter is that in the jurisdiction for monitoring and implementing weights and measures and providing for consumer protection as well, that rests with two or more bodies today, the Ministry of Trade and Industry where there is the Weights and Measurement Division and the Bureau of Standards which was established by Act No. 18 of 1997 and also the Metrology Act of 2004. Weights and measurement and its monitoring have a sort of dual jurisdiction. They have different groups, people and places monitoring this.

I am told that this poses a problem today in terms of the management of our commitments not only to national law, but also to international obligations because there are international conventions and instruments to which Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory, where we must comply with international standards in weights and measurements. Immediately, I think of the requirements of the World Trade Organization where we are mandated to synchronize and conform with international standards of the metric system and so on. I believe that the metric system obtains specifically in Europe, while the United States of America operates another system. That is the context within which we are talking here.

I informed that since 2004 the Metrology Act has not been implemented because to this day, November 2009, there are no regulations pursuant to sections 22 and 23 of the parent Act which provide for the Minister establishing regulations to protect consumers. If you go in the supermarket and there is a plastic bag of sweets which is made locally with a quantity of two kilograms or whatever it is, you would assume that is how it is. There must be a machinery, according to the law, of persons with the responsibility who will go to those factories to monitor their scales or whatever devices they use for measuring to see if they are compliant and changing from one system to another; whether it is calibrated and whether the consumer will get value for money. Because of the failure to adopt and implement the regulations to this day, the Metrology Act 2004 is effectively not in compliance and being implemented.

Furthermore, I am informed that the regulations pursuant to the parent Act have been before the Ministry of Trade and Industry for over one year. They have been drafted and before the Ministry of Trade and Industry and they cannot come to Parliament for the requisite—I believe it is negative resolution—approval so that we can implement. This is not unlike other issues. There are regulations for OSHA and we have not seen them. This is very consistent with that approach. We call on the Minister to ensure that the regulations pursuant to sections 22 and 23

of the parent Act are brought quickly to Parliament for the requisite approval, so they could be implemented. These regulations speak to the issue of fees to be collected by inspectors; certificates to be issued for the examination and determination of accuracy of measuring devices; methods of inspecting, testing and stamping of prescribed measurement devices.

The conformity of measuring devices to the law is provided for in the regulations but they have not been made in 2009. We ask the Minister to tell us whether the Advisory Committee to be established pursuant to section 22 is in effect. That committee has a very important mandate. Let us assume we are dealing with units of energy, BTU natural gas. Let us assume that this is passed today so it becomes law and is amended. Where is the machinery in terms of advisory committee and proper regulations to ensure the implementation of what is passed today? We are dealing with the lack of machinery.

I would like the Minister to tell us in his winding up whether we have the requisite number of inspectors. There is supposed to be a chief inspector and a crew of inspectors who will go around to the groceries, supermarkets, shops fish markets butcher shops or whatever to ensure that these scales are proper and they are not ripping off people. The Member for Princes Town South/Tableland told us the other day that the price of food is going down. They asked him to put on paper where he is shopping, whether it is in the Georgetown market. The price of food could go down if the people selling tamper with the scale. They tell you that you are getting "X" weight, they tamper with the scale and lower the price. You are not even getting the quality you pay for. In many markets that is the complaint.

I want you to recall when we were passing this legislation in 2004, we called upon the Government to embark on a public education campaign to allow ordinary citizens who are not too clear on the meaning of Btu and other measuring systems, to know what it means and when they go to buy their basic food items, how they could be ripped off. [*Interruption*] That is to measure natural gas and I do not know if it is hot air as well. Member for Diego Martin Central, it does not measure hot air so your speaking today would not be measurable according to this amendment.

Let me say that I want the Minister to tell us whether or not there has been a public education campaign and if so, why not, and if they have, what have they done? Persons out there are being ripped off. Is it the resources? I am informed that the relevant standard authority does not have the resources, M-O-N-E-Y, to embark on a deeper, wider and more comprehensive education campaign. This is a country where we spend \$2 million on a flag. They should fly that flag at half mast as a permanent symbol of the waste, corruption and mismanagement in this

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country. It is obscene. You heard of the straw that broke the camel's back. This is a flagpole that would break the camel's back. When they spend \$2 million there, they are complaining that they do not have money and resources to give people basic utilities and educate people about weights and measurements, as if the innocent person buying fish in the San Fernando market would know all the conversions.

The critical issue is public education and the implementing of the regulations. I mean absolutely no disrespect to the Minister of Trade and Industry. *[Interruption]* Please, time is of the essence today for me. I prefer if in their contribution they can respond. I am very sorry. The vendor and consumer in the marketplace must have information available to them on these matters of conversion. The Minister needs to tell us whether there was a public education programme; if it was communicated; how many people, where, when and how.

I was making a point earlier concerning natural gas which is the subject matter of this amendment before us. I was saying that the Minister may tell us again whether or not Btu which is before us, is used only in connection with the trade in natural gas. Our research and information tell us that there are other petroleum products that use Btu. The issue relates not only to service and products but also air conditioning. In the simple thing called air condition units, they are measured by Btus. Does this amendment provide for that? We are told, in this country as you know, we are involved not only in manufacturing and supplying air condition units, but also exporting as well. There are several business people in that. In that trade of air conditioning, will this apply and if so, why not? Should we have a blanket provision as was recommended in the other place?

I think that Independent Sen. Basharat Ali made a recommendation to the effect of widening this amendment to include not just natural gas, but other products and to cater as well for air condition units. They will have an opportunity to tell us more about that.

The other issue I want to raise concerns what happens at the Bureau of Standards that is responsible for implementing this amendment. That is an important agency involved in this area. I am informed that for several years, since 2004, the Bureau of Standards has had problems resolving a simple matter as the movement of workers. I will explain it. Just as in the health sector when we moved to the Regional Health Authorities we had to move workers from the Ministry of Health to the Regional Health Authorities and that involved some industrial relations matters over terms of employment and contractual terms—that matter was a sore issue for health—there is a related matter here where about 20 or 25 employees from the Ministry of Trade and Industry and related agencies

must move to the Bureau of Standards to work in the division for weights and measurements. To this day, that industrial relations matter has not been resolved.

2.45 p.m.

They have not provided for contracts of employment that are acceptable to employees or to indicate to employees their terms of employment when they move to the Bureau of Standards. Those 20 to 25 persons are technical people needed to staff the metrology laboratory and to police and implement these measures. There is a significant issue.

The Minister is relatively new. They said the other day how many months they have been in government—24 months or so. The flag I think is ample testimony of their 24 months. I mean no disrespect to the Minister, but there is an ongoing matter of competence and efficiency in implementing these things.

I refer to the Minister's statement. Like you, Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively. He spoke about technical requirements and the rules of quality control and the essential requirements of trade, standardization, metrology and conformity assessment. Big words, but where is the competence and efficiency to back up those words? That is the issue.

It is a pattern of the Government. Three persons lost their lives in a fire at a bridge three days ago because the Minister of Works and Transport could not build a bridge at Macoya. There was a temporary bailey structure there, and he had the audacity and insensitivity to tell the person who is dead to pay for the bridge. That speaks to incompetence, which I am dealing with as I confine myself to the issue of metrology and this amendment. If for two years, you cannot put a proper bridge there that would prevent loss of life, should we complain about not transferring 25 persons to the Bureau of Standards? Maybe we are out of place to complain.

It is very instructive, as I leave this matter, to indicate that while the Minister knew overnight how much the damage to the bridge cost, he still did not know how much the concert hall at the Prime Minister's house would cost. I believe this is a concerted effort to anger and stress the people of Trinidad and Tobago with some of the decisions the Government has taken.

I know the Member is quick with Standing Order 36(1). He is minding that Pick 2 mark for some time now, so I know he will want me to return to the Bill. There is a definition here that I thought, when I was looking through my measurement handbook, would be useful. It is *Hooke's Law* and it says—we are dealing of course with metrology—

“Within the limits of perfect elasticity, stress is directly proportional to strain.”

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This Government is straining this country and the elasticity and patience of the population could burst at any time when you think about the flag, the concert hall, the bridge, the insensitivity and incompetence of the police in raiding the Hyatt Regency Hotel. A diplomat, who was allowed to come in at the airport and was met by government officials, was searched at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

In leaving this issue, I endorse the call of the Leader of the Opposition for the Government to apologize to the Muslim community and the government of Saudi Arabia over that scandal. I put on record, as I leave the issue, that it was the government of the United National Congress, in 1998, under the leadership of the Member for Couva North, that ensured that Muslim pilgrims, when they have to get their visa document to go to Hajj in Saudi Arabia, would not have to pay money to go to Caracas and New York, but officials would come and issue the visa in Trinidad and Tobago for the convenience of the pilgrims. It was also as a result of the work of the former ambassador and former Minister, His Excellency Kamaluddin Mohammed.

I am coming back to the issue of competence in the management of metrology and the Government's capacity to implement the 2004 Act and what we can expect with the measure before us.

We have some doubt about the human resource capacity, and the public education matter. There is also the issue of, while we talk about Btus, we also talk about oil by the barrel. We also talk about a measurement of barrels and there is a scientific basis for that. I imagine that continues.

The weights and measures matter here affects human beings and while I am almost tempted to get into this very complex and technical literature, I do not want to return to my seat without indicating that a crisis is brewing in the health sector, which I will just touch and leave for my distinguished friend to develop. Several of these health clinics being developed are importing from all over the world, including places in Asia, a lot of equipment which is being used in technical work, medical examinations, reporting and treatment. Those devices have not been approved by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards formally. They may not be in conformity with the requirements of the Metrology Act because the regulations may not be there.

I am also informed that there is also a crisis at that standards division in terms of the quality human resource. It may well be that the Government will have to look wider than in the public sector to attract people outside the public sector, not necessarily outside the country, for employment in some of these more technical areas.

I like to focus on workers and ordinary people when I speak. We are talking about inspectors going out and doing their jobs. We are dealing with measurement, consumer protection and the word the Minister used, “standardization”. When the inspectors go out to measure things in the groceries and parlours, we have another problem of who is protecting them. A meter reader just the other day, in Morvant, was shot at while doing his work. He lost a kidney. So the Government has this problem with crime where they cannot protect workers. Forget what they call gang land. Ordinary people who go to work, including your weights and measurements inspectors, who will be required to go next to the post where the fellow was shot, in the parlour nearby, to check the scale, we cannot protect. We cannot protect ordinary citizens in the course of their employment from criminal activity, from bandits and murderers. That is a crisis.

Who will want this job of inspector of weights and measures? You say in this high-crime zone here, you have to go into every parlour with a scale and, more than that, you have to tell the parlour owner that he is breaking the law and that he is subject to a notice, fine and jail. We cannot protect those types of workers in the community.

At this moment, on behalf of the Opposition, I want to express deep concern and to wish the meter reader who was shot at recently—I believe that he is also a Member of the PNM party.

Mrs. Nunez-Tesheira: Mr. Clint Pamphile.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Clint Pamphile. I believe he is a councillor of the People's National Movement. We do not hold that against him. He is a human being. He was shot; he lost his kidney, regrettably, but we on this side wish him a speedy recovery and hope that the party of which he is a member would do more to protect him and others like him, a former national cricketer. He is a distinguished servant of the country. We have to hire inspectors for weights and measures and they have to go out in the community and this is the environment into which we are sending them.

I promised to be brief, so I do not want to break that promise. I want to raise the matter because we are dealing with national gas and of possible economic loss of revenue by measurement. At Petrotrin, they are now constructing an installation to deal with natural gas and that has been the subject of serious crisis with cost overruns in the gas optimization programme. That is another problem we have. That project, which is now close to \$1 billion in cost overruns, they are expected to implement the law; they are expected to implement the law like

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everybody else. The Bureau of Standards is expected to visit and police what they are doing and we are not told the reasons for the cost overruns, why they have ceased work there; if it is the subject of a loan arrangement. We must call because we are looking at revenue from natural gas. Today, we are dealing with the amendment to ensure we get the maximum value in the trade of natural gas, an asset that belongs to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Yet we embarked on a project that has been mismanaged and about which there are allegations of corruption. We call now for a public enquiry into the cost overrun in the projects at Petrotrin involving the gas optimization. We call for an investigation into what is happening at Petrotrin.

When you pass on the highway, Mr. Speaker—I know that you journey to and from South Trinidad—you will see this building started and stopped. If you venture into the compound—not necessarily the Speaker, but other Members may frequent there for golf and other recreation and they will see that the work has come to a complete halt after \$.5 billion. That was meant to expand our trade in natural gas. Petrotrin has been the subject of particularly bad publicity recently.

Petrotrin to this day is not paying the Venky's/Trinidad and Tobago captain Daren Ganga his six weeks' salary. He has been deprived of six weeks of his salary to go to India to play. He is an employee of Petrotrin, the state corporation that squandered \$1 billion, which cannot pay six weeks salary. Tomorrow night they will all go to the President's house and pretend, shake hands, hug up, well done, but six weeks' salary, a fraction of their Minister's salary, they cannot pay.

They will go to the President's House and guzzle down whiskey and wolf down shrimps and pretend that they are supporting the cricket team. That shrimps they will not weigh. [*Interruption*] I am speaking for a national audience, not for you. You do not listen to good logic. They do not measure the shrimps in Btus.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, they will go to the President's House in that hypocrisy and pretend that they support the cricket team while the cricket captain cannot get six weeks salary from a state enterprise. It is a shame and it is a disgrace to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and a state enterprise.

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs stood in this House and gave a long speech on how much he enjoyed seeing the Venky's Trinidad and Tobago team and, at the end, could not say that they will give one cent. Mr. Speaker, normally when you have an outstanding performance—you know, Mr. Ganga is working at

Petrotrin where they are now involved in natural gas and so on, and while he did not provide any information on rewards—I think the Prime Minister took a gold coin away from the cricket team. So, far from giving anything, they took away a gold coin from the cricket team. That is their approach. Anyhow, I do not want to delay on this matter, because I am much too emotional about those issues where the Government displays such hypocrisy; bad faith.

Mr. Speaker, let me get back to the matter before us, the Metrology (Amdt.) Bill. We would like the Government to tell us whether or not there are other amendments that they propose to make to enhance the parent legislation along with this amendment that is before us today. You see, while the Metrology Act, 2004 has not been properly implemented because of regulations, human resource and other matters and so on, we have reached five years later where some of the measures we voted for are now outdated, because science and technology has gone. You see, science and technology do not wait for the regulations. Somehow scientific breakthroughs do not wait on regulations, they move full speed ahead. Today, some of the conditions that were put into the 2004 Act, including schedules, are now out of sync with international best practice as approved by the international instruments that we follow. Even some of the policing measures have been outdated like the inspection process and so on.

In researching this matter, we were also looking at what is called the Legal Metrology Act in India, where there is a comprehensive measure to deal in the Act itself, not with regulations, but with the protection of consumers. We are calling upon the Ministry of Trade and Industry to undertake an evaluation of the Metrology Act, 2004 and to examine whether or not we should now reform the Metrology Act in conformity with international best practices in policing and implementing the requirements of the Metrology Act, but also in protecting citizens. I cannot emphasize that enough. This is not just a Bill about joule and Btu measurement issues and so on. This is a Bill about getting value for money, economic benefits and protecting citizens. You may get economic benefits and then exploit ordinary innocent citizens in the process, and that is why we are raising these matters.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister—we have several questions for him on this issue of metrology—whether or not Trinidad and Tobago has also satisfied the requirements of the Caribbean regional organization for standards and quality.

Sen. Browne: We are ahead of them.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, while we are involved in this Caribbean organization that provides for the implementation of instruments and conditions

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dealing with weights and measurements, we are also informed that there are several critical measures which we have not been in compliance with in the Caribbean organization for standards and quality. We have simply not complied with certain requirements in that matter which include requirements dealing with, as I said before, prepackaged commodities, inadequate declarations and packages and so on. I just want the national population to understand that there is a term called “adequate declaration” on packages. When you buy products it is the law that the manufacturer put on the product the quantity and also related matters.

At least, in the United States of America, but not so much in Trinidad and Tobago as yet, obesity is becoming a major issue. It is almost like a crisis in the United States of America. It has not reached, I think, crisis proportions here, but with this Government in power that might be another crisis looming. Part of dealing with that problem is ensuring that you have standardization in the provision of goods, particularly food beverage products, so, when you provide products to persons, you do not only put the caloric content and other issues of sugar and so on. We talk so much about health and stopping people from smoking in public and so on, but there are laws now dealing with standardization where you have to put the components on the food or the beverage, but it must also be readable to the average person.

Another conmanship that goes on in today's society and in manufacturing is that you buy a product and the writing is so fine that even if you do not use glasses, you cannot read the composition of these products. So, you do not understand if it is 60, 90, 210 or 310 calories and it disappears. The average consumer purchase products like soft drinks and so on without that. I want to make this point because this is a Government that proclaimed that they are concerned with health.

Mr. Speaker, children in secondary schools are provided with lunches and drinks. Recently, at one of these schools, a principal complained that the children are drinking soft drinks and juices and so on with an enormous component of sugar and calories, and it is not healthy for them. It can lead to diabetic conditions early and a build-up of energy in some cases, if other health requirements are not provided for. So that for our children, we must also measure, quantify and standardize the ingredients in food products and in beverage products that we market and sell to protect children from health hazard, because we are growing up a society where children believe that the only thing that you can drink is a juice with 200 calories or a soft drink with 300 calories and so on, and that is terribly unhealthy and will lead to obesity among children and problems later on for their families.

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. H. Partap*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I want to assure “Minister 36(1)”, the Member Diego Martin North/East, that I would not torture him further. I would just take about five minutes to wrap up the argument. I would wrap up the discussion and weigh it as well. Unlike the Member for Diego Martin North/East, when I give my word, it means something. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, I could take the entire five minutes to talk about him.

Mr. Speaker, I want to direct the Minister's attention to the situation in Australia and, particularly, in New Zealand where they have up-to-date legislation on metrology that provides for conditions for consumer protection in detail—much more detailed and comprehensive than in Trinidad and Tobago. It provides for certifying, producing certificates and reference materials; for validating instruments of measurements and so on. It provides for the appointment of authorities to do their work in terms of consumer protection.

Mr. Speaker, one is never sure, but I imagine the Member for Princes Town South/Tableland will join the debate at some time to tell us of the synchronization between the Consumer Division of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Bureau of Standards to protect consumers by way of not only weighing, but by the validation of instruments and devices and so on. This is a multi-disciplinary and multi-departmental type of problem we have when it comes to these matters.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I would leave the House with is the matter of—well, I would not go there, because the Member for Caroni East would then accuse me of taking his entire contribution. There is a matter with the quality and standard of the vaccine that we are promised for the H1N1 virus, the swine flu. There is a lot of international debate and, might I say, controversy, over the vaccine and the quality of it dealing with measurement, standard and safety. In health, measurement is not getting robbed like if you purchase fish. Measurement is life and death in health.

I call upon the Government in the crisis we face with the swine flu, to consider distributing industrial disinfectants to all public buildings, schools and community centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago. They can implement a full

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programme of sanitizing public buildings, schools and so on in Trinidad and Tobago. The Government should distribute industrial disinfectant to sanitize to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus while, of course, taking the measures as the distinguished doctor will speak of later on which concerns the approval of the vaccines.

Regrettably, the Minister of Health is not a Member of this House, so he is not aware of some of these issues and will not respond, but I want to tell the Minister of Health, through the Minister of Trade and Industry that the way to deal with the health sector is not to fire doctors and fire administrators in the haphazard and reckless manner he attempted to do yesterday and today. He is on the warpath now, firing the CEO in South and firing medical doctors without proper cause and breaching industrial relations and the labour laws of Trinidad and Tobago in the process. He is now like a madman firing everybody. I want you to warn him that he is breaching the law. He is firing people left, right, and centre without cause and those persons have a right to be heard. They have a right to defend themselves.

In one case, a person was fired with absolutely no cause. There was not one issue of performance in terms of the person's performance appraisal of the job and so on, and the contract has been breached without even implementing the clause in the contract for terminating a contract. That has happened in San Fernando within the last 24 hours. That is the Minister's approach to dealing with the health crisis. That cannot be it. It is reckless, it is wild and it is a violation of the law. He would be well advised to listen to the Member for Caroni East and to look at the importation of the vaccines and the correct one. Of course, the ministry and the Government should distribute the requisite disinfectants so that public buildings, schools and community centres could be sanitized in a way with the assistance of central Government given the real crisis we face on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, those are the few issues I wanted to raise. My time keeper is not in his place, but I would not delay the House anymore. I want to thank you, because it is always such a great opportunity to speak on the issue of metrology. I want to thank you for your patience and to indicate, once again, we hope this will redound to the benefit, not only of the economic prospects in natural gas, but also the proper legislation will be implemented. I hope that in response to me, the other Members will not only be equally brief, but they will be equally relevant.

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

3.15 p.m.

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Karen Nunez-Tesheira): Mr. Speaker, I join this debate and promise to be brief and keep to my word, because clearly the

Member for Oropouche East, given the document that I have, had some difficulty in measuring time. [*Interruption*]

While he seems to understand the importance of measurements—and he gave us what I would consider a pedagogic discourse on measurements and metrology—he seems not to understand that when he says 35 minutes it means 35 minutes, but I will forgive him because that is the nature of the Member. One thing the Member spoke about was the multi-disciplinary matter. He said this is a multi-disciplinary matter and I believe that he probably believes that because what he treated us to—he said it was torture and that I agree; he treated us to a demonstration in the art of circumlocution.

Why do I say that? He talked about flags, he talked about bridges, he talked about visas, he talked about concert halls, he talked about crime, he talked about schools, he talked about disinfectant, he talked about diabetes, he talked about vaccines and he talked about swine flu. For a moment, I would not blame you at all, Mr. Speaker, if you yourself forgot what this debate was about. I would not blame you because at times I was struggling to find out, was this a discussion; was this debate about metrology?

This debate is simply about an amendment, it is a very simple amendment to the Metrology Act. What it speaks to is an amendment really bringing into a legislative force and extending to some extent what already existed in measurements that are used for the purposes of trade. That is what it speaks to, for the purposes of trade. In fact, it says in the principal legislation, section 4 talks about use of units of measurement in connection with trade. So it is very specific.

The subsection which this debate is intended to address is the amendments that are relevant to petroleum and petroleum products and to natural gas. We all know that energy and its energy products are significant contributors to our GDP, to our foreign exchange, and I do not need to remind us all that that is critical to Trinidad and Tobago in terms of the economic success, the economic viability of our nation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to really speak to the issue of the metrology which the Member for Oropouche East correctly said is the science of measurement and he did speak to the importance of metrology, it is not just an abstract concept, it is not a theoretical construct, it has real and very great importance in the context of subsection (3) which deals with legislating and re-legislating the point that barrels would be used in connection with the trade in petroleum and in petroleum products, and now introduces for the first time as part of the legislation a standard cubic feet and British thermal unit will also be used in connection with the trade

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in natural gas. That is not to say it did not exist before. It existed. This is merely to provide legislative certainty.

In fact, when one studies the history of metrology one can go back to 1969 when the decision was made to move from the British imperial unit or measurement to the metric system for a number of reasons: it is more concise, it is more precise and apart from all of that it is now used as the accepted—in most countries, the United States is one of the exceptions—the measurement standard, the metric unit. So what this really does is these two sections—subsections (3A) and (3B) really speak to exceptions to using the metric system of measurement in relation to petroleum and petroleum products and natural gas in connection with trade.

The Member for Oropouche East also was correct. This is, as I said, not an abstract concept, because in today's world of globalization and WTO, there are many countries, particularly the emerging economies, what we would call the less developed economies, many of our Caribbean brothers and sisters, for example, who rely very heavily on the banana industry, they have also been impacted, not only by the removal of the import duty protection and the other protections that were provided by duties and excise duties, et cetera, but because also of the technical barriers to trade. Because included in that are the specifications that many of the developing or less developed countries are unable to realize and, as a consequence of that, it operates as a form of protectionist measure and as a form of a barrier to trade for those countries. A good example of that is the banana industry for the eastern Caribbean countries, because it is not just a question of the quality of the banana, it is the size of the banana, the measurements and all of those technical requirements play a part. It is not a theoretical construct as I said.

Simply relating to this issue of the amendment to the legislation that section 3(3) of four, really speaks to, as I said, measurement and utilizing a non-metric system of measurement that is barrels to measure petroleum and petroleum products and using the British thermal unit which is the Btu and the standard cubic feet as the measurement for natural gas. That has a relevance, because it must be referenced against a price. So you have a pricing mechanism and that pricing mechanism must be referenced to a unit of measurement in order to arrive at a price.

So it is important therefore, to determine how do you determine, in terms of your pricing, a price that is given, what does that represent in terms of a unit of measurement? Seventy dollars currently; we know that oil is trading in the vicinity of \$80 per barrel and has been trading in that vicinity for the last month or so, between \$70 and \$80 in the last few months. But the point is \$70 and \$80 of what—\$70 and \$80 per barrel?

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to know that the reason for that—in fact, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries was kind enough to provide me with an understanding of why we have kept to using the measurement of the barrel, because the barrel is not just any barrel. It is a barrel that represents 42 gallons which is the British imperial measurement. A barrel of oil is 42 gallons. In fact when I was looking to do the research on it, the reason that the barrel was used it started somewhere in Pennsylvania in the United States when they used it as a measurement for storage of petroleum. No longer is it used as a mode of transportation, but it is used now as a pricing measurement. It started in the United States, as I said. It started with 40 gallons and they added a two-gallon to make it 42 gallons in order to create the certainty which standardization allows and to give the buyer a certain level of comfort.

So, when we talk about a barrel, it is a container, yes, but it is specific in the oil industry of a 42-gallon barrel. There are some countries that use tonnes, but in Trinidad and Tobago we use the barrel as the measurement because, as you know, when we started in Trinidad and Tobago many of the countries that established trading in Trinidad in Texaco in the days of Shell and so on were either British or American oil companies and that was the measurement standard that was used in the oil industry in the United States.

So, whilst there are countries today that do not use the barrel, the United States still does that and because of our historic ties to the United States and the continued importance of the United States to Trinidad and Tobago with regard to the oil industry we still use the barrel as the measurement in oil. In fact, when you do the reading on it, it says most oil-producing countries use it because they did not have the technical expertise to develop their own domestic oil industry, so they use the US measurement of 42 gallons.

That is the simple explanation for the use of the barrel and it was there in the legislation before; all it has done now, they added the words “and petroleum products”. With regard to petroleum products, there are a number of petroleum products, and in fact, as I believe Minister Browne said, as we all know, natural gas has become far more important as a foreign exchange earner, as a contributor to our GDP than petroleum was just a few years ago. So when we look at petroleum products—there are several petroleum products that one could speak to. There is kerosene, diesel, gas, oil, bitumen, but all of these, my understanding is, are now using the metric system, because the metric system, I suppose, the rationale may be, that natural gas is in a later era of the energy sector that we are focusing on opposed to the earlier days when it was the petroleum where clearly it was the barrel that was used in terms of the petroleum industry, that aspect of the energy sector.

In those areas such as gasoline, kerosene, et cetera, although those are petroleum products they use the metric unit. The only exception, my understanding is, is the liquid petroleum gas, LPG still uses imperial unit. I am not quite sure why that is the only exception, but it is the exception to my research on the issue. As I said, that deals with subsection (3A), it is really legislating which was there already, just adding the words "and petroleum products".

The other component of the amendment to that legislation deals with natural gas, and, of course you have to look at the properties of the product in order to determine what the best way or the most applicable and appropriate measurement that can be used is? In fact, the word "barrel" means volume. You have to look at what constitutes the properties of that product to determine the best measurement. As we know natural gas has several properties. It has energy properties, it has a volume property, it has several properties and the point about it is, that in determining what is the appropriate measurement, we do not use the metric system again and it is the same history with the petroleum.

There are other ways of measuring natural gas and there are other ways of measuring petroleum, but historic antecedents, we have come from and continues to be—we have British Petroleum in Trinidad, British Gas and historically, because of those connections but, more importantly, because we trade with the United States and much of our trade in energy products come from the United States, for the purposes of facilitating that trade we use a unit of measurement which is non-metric and it encompasses two components. Since gas is not in a liquefied form when it is extracted so to speak, we use two measures and one of the measures is looking at the energy component or the heating content and that is when we talk about the British thermal unit, that is the Btu, and we also look at what measures the energy content of natural gas, so that is why they use the British thermal unit, because that is consistent with the properties of natural gas.

The other measurement that is used is the standard cubic feet and that speaks to the volume. When natural gas is extracted it comes out in gaseous form and those are two critical components or properties of natural gas which are reflected in the unit of measurement that is utilized. This point I am making with that however, is that whilst the Metrology Act really adopts the metric system of measurement these two exceptions, petroleum and limited petroleum products and natural gas are exceptions to using the metric system, they use the British Imperial system which most countries no longer use and the reason, as I explained, is because of our trade relations with the United States and the historical antecedents.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know there is very much more that I can say unlike the Member for Oropouche East. I will not engage in a frolic of my own and the usual proclivities of the Members on the other side to take any opportunity to really, in fact, cause one to invoke Standing Order 36(1). We always attempt to be patient and allow persons, no matter how irrelevant they may be, to have an opportunity to talk about swine flu, concert halls, disinfectant and all other sundry matters which one is at pains to understand its relevance. [*Interruption*]

I will not torture this honourable House with those excursions, as I have to call them. That is the purpose of these two amendments, and only this one other point, when the Member for Oropouche East spoke about, with the absence of the legislation before 2004 what was the status quo?

3.30 p.m.

The fact is that we converted to the metric system since 1969. They set up various committees to look at what was the appropriate unit of measure that should be utilized, and one of the committees set up was the Petroleum Committee. They came to the finding, as the Hon. M. Browne indicated, to stay using the British thermal unit measurements for the reason I have indicated.

Mr. B. Panday: The next Minister of Finance. [*Laughter*]

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: I conclude my contribution to this debate. [*Laughter*] I hope this has assisted, in some way, to clarify the amendments being brought to this honourable House and in showing the importance of these amendments, only to create the legislative certainty that we all strive for, just bringing into law what exists already.

Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Caroni East): Mr. Speaker, I thought it was absolutely necessary for me to say a few words on this Bill, because there are a number of situations—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: A few!

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—existing nationally, which deal with the whole metrology issue. The hon. Minister of Trade and Industry mentioned, metrology is the study of measurements and measurement devices.

I just wondered how it was that the Minister of Finance got up to speak in response to the Member for Caroni East on a matter really related to the Minister of Trade and Industry. I wonder whether she is trying to switch the roles of Minister of Finance and Minister of Trade and Industry.

Mr. B. Panday: She is protecting her Ministry.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I believe the Minister might be feeling threatened by the Minister of Trade and Industry, who is moving swiftly to be the real Minister of Finance. [*Crosstalk*]

Ms. Kangaloo: And you want to be Leader of the Opposition!

Mrs. Nunez-Tesheira: That is not going to happen.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is for the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Trade and Industry to deal with. [*Crosstalk*] I just wanted to make an observation, that the Minister of Finance got up to speak on a matter of trade and industry. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am very happy that the Member agreed that the contribution by the Member for Oropouche East has been one of major pedagogic discourse. [*Crosstalk*] We are very happy that she indicated that the Member for Oropouche East was on the ball and that he spoke admirably about the Metrology Bill.

This Government is always trying to find a way out very easily; an easy way out of a number of these areas. I wondered why the Government did not go through the process of going through an order, rather than trying to bring a Bill to amend this Metrology Act. I want to quote from the parent Act, the Metrology Act, No. 18 of 2004, the Fifth Schedule.

“The Minister may, on the advice of the Bureau, from time to time by Order publish in the *Gazette* add to, vary or amend the First to the Fifth Schedules inclusive.”

We are amending the Fifth Schedule. I am wondering why they chose not to go through an order, but decided to go through with a Bill in the Parliament.

It states as well:

“A Minister to whom responsibility for a particular subject is assigned, in consultation with the Minister, may by Order published in *the Gazette* provide for the adaptation, alteration, conversion or modification of any provisions in any enactment relating to the subject under his control for the purpose of replacing references to units other than SI metric units...”

We have a little question to ask. Why could the Minister of Trade and Industry not have made an order and publish it in the *Gazette*? Probably they are in the habit of not publishing things in the *Gazette*. He felt that they would make a faux pas on that as well, so he chose to bring this as a Bill.

Mr. Speaker, when we compare this Metrology (Amdt.) Bill with countries in the Commonwealth and how they have gone about looking after the issue of measurements, measurement devices and quality control, there are a number of countries that work very expeditiously to bring about efficiency as far as the metrology aspect is concerned.

My colleague mentioned that in 2008 India introduced the Standards of Weights and Measures Act. The Legal Metrology Bill of 2008 replaced the Standards of Weights and Measures Act in 1976. They were very strong in terms of provisions that they brought under this Act and made major changes from the Weights and Measures Act of 1976.

In Trinidad and Tobago we are still basically linked to the Standards Act. The Metrology Act of 2004 is linked, in a major way, to the Standards Act of 1969, I think it is, and there have not been many significant changes since then, but other countries have gone about to make major changes.

India made changes in penal provisions; the definition of prepackaged commodity; inadequate declarations on packages and the shortage in net quantity, some of the things which have been thought about in Trinidad and Tobago, but have not been implemented over a number of years.

Australia as well brought on the National Measurement Act of 1960. They revised and amended it in 2004. They brought out national measure guidelines in 1999, similar to what we are expecting for regulations, and we do not have the regulations. Australia brought on their guidelines in 1999, governing the way in which Australian legal units of measurements may be combined to produce an Australian legal unit of measurement, and how they may be combined with prefixes to produce Australian legal units of measurement.

New Zealand, on the other hand, in contrast and distinction from what is happening here, has a Weights and Measures Act of 1987, but because of the inefficiencies they believe would have existed with a bureau of standards, they have included the private sector organizations in terms of accreditation. It is something to consider in Trinidad and Tobago, because the Bureau of Standards seem unable to deal with the vast array of issues related to quality control, measurements, calibration, measurement devices, standardization, conformity measurements, et cetera.

New Zealand went to the private sector; this was what they said:

“The Ministry operates a trade measurement accreditation scheme whereby private sector organisations are accredited to test and verify measuring instruments used for trade...A full review of accreditation scheme was commenced in 2002.”

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So New Zealand has gone on to do a review of their accreditation scheme, and we are lagging behind with the same 1969 Act, the Standards Act. The 2004 Metrology Bill has not been proclaimed up to now, five years and five months later; despite the fact that it occupied the attention of both the Upper and Lower Houses for a considerable period of time.

The Member for Oropouche East spoke about it in 2004, expecting that it would have been proclaimed. An Independent Senator had made significant recommendations for additions and amendments to that Act in 2004 and five years later, what he had suggested in 2004 in the other place, they are now coming with it.

Today I am a little surprised that the Minister has not brought amendments which were carefully considered and passed in the other place. I was looking on my desk, at the commencement of this debate, to see whether there were going to be amendments tabled, having done the work in the other place, that would have made it easier for us to agree to based on what I saw occurring in the other place.

I do not know; I am new to this House, just about two years, but if I am wrong, please guide me. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Maybe I could assist you, since you have asked for my assistance. We have before us the Bill as amended in the Senate. It was amended in the Senate, so what you have before you is the Bill as amended in the Senate.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have before me Act No. 8 of 2009, a Bill to amend the Metrology Act 2004. I do not see any amendments from the Senate in this.

Ms. Kangaloo: Look in the front and see if you have the words "amended in the Senate". *[Crosstalk]*

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No, no. *[Crosstalk]* All right; that is fine. If someone would be kind enough to pass it across, so I could look at it to see whether it has the incorporation in it. *[Crosstalk]* *[Copy of Bill passed to Dr. Gopeesingh]*

I am happy to see that they have incorporated these amendments from the other place, because the Independent, Senator, Sen. Basharat Ali, had mentioned that this should have been incorporated since 2004, and Mr. Valley, the then Minister of Trade and Industry, told him that he would have done it shortly after. What was suggested in the Senate five years ago, they are now coming to change it. That shows the incompetence of this Government and how serious they are about doing the people's work, as far as how it is affecting people in Trinidad and Tobago.

I was alluding to the fact that in New Zealand they have gone on to improve their administration, enforcement and accountability of the private verification system; so they have incorporated the private sector in the whole question of the metrology business. This is something that we should consider, because the Bureau of Standards seems to be overwhelmed with issues that are confronting them.

They have brought out three trading standard service laboratories, and their staff is accredited to ISO guidelines for the work in calibration and verification of standard measures of mass, volume and length. I drew that analogy to show what has happened in some of the Commonwealth countries: Australia, New Zealand and India, and to indicate that they have gone far beyond us. We seem to be stagnated, as far as this is concerned.

I made mention about the fact that it has taken five years and almost five months, and the parent Act is not proclaimed as yet. My colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, spoke about the fact that the regulations are not even there. So today we will be asked to support the Government in passing this amendment to the Metrology Act, which would be to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but the regulations are not there. Regulations are going to be promised just the same way the amendment to this Bill was promised five years ago. We may never see the light of day for implementation of this Metrology Act; it has not been proclaimed and there are no regulations. We want the Minister of Trade and Industry to indicate to us how far he and his Ministry are, as far as the regulations are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of discourse in terms of how natural gas is measured. The Government is seeking to have natural gas measured in British thermal units. There are a number of confusing pictures as far as the measurement of natural gas is concerned. Natural gas is also measured by volume. It is usually measured by volume and stated in cubic feet. To measure larger amounts of natural gas, a therm, T-H-E-R-M, is used to denote 100 cubic feet and MCF is used to denote 1,000 cubic feet.

3.45 p.m.

Energy consultants are saying that the energy content is measured in terms of British thermal unit (Btu), but one cubic foot is equal to 1,000 British thermal units. In Trinidad and Tobago, we speak about MCF which is 1,000,000 cubic feet, we speak about TCF which is trillion cubic feet and when you have to convert that to Btus, how many are you really getting? You are going 10 to the 15th power and so forth. So is the measurement of Btu a correct measurement for natural gas? Is it

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in conformity with the international standards of SI unit? Why have they chosen to ask us to use Btu instead of cubic feet, MCF, or MLCF or TCF?

They have to give an explanation for that because the question of a Btu is a heat or energy capacity matter and natural gas can also be considered as a volume matter. How is compressed natural gas measured? Compressed natural gas is sold at the retail level either by mass energy units or gasoline gallon equivalent (GGE). So here they want us to relate to natural gas in Btu, but natural gas is also measured in volume and compressed natural gas from National Petroleum in Trinidad and Tobago is now measured in GGE, so there is massive confusion that is going to be in this country. The National Conference on Weights and Measures has developed a standard unit of measurement for compressed natural gas. It is confusing, and I am sure you see the confusion; Btu, cubic feet, MCF, MLCF, TCF and then some people even go further and speak about the energy content.

The Canadians speak about gigajoules and that has been around since the 1940s. The United States of America is using Btu, the Canadians gigajoules. What is the relationship between the Btu to the joule? I see even more confusion. A joule is also an energy capacity and it is the force of one neutron moving the distance of one metre. So if you move from here to here, it could be measured in terms of a neutron and a neutron in comparison to a joule and a joule in comparison to a Btu.

Mr. Speaker, this is a real conundrum of measurement of natural gas. When liquefied natural gas is shipped, that is another major problem. It is now shipped as tonnes so we measure in Btu compressed natural gas which is gasoline gallons equivalent and LNG which is the major export of Trinidad and Tobago by Atlantic Trains 1 to 4 is shipped in tonnes so where are we? I hope the hon. Minister will clear up some confusion in the minds of all of us.

What is really happening? When the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries comes to Parliament, he speaks about possible reserves, probable reserves in terms of trillion cubic feet, nobody speaks about it in Btu, and then the shipment is made in tonnes. Liquid fuels like petroleum and crude oil and so forth are measured as barrels and then there is a differentiation between standard cubic foot and cubic foot. I think there is a definition of standard cubic feet. It is a physical measurement that takes place in natural gas at the line pressure of 1,000 pounds. What is measured is corrected to 60 Fahrenheit and 14.7 lbs per square inch pressure to arrive at a standard cubic foot volume.

Mr. Speaker, you see what is happening? Which one of these are we going to use to really describe natural gas? Btu, cubic feet, standard cubic feet, MCF,

MMCF, or tonnes. I just thought I would introduce that to show that there has been some major problems and there will be some major problems as far as this is concerned. It is a real problem.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, this is serious business. We have to meet international standards and conformity with the International Systems of Unit. Alaska measures its natural gas in cubic feet; Norway, which is one of the largest producers of natural gas in the world, measures its natural gas by cubic metres; Russia measures theirs as cubic metres; the Middle East is cubic metres and Canada is cubic feet. Are we in conformity with what the rest of the world is doing? Because if we have to be a major player in the natural gas industry, we have to try to conform to what the international countries are doing as far as natural gas is concerned.

Natural gas is sold in cubic feet around the world, it is usually sold to pipeline companies in standard measurement of thousands of cubic feet so when we ship natural gas to the ports, and the ports put them into the tanks, it is measured in MCF. Most residential customers in places like Canada measure their natural gas by therm. A therm is the measure of the thermal energy in the gas and is equal to about 97 cubic feet.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a quandary and a conundrum of major difficulties as far as the measurement of natural gas. As I said, in Canada the natural gas is measured by gigajoules, and natural gas energy value is typically measured—a gigajoule is 1 billion joules and is the amount of energy consumed. So you see what is happening? You are talking about Btu which has a relation to joules. Canada is trading in gigajoules and the population is confused and those people in the energy sector will have to go through a number of mathematical calculations to come up with what is actually desired in terms of the selling price of a particular aspect of natural gas.

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way. I have been listening to what you are saying, hon. Member, and if you look at clause 3(b) of the Bill, you will see it says:

“The standard cubic foot and the British thermal unit shall be used only in connection with trade in natural gas.”

So this is saying you can either use the cubic foot, or the Btu. Clause 4 says that there is a conversion given between joules and Btus. So what is the problem?

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Are we going to use cubic feet, or standard cubic feet?

Hon. Member: Standard cubic feet.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So why when we are exporting we speak about the export in cubic feet, MCF and TCF. Is it trillion standard cubic feet?

Mr. Imbert: The purpose of this legislation—and I am subject to correction, of course—is that from now on, the units used for trade and natural gas shall be the standard cubic foot and the Btu from now on.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So that means that the Government in selling the natural gas internationally will come to the Parliament and say that the sale of so many millions of standard cubic feet, or trillions of standard cubic feet, no longer tcf? Well, we will await that.

Mr. Speaker, another major problem that occurs is that we are a major country for shipment of natural gas and countries around the world are having difficulty in measuring quantities of natural gas that are shipped because it goes through pipelines. How do you really measure how much gas is going through a pipeline before going somewhere else? Countries around the world, in the United States of America, which is a major importer of natural gas, formed a National Institute of Standards and Technology to deal with natural gas and they call that the NIST which went on to develop gas flow calibration tools known as critical flow venturis, or some nozzle to calibrate natural gas flow metres used in the field. The uncertainties of measurements currently being made are as high as 0.5 per cent. Critical flow venturis will provide traceability for custody transfer of natural gas in large pipelines with uncertainties of 0.2 per cent or less.

Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make is that at present, custody transfer of natural gas in pipelines relies on flow metres for example, turbine metres and ultrasonic metres with calibrations that are not traceable to SI units through NIST which we bring in as the Btu.

So, can this Government indicate to us how it is going to quantify the amount of gas exported through pipelines or whatever, or how much comes from NGC and NEC to Atlantic Trains 1 to 4 when there is marked difficulty internationally even in the United States of America with the National Institute of Standards and Technology to calibrate the flow of gas that are not traceable to SI units? I think the Minister of Trade and Industry should give us some idea and clarity on this matter, that is, the traceability between the National Institute of Standard Technology, the private flow and flow through pipelines. Private flow laboratories

are being established now to deal with this matter. How does Trinidad and Tobago deal with this matter in terms of flows through pipelines from NGC and NEC to Atlantic Trains 1 to 4?

4.00 p.m.

What apparatus do they use? Because the United States is now only beginning to devise special apparatus that it is trying to ship around the world to measure the transmission of gas through pipelines.

Mr. Imbert: That was around for about 50 years.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I am reading this. This paper is written 2007: Chemical Science and Technology Laboratory, National Institute of Standards and Technology.

There are just a few other points I want to raise as far as the Metrology Bill is concerned. The first is the capacity of the Bureau of Standards to deal with matters at a national level. I think the Minister of Works and Transport, the Member for Diego Martin North/East will remember when we were discussing—

Mr. Imbert: I agree with you.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Agree on what?

Mr. Imbert: You are right. [*Laughter*]

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You have not heard my question as yet. I am sure you will agree with me on this. When we sat on the same committee to look at the certification of the Forensic Science Centre, we had raised the issue of who is going to certify the measurements and so on, that are going to be used in the Forensic Science Centre and we were worried about the accreditation because the Forensic Science Centre has to be accredited for three years here first, and then meet the international criteria for certification by the international committee. We said it was the Bureau of Standards.

As far as I am aware, that is not happening with the Forensic Science Centre at the moment. So when I made the point that a lot is left to be desired as far as the Bureau of Standards is concerned, that is just one example of the need for increased efficiency and effectiveness by the Bureau of Standards.

Mr. Imbert: That is why I tell you, you are right.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Okay. I am glad that you agreed with me, but you were chairman of that committee.

On a similar point, the Member for Oropouche East had indicated during his contribution that one of the issues that the Minister of Trade and Industry raised was the question of health and safety environment as it concerns our nation and the non-compliance. The parent Act of this amendment, which is the Metrology Act of 2004, is also closely related to the Standards Act and in Chap. 82:03 of the Standards Act what is the business of the bureau, because the Bureau of Standards is the implementing body for the Metrology Act and it is also the implementing body for the Standards Act. The business of the bureau has amongst it, the question of—which is in Part II, section 3(2):

“The Bureau shall be—

- (a) the national standards body;
- (b) the national quality certifying body; and
- (c) the national laboratory accrediting body.”

I raise this issue about national laboratory accrediting body because it is a serious issue in this country today. I raised it with my colleagues a while ago and I indicated to them that I wanted to raise this issue, because in Trinidad and Tobago you are aware that the public health care system is unable to deal with the surfeit of investigations that are required for the management and care of patients, namely ultrasound, MRI, CT scanning, laboratory investigations. Laboratory investigations really, basically, engage the issue of taking blood, biologic samples and so on, and the accreditation of laboratories, Part VII of the regulations to the Act says:

“‘Laboratory’ means any facility that—

- (a) offers testing or calibration services and includes facilities for the biological, biophysical, cytological, pathological or other examination of materials derived from the human body in the assessment of health or for the diagnoses, prevention or treatment of disease.”

The Bureau of Standards leaves a lot to be desired in terms of monitoring, evaluating and certificating laboratories throughout Trinidad and Tobago. There is supposed to be a laboratory register made by the Bureau of Standards and this laboratory register is open to the general public and a register is made on an annual basis.

We have had a surfeit or a plethora of small laboratories emanating throughout Trinidad and Tobago doing laboratory work and ultrasound. The other, CT and MRI cannot be afforded by many people, but the laboratories and ultrasound departments have increased considerably in this country and there is

no standard, as far as I am aware—and I feel relatively certain that there is only one medical laboratory in Trinidad and Tobago which is internationally ISO certified. If there is any other laboratory that has ISO certification, I am to be proven wrong, and if there is, there is not more than another one; probably two for the most. The other one I am talking about is another—and I am sure my colleague from Diego Martin Central will understand what it is I am speaking about.

When the lives of people are concerned, there are a number of laboratories that have come about and have not given reliable results and medical practitioners and persons in the medical field will make the wrong diagnosis and give the wrong type of treatment resulting in death, because the laboratories are not certified; they are not monitored; they are not evaluated and they are not registered by the Bureau of Standards.

I raised this with the hon. Minister of Health. He indicated to me that he is aware of this situation and that he would try to do whatever best he can. Now, the Minister of Trade and Industry is here. We want to implore upon the Minister that lives are being lost innocently in this country as a result of the Bureau of Standards not being able to do the work efficiently which they are supposed to be doing.

I do not know whether it is lack of personnel or whether it is lack of financial resources, but it cannot be allowed to continue for any length of time, because lives are being lost daily, and I am speaking of practical examples. When people come to me and ask me which laboratory to go to for a blood investigation, I can only say one, and it is not because I have any share in it; because I have confidence in the lab. A simple thyroid function test will have a multiple of results from different labs and which will lead to the wrong diagnosis.

My colleague from Oropouche East indicated that there are a number of pieces of equipment coming from China now—not that China is not a developed country. But who has certificated or evaluated these equipments that do the CT scanning, the MRI and the laboratory testing, and so on? Because these are cheaper; they come from China; they are cheaper. I am not casting any aspersions on the Government and the people of China, but you know in the past we had had shipments of things from China which were fake, repetitive things. You remember the Reebok issue and so on. And you still see a lot of goods that have brands coming from China which are illegal. Therefore, the equipment that is coming from some of these—

Dr. Browne: And their shoe sizes.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes. And their shoe sizes, as the Member for Diego Martin said. Their shoe sizes are different, and so on. I raised that point in

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particular reference to this Metrology Act which goes on the Standards Act and the Standards Act implementing body is the Bureau of Standards.

I just want to ask the Minister if he is aware of any penalties or any court actions that have come around as far as weights and measures in this country is concerned, with particular reference to the measurements, et cetera. Because if it is so, I am wondering whether people who have been charged, or if anyone has been charged—because this Act, the Metrology Act of 2004 has not been made law and the penalties involved there, which have been stated, are not really legal in the court of law.

Have there been any court matters pending as far as the question of weights, measurements, calibration and so on, are concerned?

Hon. Browne: No.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No? Not that you are aware of?

Hon. Browne: No.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Some members of the community having seen the Bureau of Standards operate believe that the inspectors of the Bureau of Standards have too much power. They can go into people's places and remove things. I believe that there might be a little protection in the Metrology Act that you have to get a magistrate's consent if it is going to invade the privacy of somebody. But since that is not legal at the moment, what is happening when an inspector from the Bureau of Standard wants to go in and investigate a particular matter?

My colleague from Oropouche East indicated as well, that there might be a question of anti-dumping. Are we receiving goods in Trinidad and Tobago which do not have the quantification really put onto the labelling, or are we being—

Hon. Browne: We have inspectors.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You have inspectors for that now. But are the inspectors really moving through? Because you see some inefficiencies in some of the markets and places where there are a number of packages which have not been labelled properly in terms of the quantity of goods that are inside, and then to give you the exact composition of the goods and the caloric intake, et cetera.

So that is an area with the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, that you need to work in collaboration with the Minister of Trade and Industry, because there are a number of areas in Trinidad and Tobago where this is not happening, and we are getting goods coming from abroad which might be considered to be dumping;

they might be cheaper, but do not meet the international requirements that are necessary for consumers. But we are prevented from sending goods abroad, to the United States and so on, because as you all mentioned, they have put on a number of barriers, non-tariff barriers, phytosanitary and sanitary requirements which prevent the export of our goods to their countries. So we must look carefully as well, at what is coming into our country to prevent a dumping from taking place.

My colleagues asked about a petroleum register, whether we have one, that is supposed to have licences on a yearly basis; a permanent pricing committee which is supposed to put out monthly bulletins from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the Petroleum Act. We seek some answers from the Minister of Trade and Industry on these matters.

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

4.15 p.m.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Peter Taylor): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to join the debate. There has been much talk about weights and measures and the Metrology (Amdt.) Bill, but of course, we have to relate it in a very practical sense to the people. Much talk has gone on in very technical terms. I join the debate to add some balance and measure of comfort for the consumers, as to the role that the Ministry of Legal Affairs has been playing and is playing to monitor prices. Let us not forget that in the whole scheme of things, weights, measurements and scales still play a very important part in the determination of prices in Trinidad and Tobago.

We have always been very resolute in the fight and vigilance against high food prices. It is in that context I join the debate to let the Members on the other side who raised the question as to what the Government has been doing with respect to weights and measures and to let the national community know that we have their back.

The point was made by the Member for Oropouche East as to what standards are adhered to in terms of weights and measures. I want to let the Member for Oropouche East and the Member for Caroni East know that we look at the Caricom standard. There is the Caricom Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ). These are the standards set also by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards in terms of the calibration of weights and measures. There is an acceptable standard. Insofar as the Caricom Single Market and Economy is concerned, there is also a regional standard to which we subscribe.

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There has been a series of queries and complaints in the media about persons going to the supermarkets and markets and getting a sense that the scales are not just. That is the term that we use. It is either the scale is just or unjust. In the Consumer Affairs Division, the Weights and Measures Inspectorate has been very vigilant in our examination of weights and measures of scales throughout the country. In fact, we have published an ad that speaks to consumers. If you go to the market to buy pork—I do not know if the Member for Caroni East is a partaker of the flesh.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am not cannibalistic.

Hon. P. Taylor: Maybe, he is, I do not know. We have this ad out and advise members of the public to watch the scale. That is to say, observe the instrument that the person is using. You must look out for the two-faced scale, so that while you might be watching one weight in front, the vendor might have a different weight behind. Watch the vendors' hands to see what pressure he or she is putting on the scale. We have very practical lessons that we give to the national community as to how they can ensure that they are getting value for money when they go shopping.

The Member for Caroni East asked the question as to the rate of prosecution. We have a constant vigilance over the matter. I can tell the Member that there has been no prosecution to date because every year vendors and traders have to pay an annual fee before they can operate. From our figures, we can tell from the amount of revenue that we get, to what extent there has been substantial compliance. There has been substantial compliance to a very large extent.

Our districts are divided into north, central and south. The north includes Tunapuna, Sangre Grande and Port of Spain. From June 2008 to August 2009, we have had \$39,000 in revenues. As far as the central area is concerned, we have had \$37,000 and for the south, \$30,000 being accrued in revenues.

The measuring instruments in terms of weights and mass are linear. While I pointed out these figures in terms of revenue collecting, let me identify the breakdown. If you came to check your weights that are less than 2 kg or 4.4 pounds, there is a \$5 charge. For weights that are more than 2 kg or 4.4 pounds according to the Member, but less than 50 pounds or 20 kg, there is a \$15 charge per weight. For those exceeding 50 kg or 100 pounds, there is a \$50 charge. As far as linear measurements are concerned, for those not exceeding one metre, one yard, there is a \$5 charge. For gasoline pumps, importantly, there is a \$50 fee to have those pumps checked.

It is far from the impression that may be given on the other side that the Government has not been monitoring weights and measures and has been lax or asleep. I am here to tell the Members and indeed, the national community that we

have been extremely vigilant and our inspectors have been in the field. On any given day you can find them on Charlotte Street and in the markets on a weekend. Credit should be given where credit is due for that. This has been very important in ensuring that food price inflation and national inflation is kept in check.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under which law would they be penalized? Is it the old Standards Act? Under which Act would you get the legality to penalize these people for not conforming to the measurements, et cetera?

Hon. P. Taylor: I believe that the Weights and Measures Ordinance, Ch. 15 is the one under which we get our vesting powers. I imagine it would be the same ordinance under which we would now be able to determine to what extent somebody is in breach of the law and the penalty to be paid.

I promised not to be very long, but I feel that it is important that I make this intervention in light of the questions which were raised by the other side. I hope that in the time I have taken I was clear enough to let the national community know that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been looking very comprehensively at food prices and weights and measurements as a very important component of that. We were very au courant with what has been happening.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon Mariano Browne): Mr. Speaker, I thank Members on both sides for the contributions which were made and the support which came from this side of the House. I say to both the Member for Oropouche East and the Member for Caroni East that the amendment Bill contains approximately 300 words or less, probably somewhere about 200. Somehow or the other, in as much as this business is about measurement, we speak about metrology, we seem to have balanced the scales quite on the reverse side. In fact, we have involved ourselves in a little circumlocution and obfuscation. I like the word circumlocution.

Gas is sold based on the heating value and not the volume. In his contribution, the Member for Caroni East mixed up a number of measurements. In particular, I think that the Leader of Government Business attempted to make the point that that is precisely the purpose of the table. The table was meant to facilitate the calculations and create a conversion table which would allow you to move from standard cubic feet and barrel equivalents to joules. That was the purpose of the table.

Several points were made. Simply, why did this Bill take so long? It did take a little while to get here. The initial version of this Bill was started in the 1970s. We

have adopted the SI, the international system of measurement for some time. The hon. Minister of Legal Affairs had identified quite clearly that business of weights and measures—and the inspectors do operate on the basis of the international system of measurement, notwithstanding the fact that this Bill has not come into fruition as yet. The whole country has been operating on that basis for quite some time. If you want an example of how long it will take to pass legislation, you could say that the US Government which is one of three at the moment who do not operate under this system, passed a Bill somewhere I think, in the 1860s to bring this into force. At today's date, they still operate on the old imperial system. It has taken them approximately 200 years to get it right. I make that point. It is an aside.

The Member for Oropouche East raised an issue that I did not give a definition of a Btu. I wanted to keep the debate simple and avoid some of the mistakes that he made in terms of measurement. All those measurements which are contained in the Schedule of the Act set out the different measures with linear, mass, volume and so on. I too eschew that option.

I jokingly said in the Senate, half jokingly perhaps, that the best person to have piloted this Bill was Sen. Basharat Ali. It is to him I owe a debt where for example, the amendments to this Bill actually, were in large part amended by him with the Senate and brought it to what it is now. Sen. Basharat Ali made the point that there are approximately eight definitions of Btu in terms of specifications. That is one of the reasons we amended the Schedule to refer to the ISO because the ISO is more precise and we are looking for a specific unit of measurement. There are several different versions. The question of the caloric value of water is essentially—a BTU is defined as the amount of heat required to raise the temperature of one pound of liquid water by 1 from 60 to 61 Fahrenheit at a constant pressure of one atmosphere.

If you go to the specific definitions, one definition gives it at 1059.67; another one gives the mean at 1055.87; one gives it at 1055 and so on and so forth. There are several different definitions and calibrations. That is one of the reasons we have used a standard measure as defined in the international standard, ISO. That is why we say in the table, ISO Standard which is the accepted international definition, to be specific.

We avoided the definitional issues instead of using a label by referring to an ISO definition. The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards is an associate member of the World Council of Standards Setting Organizations, the ISO. In relation to CROSQ, it is a harmonizing body. If we look at it, the ISO has

approximately 16,000 standards; Trinidad and Tobago has approximately 600 standards in issue and at the moment, CROSQ has reached 50. CROSQ has a little way to go to catch up with Trinidad and Tobago. In the region, Trinidad and Tobago has the most standards. The point about CROSQ is a little off the mark.

The Member for Oropouche East raised the issue that Sen. Basharat Ali in the Senate had made a suggestion that we should include under definitions in the Act, the issue of BTUs with regard to air conditioning. I could do no better than read Sen. Ali's comments in response to the comment by Sen. Dr. Nanan:

“I know that Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan mentioned the question of BTU in air conditioning. I am aware of it. I tried to get one of my friends who run an air conditioning business, but unfortunately, I did not get him. There is no measurement per se and this is not a measurement per se. I think it is a rating. They will say how many BTUs per hour or whatever it is, how you test that or not, I could not put it in here not knowing what it is.”

Mr. President: It is time for the tea break. We will come back at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To continue where I left off, I was identifying the fact that the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards is part of the international standards-setting organization of which we are an associate Member and that the Caribbean Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) is a form of affiliate whose job is to harmonize the standards across the region to facilitate intraregional trade.

As part of the comments made by the hon. Member for Oropouche East, he raised an issue as to whether, because the Bill was late, there was any economic loss to the country. There is none and there was none. The fact that the Act has not been proclaimed does not mean that the trade is not standardized and does not take place in accordance with standard international practice. In fact, most times, legislation is behind the practice of commerce and legislation recognizes existing commercial practice.

I can, once again, do no better than to quote the words of Sen. Basharat Ali in his contribution on July 07, 2009 from the *Hansard*. It reads:

“I did ask the question about LNG. I was told that we sell LNG in tonnes at the delivery port here. We sell in metric tons so that whether the customer accepts in Btus, because there will be figures for that too, they can work it out. I am told that

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what we are doing here does not affect the sale of LNG because of the fact that it is done by mass. The idea is that by the amendment of section 43, we would have these special units, barrel for liquid fuels, petroleum and crude oil...We would have standard cubic feet for the measurement of gas volumes and the British thermal unit for the calculation of any of the matters, particularly the natural gas.”

The reality is that the country has suffered no loss and that the comments made with respect to the possibility of loss at the various supermarkets, I think was dealt with adequately by the Minister of Legal Affairs.

We were also asked about the issue of the implementation of the regulations. I can say that the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards has reviewed and dealt with the traditional weights and measures regulations—the regulations for quantity of goods. We expect that to be ready in one month's time and that preparation for the calibration of weighing machines and scales, fuel dispensers and lifts, pilot programmes have been completed, so that the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards has not stood still. In addition, its standards laboratory to measure calibrations has also been accredited.

So the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards has been preparing itself to take over its responsibilities under the Act. In addition, it has hired a chief inspector and seven other inspectors have been brought on board; all of whom have been trained and are involved in visitation units.

The Member for Caroni East asked if we were at risk. The issue of trade is a joint arrangement through several ministries. We have the Ministry of Health, which has an input in trade, particularly because of the phytosanitary standards, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. There is an inspection unit, which operates under what is known as the implementation unit, at the various ports and does inspections, in particular those dealing with the issue of labelling. In fact, we are pretty robust on that particular issue as many of our local companies raise issues from time to time about items being brought into the country that do not fit those particular categories and are in fact our labelling standards, which is a standard issued by the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards.

In order to prepare itself for taking on its role as the implementing body, it has established several new divisions. The Metrology Division has been built out into three sections: a standards laboratory, a calibration service and a legal metrology inspectorate. As I indicated, while not fully staffed, they are operating.

I can say this by way of explaining part of our difficulty in completing the amendments. It was pointed out by Sen. Basharat Ali in his contribution in 2004

that the Bill needed to be amended to take into consideration the amendment on the table, which allows for the calculation from barrel to standard cubic feet, to kilojoules or to joules. By the way, one kilojoule is 1,000 joules and a gigajoule and so on. That is just ramping it up; like a metre and kilometre.

I would say that one of the issues which delayed the introduction of this Bill was the difficulty we had with regard to transferring the staff who currently report to the Ministry of Legal Affairs. It was included in the draft Bill and we decided that putting a measure, including a draft Bill to transfer staff, was not necessarily the best way to go. So we amended the Bill, took those matters out and decided to deal with that administratively. Part of the reason for the length of time is that we were actually involved in negotiations with the relevant bargaining unit, as well as the Chief Personnel Officer, and we could not come to an agreement. Happily, we found a way to move forward and that matter is being dealt with. The regulations will regularize the position.

One of the key sticking points is that the inspectors who currently operate under the Ministry of Legal Affairs are part of a non-contributory pension scheme. The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standard operates a contributory pension scheme, so there was considerable difficulty in terms of the terms under which the inspectors operated and the position in which they will be brought into the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and how it will effect their remuneration.

I think we found an answer to that and it will be dealt with in time. We would expect proclamation to take place within a reasonable period of time after the Act is amended here today.

With those few words, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

Question proposed, That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, there is a typographical error.

Mr. Chairman: In typographical errors, just make sure the secretariat has it corrected.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned to Friday, November 13, 2009 at 1.30 p.m., on which day we will do the Evidence (Amdt.) Bill, which appears on the Supplemental Order Paper as a Bill brought from the Senate. That

Bill is a special majority Bill, so I look forward to the attendance and support of all Members opposite.

Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre (Status of)

Mr. Vasant Bharath (*St. Augustine*): Mr. Speaker, I am on a quest here this afternoon to get the Government to do what they so often fail to do—to account to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their continued spending of taxpayers' money in a wasteful manner.

My purpose specifically is to ask the Minister of Finance to, once and for all, come clean and inform the nation of the status of the Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre (IFC). The House may remember, in the context of Government's vision that we would arrive at developed nation status by 2020, the Government announced, in 2006, that they had intentions to establish an International Financial Centre in Trinidad and Tobago.

Much pomp and fanfare accompanied that announcement and since then there has been a flurry of activity, which includes the hiring of a consultant to determine what model of IFC we require and to determine the focus of that IFC, taking into account what was determined by the consultant to be our special and unique circumstances.

There was the setting up of a committee to oversee the establishment of the International Financial Centre, the launch of the IFC also took place, the construction, as we all know, of a multimillion dollar building on the waterfront to house the IFC

participants and a global hunt has been set in train for the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer, which, according to the Minister back in July, was imminent.

After spending possibly millions of dollars on PR campaigns extolling the virtues of the suitability of Trinidad and Tobago to house such a centre and, based on promise after promise, similar to promises they have made with regard to the hosting of the Summit of the Americas as well as the Caribbean Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), attempting to sell to the population the benefits of hosting these conferences, and putting in train a building of this nature, the country has seen virtually no economic or other benefit.

This is what has caused me here today to raise this Motion on the adjournment. In June 2008, the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago funded a trip abroad to the Middle East, Dubai in particular, and to the United States of America for the Minister of Finance, as she put on her international real estate cap and went looking for tenants for the IFC building. According to the Minister, the two days of meetings that she held in Dubai were remarkably successful. In fact, she said:

It helped to promote the IFC abroad and secured for us a wealth of best practices from global financial leaders. This trip is one of the most important things we can do in order to guarantee a successful launch of the TTIFC and we want the world to know what investment opportunities exist in Trinidad and Tobago.

5.15 p.m.

She said:

We arrived with ambitious objectives, and we depart confident that we have exceeded our goals.

On June 27, 2008, *Reuters* reported that the Minister of Finance of Trinidad and Tobago had announced that Lehman Brothers, a once very strong global investment bank, had expressed interest in becoming a tenant of the IFC in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, the Minister had travelled to New York to hold another series of meeting with Moody's, Standard and Poor's, UBS, CitiGroup and JP Morgan in an effort to secure those organizations as tenants for the IFC.

Mr. Speaker, in July, 2008, the Prime Minister advised the nation, and I quote:

The recent visit of the Minister of Finance and her delegation to Dubai also indicates to us that the IFC in Dubai has been looking for a partner in the western hemisphere and that already they have examined a number of IFCs that are emerging and have rejected partnering with them on a number of grounds.

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In some instances they thought that the regulatory framework was not the kind of framework in which they would wish to operate but that whereas they examined Trinidad and Tobago, they began to see more and more that Trinidad and Tobago appeared to be a natural fit for partnership in the western hemisphere and even before the Minister of Finance arrived in Dubai, they began to think in those directions, concretized by that visit which, I must say, has been extremely successful indeed.

That was the Prime Minister speaking on July 22, 2008, addressing the Minister of Finance Shareholders Breakfast Meeting.

So, if the Prime Minister is to be believed, and we have no reason to doubt him—he always tells the truth as we all know. The Minister of Finance went looking for a partner and that partner, Dubai, was identified, which examined Trinidad and Tobago and they thought that Trinidad and Tobago was a natural fit for partnership. That was in July, 2008, some 17 months ago.

I am listing a chronological set of events. On September 17, 2008, the Minister of Finance, in a statement on the United States of America credit crunch stated:

The developments related primarily to problems with subprime lending and mortgage-backed securities, affecting several large investment banks and financial companies in the United States of America will not have any significant impact on the TTIFC.

In fact, anticipated regulatory activity by the SEC, the US Treasury and the Congress will likely prompt foreign investors to seek new investment opportunities outside the United States and the TTIFC is well-positioned to compete in this arena.

In October 2008, the Government had a very low-key opening of the International Financial Centre. The buildings housed, at that time, no financial activity. There were no tenants, international or otherwise, and the lone figure in the Financial Centre at that point in time and, I believe still is, was the solitary figure of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Mr. Conrad Enill whose offices are located there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind this honourable House that we are talking about over 130,000 square feet of prime real estate languishing. Despite this, on January 23, 2009, the Minister continued to defend the IFC saying that a consultant had completed extensive work on the development of the IFC model, which would go to Cabinet by the next month. That was in February 2009.

In her budget presentation later that year in September, the Minister again repeated several things but, just in passing, and there was no major mention of the IFC. She just mentioned a few comments in passing when she said that work on the tax and the legal and regulatory framework was in train and being conducted.

We on this side understand the need to get the legislation right. We support getting the legislation right. In fact, on many occasions, we go through a lot of pain and trauma when we get legislation at a point in time when we are just about to come to the Parliament, or the day before Parliament, and we still have to do our duty and go through that legislation, digest it and make valid comments on it, because at the end of the day, there are certain pieces of legislation we believe are in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Very recently, we had the FIU Bill and the Commissions of Enquiry (Validation and Immunity from Proceedings) Bill that we had at the very last moment and, effectively, our backs were against the wall having to make decisions on these pieces of legislation. So, the issue with the TTIFC is not merely the legislative structure being put in place. It is not necessarily the fact that you put up the building or you may be securing clients, but it is the whole ball of wax that the Government has been talking about and feeding the nation from inception.

We have continued to caution the Government as we have done on all of these massive projects that they have been involved in—their over exuberance in putting these things in train—and, in this particular instance, the over simplification of their understanding of what an IFC requires. As I come back to this, it is not just putting up a building.

In fact, I have done some research on this issue and the factors that will create a competitive IFC are as follows—these are the four major factors: First of all, a proper environment where you create a development of human capital—you must have people with the right skills. You must have a flexible labour market.

Mr. Dumas: Do you doubt that?

Mr. V. Bharath: You must have a business environment where regulations are in place; a proper tax regime where you have very low levels of corruption and ease of doing business. You must have proper market access. *[Interruption]* This is also an issue; prevailing levels of securitization. You must have volume and value of trading activity levels in stocks and bonds, and you must have what is called the "clustering effect" where you have many firms involved in financial services. We do not have that again in Trinidad and Tobago. Again, you must

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have a general level of competitiveness in the marketplace, and the quality of life of the citizens of the country is very important.

Mr. Speaker, hand on heart, I do not think that there are any of these things here that are present in Trinidad and Tobago at this point in time. *[Interruption]* So, when I referred to wanting information on the IFC—

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. V. Bharath:—I am not talking about whether the building is completed or not. We know the building is completed. We know that. We are not just talking about the regulatory framework. I am talking about all these other pre-requisites that I have just mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the IFC by its very name, if nothing else, is international in nature or ought to be international in nature. I went on the Ministry of Finance website today, and there is a link that put you through the IFC. Do you know that the last time that website was updated was in July 2008 with just a series of articles written on the IFC? So, if you are looking to attract international investors, how are they going to know what is going on with the IFC in Trinidad and Tobago? They would go on the website and look and see that the last time the website was updated with any information of any relevance—a series of articles on IFCs—was July 2008. How are they going to get the information? Are they going to fly to Trinidad and speak to the Minister of Minister directly? They are going to think that we are a joke. They are going to think that we just do not have what is required to be serious about this matter.

Last year, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance were gushing with pride about the number of tenants that were coming in, and this year they have been very silent. We want to know what has happened to those tenants. Have they mysteriously evaporated into thin air? Obviously, the question that is going to be asked is whether in fact this is another white elephant that has been built with taxpayers' money—huge amounts of money and, presumably, a lot of waste. I expect the Minister would go into detail about the cost of the IFC when she stands to speak, because that is very relevant.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here are two buildings standing that require maintenance on a yearly basis. It is not occupied and we do not know when it is going to be occupied. The Government has rushed into awarding this contract—multi-million dollar contract—spending millions of dollars on these buildings. We are not quite sure when they are going to be occupied, bearing in mind that resources have been allocated to this building, and the citizens of this country have to do without roads, bridges, having their drains cleaned, hospital beds and schools and so on. Those are some of the issues that the country is going to ask.

I want to conclude by saying that what I am asking here this afternoon and what the country is asking is—because the Government must know this—who are you planning to put as tenants into the building? You must have some indication. The building has been completed for over 12 months. What is the status of the companies from Dubai who initially showed interest? What is the status of the partnership agreement with the Dubai IFC which the Prime Minister spoke about almost a year ago? What progress has the Government made, if any, in terms of creating a cadre of professionals like Jamaica? I have to tell you that Jamaica is more ahead of the game than we are. What are we doing to create a cadre of professionals to be able to run this IFC and to house this IFC? Finally, last but not least, what is the final cost to the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago of this IFC?

Mr. Speaker, I ask these questions on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Karen Nunez-Tesheira): Mr. Speaker, in the fifteen minutes allocated—[*Interruption*—this is where I was going to start, the lack of patriotism—

Mr. Bharath: Start!

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: It is just serendipitous that today in the newspapers, I just happened to look in the *Business Guardian* and Lyndon Guiseppi is quoted as saying—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Listen, Members on the Government Bench, I want to hear the Minister. It is very important that I hear the Minister. So, if you all will oblige me, please, in particular, the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: Mr. Speaker, thank you. You know, it is just serendipitous on today when we decided that we would debate this Motion that I looked at the *Business Guardian* and this is the heading—[*Newspaper in hand*] I want to share it with the Member for St. Augustine—and it says: "T&T already the region's IFC". [*Desk thumping*] You see, anytime we say anything good, they always have to put a negative spin. When it is bad, they believe it. That is the mindset, but this is what the newspaper said:

“Lyndon Guiseppi, chief executive officer, British Caribbean Bank Holdings Ltd (BCBH), believes T&T is already the international financial centre (IFC) of the region with a growing capital market and stock exchange.

‘BCBH believes that the most attractive market in the Caribbean is Trinidad and we will welcome an opportunity to operate in the Trinidad market...’”

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He goes on to say:

“T&T is already the regional financial centre for the Caribbean. Any serious raising of capital—whether it's by a Jamaican company, Barbadian company or Belizean company—any significant capital that will be raised or that has been raised in the last ten years was done in T&T.

If any company or any government wants to raise US \$50 million, US \$75 million or US \$100 million, and they do not want to go to New York or London, they must come to Trinidad. So T&T is already a regional financial centre.”

This is what the newspapers said. [*Desk thumping*] I did not make this up. I am sorry to disappoint you.

You see, Member for St. Augustine, that is your problem. When Standard and Poor's came here, you bent over backwards—and I will use the expression again—to convince an independent rating agency to downgrade your own country. [*Interruption*] You did do that. Do you know what? Everybody, including the *Newsday*, condemned you for being unpatriotic. [*Desk thumping*] Not only us, but everybody condemned you. You see, that is the mindset. They are always decrying their country. They want to fight the Government, but they fight their own country. That is patriotism! [*Interruption*] They stand here and say that Jamaica is ahead of us.

I do not want to decry Jamaica, but if you look at their debt to GDP it is over—[*Interruption*] You see, Member for St. Augustine, you just stood up there and set out the conditions to set up an international financial centre. You just outlined them. One of the criteria must be how the domestic economy is being managed. [*Desk thumping*] That only stands to reason, but I know you do not understand that. [*Desk thumping*] You see, your problem was that Standard and Poor's not only did not downgrade us as they did with Britain—a number of countries were downgraded—but they maintained our rating. Do you know why they rename the rating? They do not do that on a whim and fancy, do you know what they look at? They look at a country's ability to pay its debt.

5.30 p.m.

So when you stand there and decry your own country for the national community, you should be ashamed of yourself.

Hon. Member: Ashamed! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Nunez-Testeira: I am not joking, you should be ashamed of yourself, because it is one thing to play party politics and Opposition politics—[*Crosstalk*] I would never descend into a fish market behaviour, I leave it for your side to indulge in that. [*Interruption*] I am raising my voice because you seem—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: No, let me tell you one of the powers I have. You know what I can do. I can suspend the sitting of this House and bring you all back at 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock, so if you do not want me to do that, please, I want to hear the Minister in silence, please. I can do that because I have nothing to do this evening whatsoever.

I can suspend—[*Interruption*] and we can even do that, so please, the hon. Minister.

The Minister of Finance (Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira): Thank you—[*Mr. B. Panday stands*] I will always give way to Couva North.

Mr. B. Panday: Madam Minister, I merely wanted to find out, because a serious point was made that there are no tenants there and a question was asked, are there going to be tenants and who they are? Would you be so kind as to— Thank you.

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: But this is the point. I think I have some time, I measured the time, it is 15 minutes and I intend to get to it, but I mean to respond—in a debate you must respond. [*Interruption*] You must respond to the allegations, and I am saying, he stood up there and talked. You see what he said; these are the things that we do not have. This is what he is saying about his country you know, there are no skills, no, and we do not have a bank of skills in this country. If there is any country in the Caribbean, and I will go further than the Caribbean to say that the Government has invested in tertiary education, is this country. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, if I am not incorrect, we have passed—you know we have set ourselves a benchmark, we passed that benchmark a few years ago. [*Desk thumping*] So, we have the skills set and the ability to train our persons to be participants in the international financial centre. [*Crosstalk*]

The other thing he spoke about is the business environment, the tax regime and the ease of doing business. I am so glad he mentioned the ease of doing business, and he talked about my trip to JP Morgan, et cetera. You know one of the things they said to us? One of the points they made, they said one of the things they like about doing business in Trinidad and Tobago was the certainty of their doing business. In other words, once they made an investment they were assured that they would get back their money. This is what Standard and Poor's said about us. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] This is what Moody's said about us, and I will tell you that the research that was done. Why Trinidad and Tobago? Location, location, location. Why Trinidad and Tobago? Our international rating. [*Interruption*] Why Trinidad and Tobago? English is the language of business.

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Why Trinidad and Tobago? The common law system of law. All of those circumstances together have made Trinidad and Tobago a good place to set up an IFC and we did our homework.

But you know what the Member neglected to focus on, he talked about up to July 2008—somehow, perhaps he did not know in terms of global financial crisis—

Hon. Member: “Woo”—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: Yes, JP Morgan almost collapsed. You know that Lehman Brothers collapsed. Those were factors exogenous to Trinidad and Tobago so that the entire world, not only the United States, the entire world was thrown into a financial crisis never seen before until the—I think back in the 1930s of the Great Depression. He is pretending that did not happen. A financial crisis of that proportion.

So, the point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is this, when such circumstances happen, that inconvenient truth, it requires us to step back, do the necessary introspection and make sure we are on the right track, and we are satisfied that we are on the right track. In fact, the update that you are asking for again, it is a curious thing, because I think two weeks ago when we were supposed to do the motion, PWC International was here and I met with them the day before. What have they done up to now? They have recommended a tax framework—now, we have to go to Cabinet and we respect the rule of law. This Cabinet is a collective responsibility, and therefore I cannot make a commitment on behalf of the Cabinet until it reaches Cabinet, but I can assure you a presentation was made to the policy formulation committee and certain recommendations are going to come to Cabinet very shortly.

The tax structure, we know exactly what the ceiling would be. We have looked at the legal framework. In fact, what has already been done is what we call the “SPEZ Laws” the Special Purpose Economic Zone Laws, that has already been drafted. I actually have a copy of it from PricewaterhouseCoopers, and it talks about the creation of an independent Special Purpose Economic Zone, the accountability of the International Financial Centre, the applicability of the T&T legislative framework, the creation of an authority, the creation of a regulatory authority, the creation of a judicial authority, the creation of an independent court system, a tax framework for the TIFC.

I actually have with me the legislation. This is the draft legislation that I have in my possession, and these are the things that we have been told—and we have a number of clients. In business the secret of success is secret in the sense that until we come to the point that we feel that we have gotten the Cabinet approval for

this, it will be foolish and foolhardy of us to make certain pronouncements, but I can assure the legislation in draft is ready, the regulatory framework, the flesh is being put onto it, the tax structure has reached a point where we know what the ceiling would be and we are going to that next step—we are engaging right now with potential clients and we are satisfied that Trinidad and Tobago has all that it takes to become an International Financial Centre.

In fact, one of the things that PWC has been asked to do and have been involved in doing is making a risk assessment and feasibility study. They have gone back out into the market—Oliver Whyman did it—to determine whether the business lines that we are introducing are the way we should go. What they have done is confirmed commodities trading, confirmed investment hubs, they have confirmed certain business lines and they have talked to the market, talked to potential clients and we are satisfied—*[Interruption]* It is not fluff, I am telling you what we are doing. *[Interruption]* You have asked where we have reached. *[Interruption]* But I am answering him—

Mr. Imbert: Ignore them, they are jealous.

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: So the point about it is—ignore them? Yes, I know that.

Mr. Imbert: They are jealous.

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: Yes, I know that, "eh". What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is we have done a lot of the work already. In fact, they told us that they have conducted a customer acquisition assessment, *[Interruption]* they have done a socio-economic risk assessment, and when we looked at Dubai—Yes, we looked at Dubai and the lesson from Dubai, more than anything else is that you do not have to limit your dreams.

We are not like you on the other side. We believe that Trinidad and Tobago is capable of great things. We do not limit our vision. *[Desk thumping]* We do not do that, because we have a visionary leader and we are a visionary Government, and you do not have any doubts about that you know. *[Interruption]* You see the Point Lisas Industrial Estate—and I know I will see you Monday at NAPA. I know I "gonna" see you on Monday at NAPA, because you want to go into that building—

Mr. Bharath: The spider web.

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: That vision, you understand; the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. *[Crosstalk]* He will be standing up there, just as how they were running—but I do not think I saw him—to the Hyatt Regency.

Mr. Imbert: He was there.

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: He was there?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: Well, there you are. I forgot. [*Crosstalk*] I do not doubt. [*Crosstalk*] Clearly, you felt the taxpayers' money was well spent. So we understand—is that the story about sour grapes or whatever the story is from Aesop's Fable? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order please!

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: Aesop's Fable I believe it comes from.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have given an account. I believe in terms of moving forward, as I said in every situation [*Crosstalk*] in every circumstance it will be foolhardy—

Mr. Bharath: Tell us who the tenants are.

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: How could I say who the tenants are at this point in time? [*Crosstalk and laughter*] How could we be so irresponsible to come to the Parliament and set out the names of the potential tenants? [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: So, Mr. Speaker, as I said it is sad, but it is not unexpected because it is consistent with the conduct of the other side in particular, I am sorry to say, the Member for St. Augustine, to continuously decry his country, to indulge in a conduct that shows a lack of love and patriotism [*Interruption*] to his country and in order to score points, set out to show in every single way why Trinidad and Tobago is not worthy of becoming an International Financial Centre but Jamaica is. [*Interruption*] That is the kind of person who wants to be a leader in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side will not be distracted. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. K. Nunez-Tesheira: We know what our job is and we continue to do it. [*Interruption*] We continue to deliver because we continue to care. [*Desk thumping and continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please, I am on my feet. I am on my feet! You all got away by the skin of your noses actually. [*Laughter*] I was tempted to accept the invitation of the Member for Couva North. [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

**Departmental Joint Select Committees Workshop
(Reminder of)**

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the question on the adjournment please indulge me, I want to remind all Members of the workshop that we are having on Wednesday, November 11, 2009. It starts at 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. It is in the Parliament Chamber. This workshop is aimed at reinforcing the recognition and appreciation of the need for a strong community system for proper executive oversight and scrutiny, ensuring that Members can identify, understand and apply rules of practice relevant to committee operations; providing an understanding of the process of enquiry from planning to execution; emphasizing the importance of certain basic rules in relation to evidence taking; emphasizing the importance of preparation and research.

Our discussions will focus on roles, the roles, powers and advantages of the committee system; obstacles to a strong committee system in legislature and establishing best practices; the role of the chairman and duties of members; identification of an enquiry; planning an enquiry and consideration of committee enquiry reports.

We have resource persons from Canada and Jamaica branches of the CPA. I wish to appeal to all Members of Parliament to make it possible to attend this workshop. This Parliament does what it can to have seminars and workshops that would benefit Members and I appeal to you, it really is a matter of concern when the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago organizes workshops for the benefit of Members and Members do not turn up. It is a sad reflection on the Parliament when Members do not turn up, so do not forget the date; it is Wednesday, November 11, 2009, from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. It is a very tight schedule and it would be beneficial to all Members.

One day some of you, not all of you are at present members of these committees but you can never tell when you would be appointed to a committee, so this workshop would assist you.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.42 p.m.