

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, December 03, 2010*

The House met at 1.30 pm.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members requesting leave of absence: Hon. Stephen Cadiz, Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East. He is presently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, is also presently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House; and Dr. Keith Rowley, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House on the ground of illness.

The leave which these Members seek is granted.

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Mr. Speaker: Members, may I also indicate to you, in the case of the Leader of the Opposition, that I would like on behalf of all Members of Parliament to wish him a very speedy recovery from whatever limited surgery he may have had. So on your behalf we do extend our best wishes to him for a very speedy recovery. [*Desk thumping*]

I also would like to take this opportunity on your behalf to extend to the former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Ellis Clarke, our best wishes as well for a speedy recovery and I would direct the Clerk to "pen a letter on your behalf—on behalf of the Parliament—to extend our best wishes to Sir Ellis Clarke and also to the Leader of the Opposition.

PAPERS LAID

- 1 Administrative report of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company Limited (TTFC) for the financial year 2008/2009. [*The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
- 2 Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Library and Information System Authority for the year ended September 30, 2006. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

- 3 Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the National Library and Information System Authority for the year ended September 30, 2007. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

Papers 2 and 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER

(LEAVE)

**Avion de Transport Regional
(Purchase of Aircraft)**

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House at today's sitting for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the confusion, uncertainty and potential for serious economic loss to Trinidad and Tobago that has been created by the decision of the new board of state-owned Caribbean Airlines to resist an instruction given by the "Minister of Works and Transport with the approval of Cabinet that the airline should proceed to purchase nine turboprop aircraft from Avion de Transport Regional (ATR) at a cost to the taxpayers of TT \$1.25 billion.

Mr. Speaker, the matter is definite—[*Interruption*] I know they cannot handle it, Mr. Speaker—as it pertains specifically to the decision of the Cabinet-appointed board—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, would you speak to—

Mr. Speaker: Could we allow the Member for Diego Martin North/East to present his matter that he has been—I have given him permission to raise it. In accordance with the Standing Order he has the right to raise it. Could he continue in silence! Please! Please!

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The matter is definite as it pertains specifically to a decision of the Cabinet-appointed board of a wholly-owned state enterprise—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker! Mr. Speaker, I am constantly being disturbed by the Member for Fyzabad. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Okay! Members, may I ask you to allow the Member for Diego Martin North/East to proceed to present his Motion in silence? You have my protection.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will try again. I repeat, the matter is definite as it pertains specifically to a decision of the Cabinet-appointed board of a wholly-owned state enterprise to defy its line Minister, and the Cabinet by

extension, with respect to a Cabinet decision now embroiled in controversy involving the expenditure of a very large sum of public money for aircraft to be used to transport the public. [*Interruption*]

The matter is urgent because it was revealed earlier this week that notwithstanding the contrary views of the new board of Caribbean Airlines, the airline has already paid a down payment for the aircraft and entered into a contractual agreement with the supplier of the aircraft. Accordingly, if this dispute between the board of Caribbean Airlines and the Government over this purchase is not settled quickly, it will expose the Government and the taxpayers, by extension, to a potentially huge claim for damages from the supplier of the aircraft.

Mr. Speaker, the matter is of public importance because it constitutes a real and present threat to the Treasury and the economic well-being of Trinidad and Tobago as well as a threat to the constitutional authority of the Cabinet in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago, especially with respect to the decision-making process for the expenditure of public funds.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this particular matter does not qualify under Standing Order 12. I wish to advise the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East to avail himself of Standing Order 11.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Nicki Minaj's Concert

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Anil Roberts): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At a sitting of the House of Representatives held on Friday, November 26, 2010, I addressed this honourable House while responding to a matter on the Motion for the Adjournment raised by the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central concerning the Nicki Minaj Concert held at the Hasely Crawford Stadium on October 30, 2010. In the course of my reply I stated:

“I know one thing. You were not there. There were 20 police officers, fire officers, and at no point in time did any foul language or expletive “cause anything. If so, I would like you to state if you were there and you heard because you are casting aspersions on our entire police force “that was there.”

Mr. Speaker, I continued:

“Using expletives on stage is against the law and the police would have shut down the concert and therefore the concert would have been on the *Trinidad Express*. I am telling you I was there. Hasely Crawford was there; the police were there and there were no expletives.”

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Mr. Speaker, if my statement as quoted above is taken in its entirety, it could be inferred that a reasonable interpretation of what I was attempting to convey would be that the use of expletives on stage by any artiste would have inevitably led to a shutdown of the Minaj Concert. There having been no shutdown of the concert by the police one could also infer that no offensive language or vulgar expression was used to the annoyance of police on duty. It was in that context that my statement quoted above was made.

On reflection, Mr. Speaker, I could understand that if a literal interpretation is placed on my statement, then the impression may have been given that I was attempting to mislead this honourable House. However, nothing could be further from the truth. I had no intention, whatever, to deliberately mislead this honourable House. If it is that such impression was created in the minds of hon. Members, then, Sir, I humbly apologize for having so structured my statement as to create this unfortunate impression.

Finally, may I add, that if, however, it may be the case that improper language or use of words were uttered or conveyed at that concert, I wish to categorically disassociate myself and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago from that type of behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for permitting me to make this personal explanation.

ANTI-GANG BILL

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [December 01, 2010]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol Mc Leod): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members of the House, thank you for this opportunity to add my two cents worth to the debate on this important piece of legislation at this time.

It has already been signalled that this Bill, the Anti-Gang Bill, 2010, will be the subject of examination by a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament. *[Interruption]* Yes. I would therefore not spend too much time treating with the clauses contained in the provisions of the proposed legislation but instead I wish to visit some of the circumstances and antecedents to those circumstances which must inform the need for the legislation.

1.45 p.m.

I wish to begin, then, by asking how, why, when, Mr. Speaker, did we come to our present conjuncture? And even as we try to avoid the blame game, as was suggested, we must abandon the hypocrisy that shrouds the pious comments from some Members on the other side; but, nevertheless, I also wish to express my appreciation for their promise of cooperation with this side, with the Government, in implementing measures aimed at reversing the social degradation into which the country seems to have fallen.

The problems which we now face are systemic, Mr. Speaker. These problems did not just appear overnight. We have come too close to being condemned as an uncaring society in Trinidad and Tobago today. Those of us who frequented the cinemas, as our country boys had to do—there was nothing else, really—in those days when our major entertainment centres were the cinemas, those of us who went then would, no doubt, remember the movie, “Town Without Pity”, in which Kirk Douglas and Sophia Loren starred.

Miss McDonald: What year was that?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: I know that I am perhaps exposing my own “antecedenture”.
[*Laughter*]

Miss Cox: I want to see that movie.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: I recommend that movie, “Town Without Pity”. The Member for Diego Martin North/East might have seen that movie. I know particular persons representing constituencies in San Fernando may have also seen that movie, but he had a preference—

Miss Cox: San Fernando West?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: San Fernando East. I understand he had a preference for “Fistful of Dollars”. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Imbert: “Call me Trinity”.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: “Call me Trinity”, or, “A Few Dollars More”. And in that particular one, the “star boy” was a rotund figure like Calder. [*Laughter*] We have seen Trinidad and Tobago’s urban settlements, Mr. Speaker, become citadels, almost, of gangsterism, merciless dens of gory criminal activity. I mean, I do not need to repeat what we would have read in today’s newspapers, as we would have read in yesterday’s. It is an everyday thing almost, now. Somebody pushing a pram, is it, with a baby, and his light was put out with four bullets to the head.

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We now have enclaves without pity, even without pity for the lame and the infirm. We were not always a lawless people either. Even in those harsher times when not having the material means for a slightly more comfortable existence, there was exemplary subscription, Mr. Speaker, to law and good neighbourliness and care for the less fortunate. There was a subscription to good order and respect, to fairness, to loyalty and to justice. It has changed.

I grew up and developed in those times, Mr. Speaker, when parenting was a sacred and serious responsibility; when the school was a place where characters were moulded; when institutions which were meant to guide, to protect, to advance, to mobilize and to harness the diverse and abundant energies of the people were, themselves, respected and served faithfully by those elected or appointed to the leadership of those institutions. You hardly see that these days.

The suggestion, as was made last Wednesday, that poverty by itself has driven the gang culture and criminal activity in this country, needs to be reconsidered. I suggest that it be reconsidered, because we have come from days of real abject poverty, many of us, [*Desk thumping*] and we did not have the circumstances that attend this society today. But how did we get there? How did we get there? At that time, serious crime used to jolt the society. At that time, thieves and petty criminals used to run from police. Today, the opposite is the case. Police are running from thieves and petty criminals.

In the days of the notorious Boysie Singh and the murder of Thelma Haynes, I think it was, whose body was never found, I am not sure, that was a talking point. Everybody was surprised. I mean, how could this heinous crime take place? And with our police not being equipped sufficiently to trace and find the remains of that murdered woman, everybody was surprised. Whenever there was the commission of a serious crime, most people used to be surprised. Today, when a weekend passes without a serious crime being committed, everybody is surprised; and something, Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest has to be done about it. It seems to have fallen to the responsibility of the People's Partnership Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in 2010, to take bold steps toward dealing with this problem.

The abandonment of family and community values must be cited as one of the reasons for our coming to this point. The period when the youth and some of our more conscious, mature people, social political activists, and so on, used to congregate on the block and engage in a process of consciousness building; those days, Mr. Speaker, late '60s, early '70s—do you know what the youth used to be doing on the block then? The youth were discussing—

Mr. Imbert: Politics.

“Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yes, politics. Somebody who would have been doing a programme at the University of the West Indies would have had the youths assembled around him or her, and we were discussing Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice*. We were discussing Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. We were discussing the work of our own scholar here in Trinidad and Tobago, *Capitalism and Slavery*. [*Desk thumping*] We were discussing, Mr. Speaker, *Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon, and *Black Skin, White Masks*. Yes, serious discussions.

You know what we were discussing too? We were discussing the third five-year development plan of Trinidad and Tobago, 1969—1973. But people were becoming too conscious for the likes of those who held political power, and the block had to be broken up and certain ambitious other people, acting on instructions from those who were in control of the State, they went to the blocks, they broke up the blocks and they carried their planks with them and they chased people away from studying the books. One of the books, too, was the little red one, *Shorts of the Chairman*, which they outlawed. Remember you and I had to get rid of those that we possessed, Mr. Chairman?

They chased people away from the books, from political consciousness building, and introduced, instead, Mr. Speaker, drugs on the blocks. The drugs came before the guns. The guns have been introduced to protect the drugs and the block in which the drug is supposed to be peddled and distributed; and we started going downhill from there. I said that I will try to avoid participating in the blame game, but like that surprises you.

Mr. Imbert: I would be grateful.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You think that I ought to repeat that the PNM must “share a large responsibility for what has happened. [*Desk thumping*]

2.00 p.m.

But we have come to the point now, Mr. Speaker, where, although they would have contributed in very large measure to the state of affairs that now afflict us, it is a problem affecting everybody; therefore, the resolution to that problem must be everybody putting hands on deck and moving forward to rid the society of the heinous crimes that are—[*Desk thumping*]. And when for political favours that were granted, those in power and authority at the time decided on a means by which they would pay back for the political favours, worthy and well-thought-out,

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perhaps, social safety nets like Crash Programme that has gone through so many different incarnations: Labour Intensive Development (LID), Development and Environmental Works Division (DEWD) and now Unemployment Relief Programme (URP).

You know, I understand that those programmes, in addition to other things, were supposed to provide opportunities for the reformation of those who would have committed serious infractions against the law and would have served time in prison, and now that they were out of prison you did not want to leave them idle, so they got a “touche” in these social programmes—

Mr. Imbert: That was the original intention.

Hon. E. McLeod: That was the original intention, I am informed; but you do not take such people and put them in charge of the programme. You do not contract the programme to such people, and that is what happened. And today we continue to suffer the consequences of that. And when the programme was not enough for the satisfaction of their greed, they had to create appendages to the programme, and that is why today we talk about ghost gangs. Where did it start? Who must take responsibility for that? The Member for Laventille East/Morvant suggests that all of us must take responsibility for it. No. All of us should participate in finding a solution to it, rather than all of us taking blame for infractions that you would have perpetrated. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: Bill Francis.

Miss Cox: Bill Francis. [*Crosstalk*] I can tell you of my constituency.

Mr. Speaker: All right, order, order please? Please go on? [*Crosstalk*] There is a speaker on the floor.

Hon. E. McLeod: “Yuh doh want to hear de truth?”

Miss Cox: That is not the truth.

Hon. E. McLeod: “Yuh doh want to hear de truth?” I was hoping that you would jump on the truth wagon so that you can be freed.

Miss Cox: It is not the truth. You do not know.

Mr. Imbert: It is not the whole truth.

Mr. Sharma: Only you know. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. E. McLeod: I talk, Mr. Speaker, very briefly, about our relationship with institutions—I was largely alluding to institutions of power—and how those institutions have been—may I use a word as one would perhaps use if one were talking in terms of the Church and so on? These institutions have been desecrated

by some of those whom we entrusted with the leadership of those institutions. And I thought that a whole lot was said about that, as we debated the Interception of Communications Bill, and as we debated the budget 2010/2011. And you know that during a budget debate you can introduce almost anything in that debate. And a whole lot was said, and fingers pointed. But you know what is significant? All of the figures that were pointed seemed to have found confluence in pointing to one spot, one seat, one person.

I said that I was not going to engage in the blame game and point more fingers. This is why I am addressing you, Mr. Speaker. I remember the 1976—1981 term of Parliament in which I participated, and when the business of the House was superintended over by the hon. Arnold Thomasos. In 1981, at the closure of that term, the Speaker identified the Member for Oropouche, as I was then, as one of the most disciplined Members in the House during that period, and I did not want to tarnish that reputation. So I would look at you and not be tempted too much to respond to the hypocritical whisperings that you get from the other side so often.

We have to point, Mr. Speaker, to a number of those plans and those programmes that were enunciated in that Third Five-Year Development Programme. I was more familiar with that one than I knew anything about the preceding two. It seemed at that time one sat, looked at Trinidad and Tobago as one organization of so many people, and determined that over the next five years so many of our people were going to come out of our primary and secondary school institutions—learning institutions; educational institutions—and they would have a particular level of training such as we would put them into, so that they could move into the different areas of economic and other activity that State would assist in organizing.

So that at any one time businesses could have determined what skills we are going to require as we keep modernizing our operations, as we keep expanding our involvement in economic activity. And the school system, working in concert with other organizations that make up the society, would be informed as to how the curriculum ought to be organized—am I saying it properly, Minister of Education?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are right on spot.

Hon. E. McLeod: So that we were always keeping abreast of new developments and positioning ourselves competitively in the global arena. But we abandoned that too, and there are many of us, perhaps, who are informed that we misunderstood what was meant when the then Prime Minister suggested that

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“money was no problem”, and that planning had lost its mystique. I think those who succeeded that Prime Minister were more confused than anybody else. They were the ones most guilty of misunderstanding what was meant. So that we stopped planning, and for 13 years now we have not had a curriculum change, and this Government is moving to reorganize the primary school curriculum to bring about such changes that are necessary.

You see, we continue, Mr. Speaker, to teach, to detest and not impart values of honesty, of integrity, of discipline, of humility, of love for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We do not do it. I have said this before, and I will repeat it at every opportunity that I have, Mr. Speaker. We have always had restless youth, but we used to plan for them. They do not just fall into idle adventure and into criminal activity and so on. If when they are young you bend and mould them—there is some part of the scripture that deals with that so that in later life they walk along the straight and narrow, something like that—I am not about to ask the preacher in the Chamber to assist me in determining the particular piece of scripture either. [*Interruption*] Oh, there are a few. Call names and I might whistle.

Mr. Speaker, we have abandoned the training and development of the abundant resources and energies that we have in our young people. You know, the multinationals—against which I spent many years of my life in the trade union movement opposing and ridiculing multinational corporations—but they had their plan, but, of course, to suit their own purposes, but we happened to have benefited from those plans. You see, the apprenticeship training programme that the Government, led by the Member for San Fernando East, abandoned? Such abandonment was a disservice to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

2.15 p.m.

Texaco, T&TEC, Caroni—and Caroni was known to produce the best machinists, turners and so on, and I understand that right here our machinists and turners used to manufacture, with precision, parts that were required for the sugar mill and other machinery, and so on. When we shut down that operation on the basis that production costs were too high, our plant and machinery were too antiquated and that sugar had become uncompetitive on the world market, when we responded to those only and shut down the operations of that company, we also shut down the building of skills and important human resources that could serve the rest of industry in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is what happened.

You know what is happening—I can talk a bit more authoritatively about the Pointe-a-Pierre operations of Petrotrin. At Petrotrin today, there are highly skilled workers, some of whom have passed their retirement age by five years already and in a couple of cases by as many as 10 years, but they are retained on month-to-month contracts because the work that they do is so intrinsically necessary for the continued operations of what we have there in Pointe-a-Pierre and our not having trained anybody to succeed them, they are kept on. That is happening there as it is happening in many other places of serious and important activity in Trinidad and Tobago.

So when the youth, who may have had an opportunity to get into one of those programmes, not to mention the Presto Presto Youth Camp, the Mount St. George Youth Camp, the Chatham Youth Camp—I happen to have sat on the first interviewing panel; I was a youth myself, but I was the President of the La Romaine Progressive Youth Organization and having been affiliated to the Victoria Association of Youth Groups, I was for a while the President of that too, and youth organizations, community organizations, and had a responsibility for what happened in their communities; responsibility for the community centre. There was always activity in the community centre, and we impacted on government's plans and decisions for youth and the development of our young people.

So when the first youth camp was opened, I sat as one of the interviewers on the panel to select young people to go to the youth camp, where they were taught agriculture, animal husbandry, some basic trades, and so on, and these people would come out from there and they would have gone into their own little farming business. Some of them would have gone on to other areas of activity, but there was always an intake of people who would have been trained over a period of three years and five years.

The ones with which I am most familiar were the programmes at Pointe-a-Pierre under multinational Texaco. There was the craft apprentice training programme that prepared our craftsmen—our journeymen, as we call them—in a wide array of disciplines and trades. You had the stenographers' three-year programme in which our young women, secondary school graduates, were trained in stenography and office administration and so on, and you had the student technician and engineering programme where our brighter college graduates spent three years developing supervisory and middle managerial skills.

Many of them, from those three streams of training would have gone on to the university and they would have gone back to the industry and continued to build

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that industry and trained other people and these apprentices, after they would have spent their eight hours at the workplace, seeing and participating in the practical operations of their craft, they had to attend evening classes at the technical institute in San Fernando, at John Donaldson Technical Institute in Port of Spain; in Point Fortin I think it was the Civic Centre, I am not too familiar with that one, and you had to; you did not have a choice, you had to go to school.

So that during day there is the trained worker who is practising his craft and inviting your participation in the practice of the craft, and in the evening you went for three hours, from five o'clock to eight o'clock where you had the theoretical applications and so on, so that you understood the importance of Ohm's Law as it related to the practice of the electrical craft: resistivity, resistance, impedance, and so on.

I was trained in electrical craft and quite often I feel that I can get up and electrify this Chamber with a bit of the history. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. McIntosh: I have some work home to do.

Hon. E. McLeod: You have some electrical work to do?

Mrs. McIntosh: Home.

Hon. E. McLeod: I will talk with you after the session. [*Crosstalk*]

The point that I am trying to make is that we had some avenues. They did not fully deal with all of our young people who would have liked to have an opportunity to engage in those programmes, but many, many, many people—Point Lisas, somebody was suggesting that Point Lisas depended on those training programmes; in Caroni, in Texaco, in Shell, Trintoc, Trintopec and T&TEC, we were doing serious business.

Today, what do we offer our young people? Nothing. The MuST and the HYPE and the YAPA and so on, might well be helping to some extent, but that is not it. You are not going to have a properly trained, solid, well-qualified instrument technician, a mechanic, with six months of training. No, you have to do better than that.

Then you have the lure of the big time; good life by the dons and others who have our communities trembling before them, almost, and we bring a measure that ought to help us in curbing those tendencies and we are told that the penalties are too harsh and—what was the other word you used to describe them?

Miss Cox: Draconian.

Hon. E. McLeod: Draconian.

Mr. Imbert: Oppressive.

Hon. E. McLeod: And oppressive. Mr. Speaker, I alluded to the movie, *Town without Pity* and what I am hearing is there are those of us who would wish that we would show some pity to those who have been pitilessly and mercilessly injuring the rest of us in the society.

Mr. Imbert: Not all, not all.

Hon. E. McLeod: I want to suggest that we consider carefully our positions on all of that. Do you want me to give way?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for giving way. I just want to make our position very clear. We are of the view that violent gang members should be punished to the full extent of the law. The problem is the person who may have joined a gang who may not be involved in any criminal activity whatsoever and can be rehabilitated the penalty is the same, no matter who you are, whether we are a vicious criminal, a hardened criminal or just a misguided youth.

Hon. E. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that when this matter comes before the joint select committee, all of those views are going to be expressed and I am sure that this side is going to treat very seriously with whatever is expressed.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. E. McLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was making the point that we need—all of us, together—to send a strong, a very serious message—signal—to the rest of our national community that the gangsters, the hoodlums, the drug and gun runners, the perpetrators of serious crime, whether white collar, or blue collar crime, against the people of Trinidad and Tobago, will no longer be tolerated. [*Desk thumping*] We have to send that message.

2.30 p.m.

Anytime, Mr. Speaker, that you appear to be trembling, anytime you express fear of the criminally inclined, you will spend the rest of your life in fear. I do not intend to spend the rest of my life in fear. There are many of us—we have an abundance of subscribers to Christianity—Member for La Brea—and as good Christians, we all want to go to heaven but “we afraid to dead”. Well, I understand

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the transition to heaven is through that path, and if you are a serious Christian and you really want to go there you will say what, so be it? There is plenty of work to do, and you are prepared for it.

We cannot afford, Mr. Speaker, to allow this thing to continue the way it has been going. We must no longer allow irate mothers and fathers, biologically, who have been poor parents—let me put that differently so that I am not misunderstood—who have demonstrated poor parentage or poor parenting, to go to the school, walk into the classroom and accost the teacher who sought to discipline an errant little boy or girl, neither should we want to tolerate teachers who do not deliver what is expected of them. Our parents are teachers. Our leaders in the society must see where our society must be however many years from now, and we must all put our shoulders to the wheel to ensure that we are safely landed where we ought to be.

I am subscribing here to the advice of another great son of the soil, CLR James, when he spoke to the future in the present. We must be making our future today. We must be determining the extent to which we will allow ourselves to walk free on our streets without being molested. Today is when we must determine that, or as has already been said, we will find that Ella Andall was being prophetic when she talked about the generations of our youth or the generation of our youth that is lost. We cannot find them. They are finding us these days, and I do not know if we should wait for too long for many more of them to join those ranks where they genuflect before a criminal boss, and where dollars and very little sense mean everything to them. It is our responsibility to save them. It is even a greater responsibility for us to save those who have not already been spoilt, from being spoilt by those who perhaps we cannot redeem.

Having said those few words, Mr. Speaker, I wish to suggest that every business, whether small, medium or large in Trinidad and Tobago, in the year 2011, should commit to the extent that they can afford to recruiting a young person, or two or three or 10, and put them through some training, and we must not exploit them. [*Desk thumping*] We must not exploit them as certain OJTs have been exploited. Let me explain where I am coming from with regard to that. [*Interruption*] Aaah!

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I will deal with it later on.

Hon. E. McLeod: A number of them could not do otherwise but to accept what has been offered to them, and what has happened is that jobs, well paying jobs, have seen the substantive persons in those jobs forced out, invited to go on voluntary separation, some of them coerced to leave \$1,500 per week jobs, and

you put an OJT in that job with a stipend of \$300/\$350. That was one of the means by which they sought to subvert the bargaining process that the unions would have engaged in to provide decent well paying jobs.

Every OJT is an On-the-Job trainee, every OJT ought to be working alongside, learning alongside a person confirmed as the substantive holder of that job. That is what it ought to be. Somebody does not go except they are experimenting in their own individual capacity. You do not go into a business identified as an On-the-Job trainee and there is nobody training you. That is wrong. That is wrong. That is exploitation and the businesses, which I hope will respond positively to the suggestion, must insist that these young people whom they bring into their business to be trained—to hold down responsible positions perhaps later on—must also go to school. There are many, many institutions—some of them free—that you can go to and get that next O Level subject; you can go to and learn to read and write. There was a time when our literacy rating was something that we as a people were proud of.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Ninety-five per cent.

Hon. E. McLeod: Ninety-five per cent, we were proud. Today, many of those young people who are terrorizing us know a 9mm bore as against a .22 as against a .45, but you put their name up on the wall and they cannot read. I understand that a US \$10,000 reward was offered for anybody bringing information as to the identity and whereabouts of a police officer, who in the exercise of his duty was forced to do a particular thing. We must demand of our policemen that they be the first subscribers to law and order, and we must be prepared to defend them as they carry out their duty and responsibility on behalf of all of us.

We must move swiftly to deal with such policemen who are setting poor examples for other citizens in the country, and is not too difficult to find out who they are. If we are going to effectively deal, with the question of ridding ourselves of gangsterism and so on, we must ensure that those of us in leadership positions, those of us at the top, whether in the police service, in the Opposition, in the Government, wherever, we must be setting such examples as we would expect our citizens, and particularly, our young people to emulate.

I wish to thank you and the honourable House for this opportunity. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am afraid I do not have very much to respond to in terms of the contribution of the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. In fact, the effect of his contribution was exemplified

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by the actions of the Member for Tunapuna because he took a much needed rest during the contribution and that was the effect of the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. In fact, he has contributed to a lot of productivity in this nation. He has slowed productivity because I am sure everyone fell asleep during that contribution.

In fact, he also went on to give us a movie guide for an era that none of us in this House belong to. He is lone ranger of that era. But to speak about some of the things he said, he said that for 13 years there was no curriculum change, and nothing is further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. Because from 1993 to 2002, the PNM in fact had an education plan, but when the UNC came in, in 1996, they did nothing about it and we were the ones who had to pick it up when we returned to office in 2001. [*Desk thumping*] Those were the facts.

He spoke about crime within the URP, but I want to deal with that significantly later in my contribution. He also went on to talk about the OJT Programme, being very dismissive of it when what they have done, is that they have come to office and have sent all of these people home. [*Desk thumping*]

2.45 p.m.

The figure which the Member gave of \$350 is totally misleading and totally wrong. In fact, the figures were in the vicinity of \$3,000 to \$6,000 per month, dependent on their level of qualification. That is what it was about. Their dismissal of most of them—I understand that some of them may have been kept—has contributed to the high unemployment figures today. The reality is that the unemployment has probably reached double-digit figures.

I want to go back to the Bill “to make provisions for the suppression of associations established for unlawful purposes and for the better protection of public safety and order and for other related matters”. Before I start, I want to point out that it says “suppression of associations” not “wipeout of associations”, which is what this Government seems to want to do through the passage of this Bill. I want to make that clear distinction.

The Attorney General, in his opening remarks, said a number of things and I want to refer to that. He said that the Bill, otherwise known as the Anti-Gang Bill, is path-breaking legislation and I agree with him. It is path-breaking legislation and we in the PNM take full credit for it. It is our Bill even though it was doctored by you all. We will make good with it in the same way we did with the Interception of Communications Bill. I thank our Members for the very important contributions they made to that Bill.

The Attorney General also went on to say that this Bill and other pieces of legislation to come—I quote from the *Hansard*:

“...is intended to improve the ability of the State to deal with the unprecedented level of crime in our society...”

I agree with him that there is an unprecedented level of crime in our society. We were dealing with it and the level has skyrocketed since this Government came into office. That is more so since the announcements were made of no more OPVs. They did not see the need for the offshore patrol vessels. That is so since the breakdown of SAUTT—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: The crosstalk is what is generating heat. Every Member will have the right to speak. Take notes, so that when you get your chance you can refute. Please do not interrupt Members when they are making their contributions.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. He not only interrupted, but was also very disrespectful.

I was saying that crime has increased under this Government with the announcement of no OPVs, the breakdown of SAUTT, and, of course, the official leak by the Prime Minister of SIA operations. That caused crime to skyrocket in the very recent past. That sort of action was irresponsible. In fact, people in the US are going to jail for making leaks about matters such as this. Instead, in Trinidad and Tobago, our Prime Minister made an official leak; a matter for which, perhaps, in another country, she could have been sent to jail.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 34 or 36, the Member is imputing motives to me and wants to send me to jail. She is accusing me of an offence that has a jail term, which then means imputing improper conduct of a criminal offence. I ask the Member to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, no standing Order was offended when the hon. Prime Minister addressed this House. What took place in the United States took place there, but in terms of this Parliament, the Member for Siparia did not offend the Standing Orders. So do not impute in the circumstances that she did or she could have. The Prime Minister is not in the United States. She is in Trinidad. So please! [*Desk Thumping*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I will be guided, Mr. Speaker. I was referring to some statements made by the Attorney General in his presentation of the Bill. He did say that urgent action is needed and we agree with him. I will come to that. Our administration has been dealing with that for decades.

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We had been dealing with it, but we are also saying that this Government cannot cope with the levels of crime. The question I put to them is: Why does it have to get worse before it gets better? The fact is that there is just no plan by the Government for dealing with crime.

The Attorney General also went on to say that:

“...gang-related criminal activity permeates...every sphere in the criminal world...”—and that—“has become the centrepiece and a foundation for crime...”

I agree with him and emphasize that gang violence and gang activity is global in nature because not only did we have globalization of trade, but along with that came globalization of terrorism and globalization of crime. It is not at all a problem that is singular to Trinidad and Tobago as they would like to glibly blame us for.

We remember doing things and it is a fact that now that they are over there crime is worsening. I want them to examine the statistics and see for themselves that kidnapping was down, robberies were down, car thefts were down. In fact, we were making significant progress, then this Government came in and they thought perhaps they would wave a wand and it would all go away; play some Celine Dion songs, some Bob Marley songs, like *One Love*, and all the troubles would go away and that just did not happen.

It did not happen because the Government acted irresponsibly from the start. They disbanded the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT); they fired people. You go to a national security meeting now and there are new people around the table; everyone is new. There is no institutional memory now; there is no experience now and what is happening is that the criminals are all laughing at us.

In this day and age of technology—I am talking not about the criminals in Trinidad and Tobago, but criminals internationally, the head of the gangs—they know what is going on in Trinidad and Tobago. They know how exposed we now are and this is why we have had an upsurge in activity here as well. They know that Trinidad is perhaps the place to be especially since they know about this interception of communications that had been stalled for a period of time. *[Interruption]* Well, crime has flourished on account of this irresponsible Government.

Meanwhile, the Government sought to politicize crime and made a scandal out of it. What did we do in Trinidad? Under our administration, we acted responsibly. I want at this time to refer to the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre's—let

me go back to his exact words. *[Interruption]* He was speaking about crime within the URP and fortunately or unfortunately he did not tell the whole truth with respect to the introduction of criminal elements into URP.

The criminal elements were driven out of the URP under the PNM administration during the 1991—1995 period. No one with a criminal record or association was allowed by our administration to be in a supervisory position during the period 1991—1995. They were allowed to work as tradesmen, labourers and so on, but not as supervisors.

The problem began in 1996 when the UNC came into power. It was Minister Sadiq Baksh who would have been responsible for the URP then. In order to get a foothold into Laventille, East Port of Spain and those other urban areas that the UNC then recruited some notorious criminals. *[Interruption]* What name did you say?

Hon. Member: Bill Francis.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Bill Francis. He was a candidate as well? My goodness! They recruited notorious criminals and put them in charge of the URP. What was the effect of this, Mr. Speaker? This caused an explosion in criminality and the emergence of “ghost gangs” and fraud. That was the monster that was created in the URP.

We in the PNM were systematically rooting out these criminals and “ghost gangs” that had been introduced into the URP by the UNC and we had some measure of success. I am not saying that we had full success. However, now that the UNC-led coalition is back in office, there has been another explosion of “ghost gangs” to my understanding. I am informed that in a particular constituency we had as many as 40 ghost gangs introduced since May 2; all in Laventille East and Morvant. I think the right thing is that the Government should admit that they have had significant responsibility for the present problem of ghost gangs and gangs in general.

How did the PNM deal with crime over the last few decades? Public security has always been a matter of concern for us so we were dealing with it from time immemorial. Under our Vision 2020—and I have the document here, it was at the 38th Annual Convention of the People's National Movement in October 2003 on the matter of Vision 2020—the address was made by the then political leader and this is where our reaction to national security was clearly enunciated. It spoke about Vision 2020 having a mandate to ensure this country became safe for basically peace-loving and law-abiding citizens.

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It was said in that document that we have already declared war on the criminals who are terrorizing the society and it was repeated that there was an allout war on those who are denying our people the sense of security and stability that they deserve.

Then we went on in detail, the political leader, to speak of an 11-point plan and to speak of the special crime fighting unit, under Peter Joseph, and spoke about the introduction of 1,000 police officers and the plan to increase the size of the police service even more; the introduction of more transport vehicles and equipment, the training of officers in narcotic investigations, the whole business of intelligence-gathering and analysis, drug enforcement, forensic training and building of new police stations throughout the country. The political leader went on to say that we should push back the drug traffickers by policing our coastline through comprehensive radar surveillance and new patrol boats with full attack capabilities. That was the origin of how we were approaching with the menace that was before us. The point is that there was a plan.

It came to pass that, under our administration, as I have said before, kidnapping was substantially reduced and, in fact, it was almost non-existent for long periods. We also spoke then about all the pieces of legislation that we intended to put in place. Even before that, in 2000, there was the birth of Vision 2020 and that too was also clearly laid out.

More recently, in 2009, the then Minister of National Security, Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph, had come to the House and he had detailed for us, so Members on that side who were on this side would have been totally familiar with the full security plan that we had then laid out. In fact, he spoke of all the different security agencies and, in particular, the National Security Council and how it operates. Hearing news that people were unfamiliar with the SIA, SAUTT, and the SSA, I think, are totally unfamiliar to us.

He detailed the workings and machinations of all of our security plans, the intelligence and the SSA, SAUTT, the Defence Transformation and Integration Secretariat of the Ministry of National Security, and a number of other recommendations that came out of these plans and an audit which was performed around that time, something like 300 recommendations came out then. This is just to emphasize the fact that we had a plan, a very detailed one, and we were dealing with crime effectively, but, of course, the tide was against us. But, we were

working diligently at it. What has happened now is that this Government has come into place and they have failed the people of Trinidad and Tobago and crime has gone through the window.

The SSA—there was a clear mission statement by the Strategic Services Agency (SSA). That mission statement was—I want to read it for you—to suppress the importation and transshipment of illicit drugs into and through Trinidad and Tobago by the development of an integrated interdiction strategy and the coordination and facilitation of efforts of all relevant agencies in the implementation of this strategy; all the details of what was going on with the SSA document, a full plan for anyone who took over the responsibility of crime, all of the details were there.

In this document, which all of those members of the National Security Council would have been privy to, there was an outline of a coordinated approach towards drug interdiction. There was an approach with regard to regional and international corporations. There was a plan to protect territorial borders from entry and exit of drugs. There was a plan for dealing with our territorial waters and airspace. I can go on and on. There was a plan to eliminate the illegal traffic in arms and ammunition. I am talking about arms, ammunition and drugs, because that is the basis. Those are the tools of trade for gangs and gang activity. I can go on, because all of it is documented for the members of national security and the Government to deal with.

There was another document, a Commentary on the Status of Serious Crime in Trinidad and Tobago, which spoke extensively to gang-related murders and it spoke of the fact that, in 2007, 45 per cent of the murders were gang related. The research which we had done at that time, in fact, identified young men as the primary actors in contemporary violence, as well as other forms of antisocial activity. It went on to speak of gender and age distinction and the reasons for those persons becoming involved in gang activity. We had done the research as well.

This document also went on to say that guns have both a functional and symbolic role in the lives of young males in our society. It was very wide where indeed. It went on to talk about young men being the primary audience of violent movies, the gun is often the chosen instrument of violence. We had done all the research into gang-related activity and which research formed the basis of the legislation that has come here today and formed the basis of all of the action which we took to deal with gang-related activity as well. The point is that we were dealing with it.

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I want to speak about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Even with our foreign policy and the fact that there was a new foreign policy document, which came out of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had been Cabinet-approved, but had not yet come to the Parliament, the question of security diplomacy was also dealt with comprehensively. It was one of the main areas of attention. Of course, of concern was the age of globalization and the effects of drug traffickers and traffickers in persons and cybercriminals and terrorists. We, of course, were concerned about island nations being particularly susceptible to some of these threats, given the porous nature of our boundaries, hence, their facilitation of easy access and criminal elements.

Coming out of our foreign policy concerns and how we would treat with it internationally as well, was that Trinidad and Tobago must continue to subscribe to policies or cooperation at subregional levels, at regional and global level, in addition to the national levels. In addition to dealing with this aspect of crime nationally, we were also dealing with it internationally at the regional level and at a global level as well.

In particular, since Trinidad and Tobago holds the security portfolio within Caricom, Trinidad and Tobago must not only be mindful of its domestic responsibilities in this area—this is what we said; we must not only be mindful of our domestic responsibilities, but we must also promote initiatives that secure the region as a whole, bearing in mind that regional resources are scarce and national capabilities are weak. That was our approach, in particular, towards Caricom. We were concerned about the effect on the whole region. That is where we were.

Again, given the fact that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, at this time and then, was lead/head of security in the Caricom—quasi government governance system, we took our responsibilities towards crime in the region seriously. What would happen at every meeting that we went to is, the Prime Minister will present a report. Usually, that report would begin with an intelligence assessment presented by the Director of the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre. There is an intelligence system set up in Trinidad and Tobago and, as well, in Caricom, there is the Regional Fusion Centre. The question I want to put for the Member for Siparia and Prime Minister is whether or not her Government, in fact, supports Caricom's Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre and whether or not they are pleased. The implications of that may well be that the director of that organization may also be fired, and, in the interest of the smooth running of this Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre, I really would like to get the Government's view on that, if they have a view at all, or if they have an understanding of how it functions.

Also, at these meetings, the Executive Director of the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security Impact time would also provide details and critical updates on major elements on crime and security within the region. Then, of course, they would deal with a lot of problems. They would update us on matters of homicides, violence, gangs and gang crimes. We were working together in the region, all of us, all the Caricom countries. We were also working with Latin American countries and the United States as well. In fact, it is well established that the US had announced, during the Fifth Summit of the Americas, the intention to provide an initiative with Caricom, to the extent of US \$30 million and that was, in fact, extended to US \$40 million.

There was cooperation at that level in dealing with the whole gang violence issue and gang activity issues, because there was an understanding that we were not affected in isolation, that we in the region were all targeted together, with activity taking place from one country to another. Of course, this extended into the hemisphere as well.

We were dealing with it. We had set up legislation to deal with matters like that, the Caricom Arrest Warrant Treaty, the Caricom Maritime and Airspace Security Cooperation Agreement as well. There were systems in place. There was a Council of Ministers responsible for national security and law enforcement as well and they would, in fact, meet quite often to discuss the whole question of crime within the region. Then, more recently, there was a reactivation of something called the RMC, which is a Resource Mobilization Committee to deal as well with a management framework for crime and security. We were in fact dealing with all of this in Caricom together; the whole question of small arms and light weapons, as well. In fact, states were encouraged to adopt and implement the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and, of course, also to undertake all of the obligations under the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related materials. All of that was being done. Together we were dealing with this whole aspect of crime and gang violence in particular.

My question is—and I have detailed what goes on in Caricom—whether or not the Prime Minister of this country can really effectively perform the task that has been assigned to her in Caricom?

3.15 p.m.

Quite frankly, at this time, I think the Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, because of all the unsavoury comments that were made between May and now—

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no ATM card, et cetera—the Prime Minister is already without a face in Caricom; totally faceless in Caricom. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, recently I was reading the newspaper, and it has come to pass that the Jamaican business people have, in fact, boycotted Trinidad and Tobago's goods, and that is the effect of this Government, because of the statements that were made recently. That is the backlash in Caricom, and we know it.

When hurricane Tomas passed, the Prime Minister tried to resurrect herself and, in fact, went into the islands and made good after all the obscene statements were made. One country, in particular, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, refused to allow this country into their country—one week after, they refused to allow them to go in there and make propaganda and politicize the whole question of Tomas and so on in the island. What I am saying is this Government is faceless in the Caribbean.

Quite frankly, on the whole question of crime, this Government is rudderless. This Government is rudderless with regard to crime in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] So there you have it; faceless in the Caribbean and rudderless as well. How is it that our Prime Minister intends to continue to sit as the head of Caricom with responsibilities for security when, in fact, there is no control of security in Trinidad and Tobago? How could this Government give advice or pull the reins of security together for Caricom when, in fact, they are rudderless here?

What should be done is, the Member for Siparia should call her colleagues in the region together and say to them that it was really obscene of her to attempt to be leading or giving guidance to Caricom and member States on matters of national security that she is not even in control of in her country. The Prime Minister should, in fact, call them in and have a mini-summit on national security. I can assure you this time it would not be a summit of distraction, but it would be a summit of attraction, because everybody in the Caribbean wants to know what she has to say about Caricom. But faceless and rudderless as this Government is, the ethical thing is that this Prime Minister should step down from that portfolio which she holds in Caricom and deal with the issue within this country. [*Desk thumping*]

We are also dealing with the matter of crime hemispherical—you are going to learn something. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: For the last 10 or 15 minutes you have been on a journey into the region. I do not like to intervene, but we are dealing with an Anti-Gang Bill. You have gone all over the Caribbean. I am just asking you to link your contribution to the clauses in the Bill, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the question of gangs—in fact, the word “gang” does not appear in the label of the Bill. It is called the Anti-Gang Bill, and it is referred to as that, but it is about the suppression of groups and associations. That is what it is. In fact, the Attorney General, in his presentation, did speak extensively about the whole question of crime, and the whole issue of crime was addressed. I have read the *Hansard* and all the contributions on matters of training and so forth. So we have gone very wide on this Bill.

As I was saying, we were dealing with the business of crime, including the question of associations, et cetera. Even hemispherical, at the 5th Summit of the Americas, we dealt with it. We dealt with our willingness to cooperate in the hemisphere as well. There was negotiation. The document which came out of that meeting was the Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain and it spoke to the business of strengthening public security; it spoke to the whole cooperative approach—the multidimensional approach by the region; and there was also an acknowledgement of the negative impact of criminal gangs in that document. I am making the connection that within that document there was an acknowledgement of the negative impact of criminal gangs with the OAS being encouraged, at that time, to prepare a comprehensive strategy to deal with the whole problem.

So, we had a plan locally; we had a plan regionally; and we had a plan within the hemisphere with our neighbours as well. We can see from the manifesto of those on the other side that they had very little plans for the whole question of security and gang violence.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, a serious problem with gang activity is the whole question of the infiltration of guns and drugs through our very porous borders and, therefore, I put it to you that border controls remain an issue. The control of our borders is a serious part of dealing with gangs and curtailing gang activity. If they had no tools of trade—no arms and ammunition and no drugs at all—drugs were not allowed to enter into our borders—we would not have this problem. This Government is not interested in controlling our borders, and we continue to have other problems. Even the question of the security of our critical infrastructure and so forth around Trinidad and Tobago; and the whole question of the protection of fishermen are serious effects of not dealing properly with our borders and not fortifying and strengthening our protection around Trinidad and Tobago.

More than likely, we are going to have other problems coming up with the whole question of the recent signature by Russia and Venezuela to effect a

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nuclear power plant in Venezuela. All the questions of nuclear waste and so on would need some sort of address with regard to the borders.

Before I close, I know this matter has been addressed by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant as well but, principally, the legislation is extremely important and we will support it; it is our Bill. I want us to look, in particular, at the age group of the offender. The fact that most of the offenders are young—they are young adults with a full life ahead—I am saying that the legislation, whilst it is necessary, it must not curtail life. It must allow for life; it must give a chance for life, bearing in mind the chief offenders, given their ages, there are other things we can do to help these offenders. In its present form it is harsh. Whilst it is well-intended, to my mind, it is unconscionable in that the penalties are very onerous and high; generally it is atrocious. We really should not implement it as it is, the result of which our jails will be overflowing and, of course, as I said before, we would be snuffing people's lives out in the prime of their lives. I do not think that everyone who is going to be caught under this legislation, if it is implemented as it is, would be truly justified.

In reading the Bill, I found it to be so atrocious in many cases. My heart really goes out to all of these parents of these gang members, particularly the mothers, regardless of where they are from. These children were brought into the world and these mothers nurtured them; spend their last dollars on them and did everything for them. I know things go wrong with our children. I would admit it. We are all parents.

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. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I just want to emphasize the human side. I want the Government to look at the human side of the effect of some of the penalties proposed to be imposed by this legislation. I get the impression that they were targeting and sending a message that this whole question of gang-related activity is attributable to particular areas of society and so on, and that is not so. I do not think it escapes all races, creeds and geographic locations and so forth.

In fact, if you go to the prestige schools and the supposed middle and upper class areas and you ask their parents, there are drugs and violence in those areas. In fact, some of them have been imported into the whole gang system as well. So

no one has escaped. We want to be very careful how we treat with the legislation. We can deal with them, but deal with them as human beings as having some worth. I am not talking about defending their actions, but I want to defend the human side of these persons who are involved in gang-related activities. I am just saying that there must be equity, fairness and there must be justice when we are dealing with these perpetrators of crime and so on.

In closing, I am extremely disappointed at how this Government has grappled with crime since it has come into office. I think they have been floundering on it, and failing on the whole question of crime.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, is it nine months? Six months have gone and they seem to be all fagged out.

Mr. McLeod: You always take a six for a nine! [*Laughter*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: They seem clueless and without focus when it comes to matters of crime. They are very, very foggy, to say the least and have been filibustering on the real issues. [*Interruption*] I will not eat those words. Your Government is a farce and you are very fragmented. [*Desk thumping*] You are a fashionable Government and I am not sure if all of you would qualify under the notion of fashion. What you have been doing is fooling the people in dealing with matters of the economy and in dealing with the matter of crime.

Mr. Speaker, if I were to assign a grade to this Government's performance in the last six months, it would be a capital "F", a big fat "F". That is what it is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

"The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Anil Roberts): Mr. Speaker, it amazes me, as I stand here and listen to the Member for Point Fortin with a straight face, with a stoic stance and a new hair style from "foreign", stand there and tell this Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the former regime of the PNM was effectually dealing with crime. [*Laughter*] She said it; the Member for Point Fortin said it. I cannot believe that she said it. She did not even laugh or smile; she said it seriously, that the former government was effectively dealing with crime, as murders skyrocketed from 2002, 160 up to a world record. The former Minister, Martin Joseph, was breaking a world record every year; topping off at 594 murders in 2008, but she is effectively doing it. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Where did you get those figures from?

Hon. A. Roberts: Check the figures; you come here.

Then the Member for Point Fortin said that while they were in power car thefts were going down. Well, I am sure that there are many citizens watching Parliament Channel 11, who saw her in an uninterrupted broadcast, and they are saying, “What on earth could the Member for Point Fortin be talking about?” Because just last year, year before, 2000 cars have been stolen and are still unrecovered. People were afraid to go to the malls or park their cars. People were going to buy bread to make “breakfasses” [*Laughter*] and the next thing they turned around and their car was gone. And the Member for Point Fortin stood here with a straight face and said that car thefts were going down. [*Laughter*]

She said that Vision 2020 penned in 2000 had an 11-point plan to impact crime. Unfortunately, it is the first time in nine years that I have, at least, seen a Member of the former government actually read from the Vision 2020 document, because it appeared while that was the PNM’s vision statement, none of them had read it. They had five pillars of which number one was creating an innovative people. We moved from thirty-second to second to last in that category. [*Laughter*]

They said Pillar No. 3 was respecting the environment and sustainable development and the Member for San Fernando East said, “Yuh want smelter, yuh doh want one, we go give yuh three.” [*Laughter*] So I am, at least, happy to know that the Member for Point Fortin has the Vision 2020 document. I would advise that she makes photocopies and pass them out to the Members beside her and in the General Council of the PNM, for they forgot that it existed, an 11-point plan.

She said that the PNM government had protected our coastline with a 360-degree radar, but failed to say that it never covered 360 degrees for one day, because in Toco pigeons were using it as a perch to relax and it was not functioning. There were gaps throughout, but they did not say that. “How yuh go do dat? Yuh cyar do dat.” [*Desk thumping*]

Then the Member went on and she said that her government, the PNM government, had done all the research and understood in 2007 that gang-related murders were 40 per cent; yet we are here in 2010 and it takes the People's Partnership Government, under the hon. Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, to bring this Anti-Gang Bill to Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

So you cannot plead ignorance. You could have gotten up there and said, “We were not aware. We did not know that gang violence was so critical.” You could have said that, but you said that you knew, therefore it was tantamount to a dereliction of duty to have known what the problem was and yet do nothing. To borrow the phrase from the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, “Things go awry when good people do nothing”; and one thing the PNM has is a lot of good people who are expert at doing nothing. [*Laughter*]

The very PNM government said that they wanted to promote youth initiatives and respect. Yet, in an attempt—and a successful one at that in November 2007—to win an election, they brought down Sizzla Kalonji, a man who sings the most vile lyrics against homosexuals, a man who sings about violence and who just before that PNM youth rally in the savannah was charged with gun possession of over 45 of all sorts of automatic weapons. [*Crosstalk*] The PNM brought Sizzla Kalonji to sing to the youths, to say “Great, we stepping up with San Fernando East.”

Dr. Khan: The Member for Diego Martin Central was there? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Yes, the Member for Diego Martin Central was there. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, point of order. The Member is misleading the House.

Hon. A. Roberts: I did not say you were present at the concert. You were there in the People's National Movement. Let me clarify now. You were in the PNM and you were involved in that election, the last one that you won. It may be a fleeting memory now, but you won.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(7); the Member continues to refer to other Members in an improper manner. I am bringing this Standing Order to your attention. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I am glad you have raised that. Listen, we refer to Members of this honourable House either by the constituency they represent or the office they hold. This “she” and “he” does not exist here. You have either “the Member for Caroni East” or “the Member for Arima”, “the Member for La Brea” or “the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development”.

I have seen that as a pattern emerging. I would like Members to desist and to refer to Members either by the constituency they represent or the title of the office they hold. I would like Members to be guided accordingly.

Hon. A. Roberts: Member for Diego Martin Central—as I did refer to him as that, I do not know “what he stood up for”. Hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, I am sorry, but I do not believe that Sizzla Kalonji was singing “Itty Bitty Piggy” in 2007 when the PNM was trying to win votes.

But moving right along, I have seen and heard a disturbing theme from colleagues on that side. The Member for Point Fortin just exacerbated the situation by stating that we on this side, as the Government, should mollycoddle criminals, people who are holding our citizens to ransom in the most vile, dastardly acts of lack of love and care, of pure torture, of wickedness and evil; that this Government should somehow hug them up, after they murder our citizens and our children and say, “Come here little baby murderer, we love you.” This Government will not do that. [*Desk thumping*] We are under siege and we will protect our people with all the resources that we have, including fixing that never functioning 360-degree radar, that the Member for San Fernando East so often boasts about. [*Interruption*]

Absolutely not, Sir, with all due respect; not today. This is serious business here today.

Mr. Imbert: I gave way to you three times.

Hon. A. Roberts: Well that is good; you did not give way to the Opposition for 10 years, “yuh” want to give way now? You relax. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I now move on, because I am going to deal with this Anti-Gang Bill that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is debating in this Parliament today. Unfortunately, my constituency of D'Abadie/O'Meara was thrust into the scourge of violence, murder and mayhem, when, in the wee hours of yesterday morning, a 70-year-old retiree was held, kidnapped, kept for hours and tortured along with his wife and grandson. Then he was brutally shot and murdered, at 70 years old, in Malabar, by two young, heartless individuals.

The newspaper reports are saying that there is no connection, but at 10.30 the previous evening two gentlemen, one armed with a gun, one armed with a knife, reigned terror on a family in Reid Lane. Beaula Mayo and Elon Mayo are now fighting for their lives in the hospital. While our citizens are suffering, we have people opposite who are claiming that this legislation to deal with murderers, rapists and vagabonds is draconian and too harsh and they are feeling sorry for them?

I ask you on the other side, please feel sorry for Mr. Elvon Roberts who is now lying dead in the mortuary with six bullets; feel sorry for him and his wife. Feel sorry for Beaula Mayo and Elon Mayo and all the people who are being

savaged by criminals and gang members. Feel sorry for them first, because, one, they are but victims, two, they are larger in number. The PNM government had statistics. We would hear Martin Joseph, the former Minister, stating, “There are 500 gangs and 500 members”; then it went up and there was an increase in the decrease and all these things, so I beg to differ with those opposite, draconian.

What can be more draconian than holding a little girl who was liming with her boyfriend as they were about to enter Zen, after liming and hanging out with their parents at Caura, and taking her up Chancellor and gang-raping her? What sympathy can you have for miscreants like that? This Government is serious about crime and not playing little games to mollicoddle criminals. I urge the Members Opposite to come on board and help this Government fight to save our citizens. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, what is the purpose of the Anti-Gang Bill? I could not gather anything from what the Member for Point Fortin said. But earlier, while she was absent, the debate was at a higher level, especially by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, with whom I was quite impressed with. When he relaxes his hands and allows others to use the elevator, he actually makes some sense. He was speaking very well. The purpose of this Bill is to have an immediate impact on a debilitating problem.

This legislation does not exist in a vacuum, because we heard from the Members for Diego Martin North/East and Laventille East/Morvant that they would like to see some softer, easier punishments going up on a step basis.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is to deal with miscreants who have lost their way completely, who are heartless, wicked and murderous. We have other initiatives and interventions to deal with students who are losing their way from truancy. Moving on, for the minor criminals and for the petty thief, we have those things in place. We have education reform from the hon. Minister of Education that is coming on now. We are going to actually build the Early Childhood Centres that the former regime promised they would build; 600. They gave a foreign company called Haji because—and I quote:

“The former Minister of Education said the Haji bid”—

Mr. Imbert: Would you give way? I thank the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, for giving way. The problem with the legislation as it is presently drafted is that it makes membership in the gang a crime. Now, a person may be a member of a gang but may have not committed a crime, so a person may

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steal a motor car, for example, and the penalty for that is a maximum of 10 years, but a person may be in a gang and not involved in any crime and the maximum penalty is 20 years, so there is a disconnect. That is the point we are making.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Member, there is no disconnect, it is very connected, in that, what we are saying strongly is one, the judge and the judicial sector will have the ability to interpret each case on its merit and give a sentence up to a maximum of 20 years. You do not have to get the maximum. The maximum is there for the maximum miscreant and wicked people. If a case occurs as what you are saying, I am sure the learned judge or magistrate would use his or her intuition and experience to deal with the matter.

Furthermore, what we are saying with this legislation to our young people is stay out of gangs. You do not want to go to jail, you do not want to get lock up, stay away from gangs! That is what we are saying. The statistics that your Government so eloquently read out by the Member for Point Fortin showed that you knew. You knew that gang proliferation was increasing. We were beginning to become victims because of gangs and you did nothing. We are saying we are doing something, not halfway but full throttle, we are not accepting it.

So to our young people now, if you do not want to get in trouble and you do not want to spend time in an institution stay away from gangs, join a football team, join a pan side, go and do some art, go and do some culture; do something positive. [*Desk thumping*] The time has come for action, decisive action.

We have also—under the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of the People and Social Development, the Ministry of Community Development, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs—programmes to attract and catch those who may not be hardened criminals. If these fail, if all of these interventions fail, this is where the Anti-Gang Bill steps in. So there is no need for step up. We have those steps. If those steps do not work then deal with the Anti-Gang Bill, deal with the police officers, deal with the court, deal with jail, because jail eh nice and right now we the citizens are running scared. We must take back our country and let the gang members know, let the murderers know, let the bullies know, that they must now be afraid.

Mr. Speaker, part of the reason why gangs flourish is because there is a bully mentality. Any coward could hold a gun and squeeze the trigger. It takes a strong individual to stand up “mano a mano” and fight. You know, Mr. Speaker, longtime used to have fights. There was always gang interaction in this country. You would know about Despers—and way back in the ‘60s, the pan riots and so on, but it was bottle and stone, there might have been hard cuffs and so on. These

days because our citizens are unarmed because the law states that we do not have the ability to bear arms as exists in the USA. It is not that we do not have that right and therefore the criminals know this, so if they are willing to illegally get a firearm, they are all of a sudden God—like. They can take life at the pull of a trigger. It does not take a brave person to do that, it takes a dastardly coward and this Anti-Gang Bill is here to deal with them in a serious manner, because our citizens cannot arm themselves to protect themselves, so this Government must arm them with strong legislation to protect the people of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, there is another aspect of this gang violence that is pervading and encouraging the proliferation of gangs, and unfortunately, Sir, it has to do with young ladies. The Member for Diego Martin North/East was correct in his analysis. He did a lot of research and he was actually quite brilliant, which is rare and I think we should record that on *Hansard* again because I may never say it again in this august House. The Member for Diego Martin North/East was quite brilliant, he researched different jurisdictions: Canada, Australia, California, and he understood and analyzed the concept of gangs with bikers, Hells Angels and so on, as opposed to Trinidad and Tobago where we do not have that sort of politically designed or system where a particular style of belief brings people together.

What we have, and I quote, and I must agree with the Member for Diego Martin North/East when he said, “Gang culture in this country is driven by poverty”. A telling admission by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who sat in the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for nine years, \$300 billion, and is admitting that while we had the largest, while we were flooded with money that, that Government did nothing to alleviate poverty and that poverty is what is fueling the proliferation of gangs.

It is the first time that I have heard a Member from that side admit that they have squandered the nation’s Treasury. They have squandered the money. People did not get the trickle-down effect of the resources of natural gas and oil and that only a few of them who may aptly be described as a gang; the Calder Harts, the Uthara Raos, the Devant Ramlals, the Ken Juliens, the Arthur Lok Jacks and the like who was wasting money, every project over budget, every project over time. These gentlemen utilized the Treasury in their way, but the money never trickled down, and therefore, in a land of milk and honey, to borrow a phrase from the Member for San Fernando East, our people and our children were left poverty ridden and the Member for Diego Martin North/East has admitted that, and it is true.

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Mr. Imbert: I admitted to what?

Hon. A. Roberts: You should have paid attention. Pay attention.

Mr. Imbert: What is it I admitted to?

Hon. A. Roberts: You were talking too much. Mr. Speaker, let me get back to the point now of young ladies, because, fortunately or unfortunately ladies are very important, special things and every young man—

Hon. Member: How do you know that?

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, 98 per cent of young men would really love to find a lovely young lady to take care of her, allow her—[*Interruption*] I am not getting involved with your—this is not the debate on the gender policy. I am debating the Anti-Gang Bill. [*Interruption*]

Yes, as we say, even the gentlemen in the House—every young man wants to find a high quality, gorgeous young lady to take care of her, to wine and dine her. Is that not so Member for Diego Martin Central?

Dr. Browne: No.

Hon. A. Roberts: You agree?

Dr. Browne: Is that the reason you had the Nicki Minaj concert recently? [*Laughter*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Oh, yes, you were obviously sort of taken up—

Dr. Browne: I understand that you went to New York and met the young lady, so I am just curious if that was part of the arrangement. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Oh please! At least I went to meet a young lady—but anyway moving right along, do not try to sidetrack me. You cannot sidetrack me. What I went to New York to do is I went to a confectionary store and bought lollipop.

Mr. Speaker, so when you have as the Member for Diego Martin North/East described, and let me quote as it was a reproduced verbatim by Anna Ramdass in the *Express*, and the Member for Diego Martin North/East, very correct, very precisely said:

“If you look at the typical gang member in Trinidad and Tobago, it is a high school dropout”—correct—“the person may have dropped out even before they got to high school”—correct—“they are social outcasts, they are

illiterate, they are unskilled and unable to find employment because they have no skill and they fall easy prey to the recruitment exercises of the gangs”—absolutely correct.

The problem is that under the nine years of the People’s National Movement the number of gangs increased, the number of gang member increased, and even though they had \$300 billion, it means from the Member for Diego Martin North/East that illiteracy rates went up under the PNM, poverty went up under the PNM, unskilled people went up under the PNM. It is total admission and I agree that government failed, even presented with a strong economy and I agree with the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Now, let us get back to the young ladies, because Hasely Crawford told me a story about five years ago and it really worried him. He was coaching and there was a young lady who was showing some talent, showing some potential and then all of a sudden he could not see her, she did not come to practise anymore. She was not in the gym. A few months later he was on Maracas Beach and saw the young lady and she was in the company of a young man. Mr. Crawford in his normal friendly style said, “girl what going on? Why are you not at practice? You have potential; you could possibly get a scholarship to university and so on”. She said, “Sir, I found my hero” and she pointed at the gentleman next to her, so Hasely Crawford looked at the young man, turned and asked the young lady. He said, “that is your hero”? She said, “yes”. He said, “but I do not know him. He doh look like a national footballer, he is not an open scholarship winner. How this gentleman is your hero”? She turned to Hasely Crawford and said, “he geh shoot six times and he still living”.

Now if that is not a telltale sign of some of the problems that we have to address. So understand this, the problem is wide ranging, so now young ladies are looking for this sort of structure, strength and power from the gang which is fuelling it. Our illiterate, unskilled young people that the Minister of Education, the Minister of Social Development, the Minister of Community Development and the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, we all have to deal with, but what is happening, they have to look for their self esteem. So you are correct, they find that self esteem in the comfort and the love of gangs and this is where we are saying, that we here on this side must not only deal with the social issues, but must also let and send a strong message, that joining a gang is not on. That being involved in illegal activity is not on, that if you get involved with that the heaviest hand which is the weight of the law will fall on you like a tonne of bricks.

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So I beg those on the other side, please revisit your contributions about draconian, and stop trying to mollycoddle criminals. Criminals are criminal are criminals! If they reach into the state with the Minister of National Security now and they are in jail, yes, we will enhance the reformation process, the education abilities, capabilities and programmes in the institutions, so hopefully, unlike what we are seeing, we are seeing now that a young Chuck Attin—anyway I cannot talk about that it is sub judice, so I would not talk about that.

We are seeing that some people come out successfully. We have not done that. We need to institute those programmes. We must commend Vision on Mission and so on for attempting to introduce this. This is why this Government, regardless of political affiliation, has supported to the tune of \$1.3 million—Vision on Mission—because they are doing a great task. [*Desk thumping*] They are reforming and helping. They are getting up there and getting the job done and that is what this Bill is about.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the problem of self-esteem is a serious one, because while some people may laugh, as described by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, these young men have nothing really to look up to or to feel proud about; and if they, like any other man in the society, whether they have five O Levels, 10 O Levels, a law degree or a Masters degree, would like to gain a life-long companion, and so on, they have to do it in some way. Some of them with low self-esteem may be suffering from “Itty Bitty Piggy” and take a big gun and hold it up and feel that by holding that gun and pointing it at somebody else, that they are now superior, they are a man, that they are mature, and we have to say, “No more. We are not taking that”, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we get into the Bill and as we start an Act to make provision for the suppression of associations established for unlawful purposes and for the better preservation of public safety and order and for other related matters, I now go to our Constitution. Mr. Speaker, our Constitution is clear when in Part I of “Rights Enshrined”, 4(a) states categorically, the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof, except by due process of law.

That is the number one right enshrined in our Constitution, and then the list goes down in order of priority, and yet, the Members Opposite would like to choose and harp on Part I, section 4(j), that the rights and freedoms, namely, freedom of association and assembly—the Member for Laventille East/Morvant

said that in this draconian legislation, we are going to eliminate the right of freedom of association and assembly. That right was intended for positive means of association. Not to associate, as the Bill states, for criminal activities.

The number one right is the right of the citizens to life and security, so their argument is moot. When we are trying to ensure that our citizens' number one right to safety, security and protection is being impacted by other citizens' desire to associate in an illegal manner, this is why we must bring this Anti-Gang Bill, Mr. Speaker. So please, on the other side, do not mollycoddle criminals. Do not do it.

As we move on, Mr. Speaker, section 5(1) of the Constitution states:

“...no law may abrogate, abridge or infringe or authorize the abrogation, abridgment or infringement of any of the rights and freedoms hereinbefore recognized and declared”

And then 5(2)(b) says:

“(b) impose or authorise the imposition of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment;”

The Opposition is trying to suggest to the nation that some of the measures involved in this Anti-Gang Bill are cruel and unusual. Mr. Speaker, once again, the punishment must fit the crime. If you are eliminating the rights of citizens to their number one right of life and safety, then the punishment must fit that crime. So you cannot go down to a lower right and then say that the legislation that we are bringing is no good, so throw it away. It does not make sense.

Mr. Speaker, moving right along, in the Explanatory Note of the Anti-Gang Bill, 2010, it states:

“This bill seeks to make provision for the suppression of associations created for unlawful or criminal purposes...”

For unlawful or criminal purposes; yet, over on the other side, our colleagues continuously say, “Do not do that. How you want to charge them? They might just be liming.” If they are liming, they are not involved in unlawful or criminal activity. It is when they get together, get a gun, run up in somebody's house, hold up somebody's wife, tie up the children and shoot everybody, that is when this Anti-Gang Bill comes into play. So stop mollycoddling criminals.

It continues: “The Bill seeks to make it a serious offence...”. English language is very clear. It is a serious offence, therefore, there must be serious

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punishment. It is not just an offence. It is not just a mistake. It is a serious offence. It continues, "...would be inconsistent with 4 and 5..."; we dealt with that, Mr. Speaker, in the Constitution.

Going into the clauses now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say first and foremost that I am imploring the other side, not only to support this Bill, but to change the tone of the argument, to change the tenor, because if we go to a Joint Select Committee, please, Opposition, do not try to water it down. Do not try to make it softer, because a bullet does not soften. A bullet is a hard thing.

Ask Mr. Elborne Roberts. Oh, you cannot ask him because he is dead. He was murdered by two gang members in the wee hours of yesterday morning. The Member for Arima understands. You cannot ask him. We cannot ask him if he feels sorry for them; if he wants to carry them to bake cake. We cannot ask him, because he is going under. He is done. At 70 years old, after he worked his entire life to build this country, when he should be relaxing, collecting his \$3,000 pension and rocking back, he had to go through an ordeal for a few hours and then his lights were turned out by gang members whom we are coming to deal with.

You on that side, please, I beseech you, come off that softness. You did it for nine years and we are in the position that we are in now. Now we are ready to deal with the situation, we have—let me tell you this, while I am beseeching you on the other side, the colleagues on the other side, let me just categorically state that we do not need to. We do not have to, because this Bill requires a three-fifths majority. We do not have to. The last time I checked—

Hon. Members: Well go ahead!

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, no problem. We do not have to. You see that attitude? You do not have to get on like that. That is what I am saying, Member for Port of Spain South, this is why I am beseeching you; I am begging you.

Mr. Speaker: All right, okay.

Hon. A. Roberts: What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that this Government does not have to ask and discuss because we have 29 out of 41, which is 70.37 per cent. But we do not use that. We are not arrogant. We share the elevator with our public servants. We do not park up an elevator on top and say, "Only I will use it." We do not do that. We cannot do that. How will we do that? Who does that? Everybody knows. Just ask the Ministry of Works and Transport.

We are moving on. Mr. Speaker, imagine that there was a document floating around the country purporting to be a draft Constitution which would have led to

the development and creation of an executive president. There were many committees that were involved in constitutional reform and consultation, but none of the constitutional experts in this country would state claim to the document that was being discussed in consultations, under Dr. Hamid Ghany as Chair.

Then it was stated that it was a Sir Ellis Clarke version; and as I call his name, once again, Mr. Speaker, I join with you that he recovers fully. Then former President, Sir. Ellis Clarke, said, "I do not know about that version." Then the former Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East said, "Well, it was his version originally," but it made eleven changes and it came out to an executive president document for discussion.

Mr. Speaker, what was thought? People were thinking why would the former Prime Minister, with two and a half years in Government, call an election? Mr. Speaker, that power and that desire for more made him make a fatal mistake. I thank the Member for San Fernando East for calling the election. But why did he call it? Because he would have liked to have the majority that we have in order to pass a piece of draconian constitutional reform, and nobody knew who wrote it, nobody wanted it, and it gave him the power to do everything and anything under the sun.

We would not abuse the power that the Member for San Fernando East once sought. We have it, but we will not abuse it. That is why I am asking for the Members opposite to stop trying to soften this legislation, because people are dying. People are crying. Please, as we move on, Mr. Speaker.

Clause 4 defines "child" to mean a person under 18 years of age. Now, we may understand that children who are not loved, who never knew love, may go the wrong way. We understand that. That is why we have to improve the family structure, the community structure, the early childhood centres, the primary schools, the counsellors to go along with the primary schools, the sporting activities and the youth options.

We have to do that, because, Mr. Speaker, during the 2007 election campaign, I was walking in Sea Lots at approximately 10.00 a.m. and I came up to where there was an early childhood centre. I would not have put it right there because it is right where the Korean shippers take their fish. The stench is really—I would not want my little children to be breathing that all the time, seriously, but I guess those on the other side saw wisdom in putting little babies to try to learn and have fun next to rotting fish guts.

I could not understand it, but I went there, and at 10.00 a.m. I saw some little youth men playing football, so I went up and sat in the little stands there and saw them on the court taking a sweat. There were about six of them, three a side; some

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very skilful young men, average age, between eight and 11. In between, two of them, one eight and the other ten, I believe, came up to me and said, “Sir, what somebody like you doing in Sea Lots?” I said, “Son”—no, in fact, let me tell the story exactly correct.

They said, “Good morning, Sir.” Very polite and well mannered. “Could we speak to you?” I said “Of course, gentlemen. Have a seat.” Then they looked at me, Mr. Speaker, and said, “Sir, what somebody like you doing in Sea Lots?” So I looked at them with a quizzed look and said, “What do you mean, son?” He said, “You on TV and radio, and what a celebrity doing here?” Well, I then had to sit with them and explain that all of us, Sir, are the same. All of us have the same opportunities under our Constitution to achieve and to move on.

So we had that discussion, but what was worrying is that at the same time, my children were eight and nine, and their only philosophy on life was if you want something, make sure you do something to make daddy proud and you will get it. Yet, here it is, children of the same age had formulated an entire philosophy and concept on life that they were somehow different; they were somehow beneath others; that they were somehow not the same. They were not equal.

How is it possible, Mr. Speaker, for an 8-year-old to develop a philosophy on life? You know how it is possible? That from the time of conception, while we play music, calypso, jazz, pan, opera; read poetry and read books to our children when they are in the womb, what these young embryos are hearing is negativity all around, negativity before birth, negativity during birth, negativity after birth; and, therefore, they come to the perception and philosophy that they are different. We have to deal with that situation in a serious manner. We have to get more positivity into our areas that are at risk where gangs now are there providing our children with the sort of camaraderie and love that is not there.

Member for Diego Martin North/East, with all due respect, \$300 billion and your Government did not attack that problem in a meaningful way. We did not get in and solve the problem. We sat there hosting summits for \$2.8 billion, building waterfronts for \$4.2 billion over the next 17 years. We built the Hyatt to “buss” Hilton, then spent \$600 million to “build back” the Hilton that has no customers now. We spent \$1.8 billion in eTecK and I cannot even see where that money went.

We spent \$1.8 billion on a cricket stadium in “sapotay mud”, yet we did not deal with the issue, and now that we are presented with a problem and we have to deal with the worst of the worst. This Bill is not just for young people who do not

have skills. We have programmes and we have development to capture them and encourage them to move in a positive way. This Bill is to deal with those who, at this point in time, seem beyond redemption, who need to be caught to save other people, and then hopefully, introduce programmes to see if we can return them to some form or semblance of normalcy, of caring and of love. So this Bill is a serious Bill and we beseech you on that side to join with us as we take serious measures.

4.15 p.m.

Now, it is also an indictment on the Member for Diego Martin North/East. I am glad that you have taken that tone in this debate.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You are not only a scholar, but a gentleman. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I have been told, and we must understand something, and I will say it from now, because it is the truth. I was born a member of the People's National Movement. I believe I understand, and I know a bit more of the history of the People's National Movement than some of those on that side. However, because of that institutional knowledge gained from years of discussions with my parents who were both staunch PNM, my mother who passed away as a PNM—she did not even vote in 2007 for the Congress of the People—she did not, but she withheld her support, because she realized that the party that had built and done a lot for this country had lost its way under the leader, the Member for San Fernando East. And one of the critical elements where they lost hold was in our educational system. While it was started and founded, it was good and it increased the numbers of us who could go and get educated, there was no further development. Our schools, under their watch, started becoming hives of iniquity; dens of “badjohnism”, teachers were under siege, underpaid, and this was going on while Calder Hart was on ten boards; while he was in charge of \$30 billion a year, but while we were not building schools, not educating, not increasing the number of teachers so we could decrease the ratio. Imagine in this country of Trinidad and Tobago, a teacher has to teach 40 students. How could that be possible? What is that teacher going to do? You have five who are serious; you

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have 15 who could be serious; you have 12 who do not even come to school and do not care, and just come to “mash up de place”. Yet we put our teachers under that. That is what the People’s National Movement education plan is. And this is the reason why we are here today. So do not come here, after creating a terrible problem, leaving our children to the wolves and allowing them to get so heartless, that they could squeeze a trigger and walk down the road. Imagine that.

Many police officers and soldiers who are trained could tell you of the emotional impact they have; how they feel when they are forced to use their weapon, that it affects them. One of our Local Government—WPC St. Louis was in the market, and dealt well with the some criminals. She was forced to use her weapon and she has had to undergo psychological counselling because being a mother, being someone who had been loved from before, she felt pain, even though she was acting correctly in her duty. It hurt her that she had to use her gun. Yet we have young gang members who will shoot you on Brian Lara Promenade at 11.20 a.m. in the hot, blazing sun and walk down the road without a mask, and go and “sit dong” and laugh and play cards and “wapie an’ ting.” We have gone wrong and we did not get here just by chance, or just yesterday. It is nine long, torturous years of PNM neglect under the former Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East. So do not come now to tell us that we are being harsh. It is not being harsh.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at gang—because the Member for Diego Martin North/East wanted a tighter definition, but then there was a contradiction in what he was saying. You see in Australia the “Bikers” and in LA the “Hells Angels” and in Canada and so on, they were well-defined groups—and I take that point. He went on to say that we in Trinidad and Tobago do not have well-defined groups. Correct. So, therefore, we cannot tighten that definition; we cannot, because there is no pattern. There is no real unifying force that brings groups together other than, maybe, some borderline. But when we say gang, it means—

“...any alliance, combination, enterprise or other similar conjoining of two or more persons whether formally or informally organized that, through its membership or through the agency of any member, engages in any gang-related activity.”

And what is gang-related activity? It is defined as criminal action. So to make the point that somebody—a boy—might say, “I in a gang,” to look good, he is not involved in criminal activity. So to use that to say, suffer that legislation, is a bit disingenuous. It is specific.

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way. I am glad you are reading out the definitions. The fact is that whereas a gang is defined very broadly as an organization whose purpose is to commit crime, the crime that is being created is membership of that organization.

Now, one can be a member of an organization, whether you are coerced into it, intimidated, forced to join a gang or whatever, or you do it because it is glamorous, whatever reason, but that does not mean that you are involved in criminal activity. And that is the distinction that has to be made. Anybody who is in a criminal gang committing crime should be locked up for a long time. But someone who is forced to enter a gang because of their unfortunate “circumstances, and commits no crime, they are facing this 20-year penalty.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Member for Diego Martin North/East. But what I am saying is, as a legal luminary you should understand that this is the beginning part of the jurisprudence and the judicial process. So the charge may be very well laid and then the defendant will have the opportunity—with a lawyer like yourself, if he could afford you, or if you do pro bono work—to then make the case before the magistrate or the judge that those situations presented.

Mr. Imbert: As a quasi-lawyer yourself, Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara—and I thank you for giving way—there is the whole concept of strict liability, where that is it; you have committed the offence; or whether you can prove, you have a defence against the crime. And this, to me, is too much on the borderline of strict liability.

Hon. A. Roberts: Okay. It might be on the borderline of strict liability, but we are moving very strictly, and furthermore you can present a defence. As a learned attorney you would know that that is the point. But if you are caught—you have to get the messages in order. The first one is to our young people: stay away from gangs. When you see gangs, run the other way. That is the first thing. [*Desk thumping*]

Secondly, if you are coerced, or forced, or encouraged, or enticed to go into a gang, and you are caught before getting involved in criminal activity, your defence will be such—and the judicial process will take place and you do not—

Miss Cox: Some of them are threatened. Their lives are threatened.

Hon. A. Roberts: Their lives are threatened; correct. And, Member for Laventille East/Morvant, if their lives are threatened—and follow me in this “now—then this Bill will save their lives, because if they are threatened to get

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into a gang and they are caught by our good law enforcement—and we also know that we have some bad eggs, and we will deal with that—but our good law enforcement officers, and it comes out that they are threatened, we could then put them into a safer place, into the reform programmes, into developing them—

Miss Cox: Once those programmes are in place, that is no problem.

Hon. A. Roberts: Yes. Some are there that you all had some, but we will develop more.

So as we are saying, this Bill will actually save and protect those who are forced to join the gang; who are forced to get involved, because they will come into the system and have the protection of the government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, I was listening to Power 102.1 FM, as you know, possibly the number one radio station in Trinidad and Tobago. I must say I am biased.

Mr. Sharma: It is a commercial.

Hon. A. Roberts: It is a commercial. And seeing that Parliament channel is now the number one watched station in the nation, I would say that I was listening to Power 102.1 FM and I was listening to Miss Sherma Wilson, and she was making the point, firstly, that why come with this one Bill to lock up little black boys and so on. Mr. Speaker, one, it is not one Bill, as the hon. Attorney General alluded to. It is the first one of a package of legislation that is on its way. And secondly, unfortunately—and I would like Miss Wilson to listen—when you define “gang-related”, in the latter half of the definition, you are dealing with a—

“...gang member including a gang leader, officer, or governing or policy-making person or authority, or by any agent, representative or deputy of any such officer, person, or authority of the gang...”

So if the position is as was being made on Power 102.1 FM, that are some “Mr. Bigs”—not the elusive “Mr. Big” that the Membr for San Fernando East knew where he was and we have not found him as yet, but if there are elusive “Mr. Bigs” who are utilizing our uneducated young people who are low in self-esteem, and fuelling them to conduct activities, they are caught under this Bill by the definition of gang-related activity, in that anyone who is running the show, so to speak, can be summarily charged.

So it is not about “little black boys”. It could be the man, if they are saying, as people say, the businessman who wants to make extra money, and recruits these boys to carry out his mission, he or she is caught under this Anti-Gang Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we go on now where the Member for Laventille East/Morvant wanted to include under “law enforcement authorities”, army and prisons officers, et cetera. But if she read a little bit more carefully, she would see that under the definition:

“‘law enforcement authorities’ include—

- (d) any other agency of the State in which investigative powers, similar to those exercisable by a police officer appointed under the Police Service Act, 2006, are lawfully vested;”

Miss Cox: It needed to be spelt out.

Hon. A. Roberts: Okay. Even that, we will spell it out. It is there. But I agree, we could tighten it up.

We then move on. And, you know, subclause (2) in the definitions states:

“For the purpose of this Act, it shall not be necessary to show that a particular gang possesses, acknowledges or is known by any common name, insignia, flag, means of recognition, secret signal or code, creed, belief, structure, leadership...”—et cetera.

This is the point that the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East was making, in that we do not have structured, defined gangs. Our scenario is different, and this Bill takes it totally into account by including, and making it wide, because we do not have, like the Crips that are defined by a red bandanna, or the Bloods, or the Nazi or the Red Necks or the Hispanic gangs with tattoos and markings. There may be some of that, but it is not well defined. So, therefore, we have to be looser in our definition, because the two young men who murdered Mr. Roberts last morning, they may not wear the same colour pants or jersey, but by this definition, they fall under the serious Anti-Gang—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is now 4.30 p.m. It is a good time for us to retire to have some light refreshments and hors d’oeuvres. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, by my calculation I believe I have 21 minutes and 20 seconds. By your calculation, what do you have, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: By my calculation you have 16 minutes.

Hon. A. Roberts: Sixteen minutes, Sir? Thank you very much. I will be guided. Your mathematics is clearly superior to mine, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, as he put on a different persona and was very impressive earlier in the debate, made the claim that this Anti-Gang Bill would be an end or at cross purposes with some of the existing jurisprudence, such as the aiding and abetting laws as conspiracy. I put it to the hon. Member that that is not true. This Anti-Gang legislation incorporates the principles and tenets of those crimes and puts it into a specific context in this criminal climate as we exist now and deals with it in a serious manner. So this Bill does not impact on the offences of aiding and abetting and conspiracy, because there may be other people in the society who commit these crimes who are not members of gangs. I just wanted to make that point.

Furthermore, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, when discussing clause 5, stated that some young men may want to boast that they are in a gang and they may be looking for pips; they may be looking to impress the girls; they may be just looking to boost their self-image, and therefore, it may be draconian to charge them and let them fall under this Bill. I say once again to our young people: It is not a means to build your self-esteem to join a gang; it is not an idle boast to join a gang.

A gang, by definition in this Bill, means a group, two or more people who get together to commit criminal acts and, therefore, to boast that you want to be in a criminal gang, suffice it to say, do not do so or else the weight of the law will come down on you. The whole message to our society, to our young people, is that we will not tolerate our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our brothers, being abused and bullied, battered, raped and murdered by anyone purporting to be a gang member, a group member, involved in illegal activity. That is why these measures are harsh; they are strong and we must send that message.

So once again I beseech the Opposition, please, change your argument. Do not attempt to water this down or to call it draconian or to go soft on crime. We have had nine years of being soft; it is time to get hard.

Also, clause 5(3) is a critical point, because to whom much is given much is expected, and when you are given the powers of arrest and investigative powers as a police officer, we must hold you up to a higher standard than the rest of us. Police officers go through training; they are people of discipline. However, there are certain and very few—and it must be made clear that out of the thousands of

police officers there are a few who would like to abuse their authority to promote, whether it is gangs or criminal activity, and they must be weeded out and they fall under this Anti-Gang Bill, where it states at clause 5(3):

“Where the person convicted under subsection (1) is a police officer, prison officer, a member of the Defence Force, a constable appointed under the Supplemental Police Act or the Special Reserve Police Act, a member of the protective service agency or a person involved in law enforcement he is liable to imprisonment for twenty-five years.”

Yes, because not only does an officer who is given the authority and responsibility to protect us, who is given powers above and beyond all of us a regular citizen— if he abuses that power, he must pay the price.

Furthermore, the few bad apples are giving our police force a bad name and this Government will not tolerate it. There are too many good officers out there who are doing their job; they are undermanned, understaffed; their technology is archaic. Even though the former government spent over \$32 billion on national security over nine years, our officers do not even have communications on their uniforms, so if they are chasing down a gang member; there are two members and they are chasing them down, and one officer is chasing one and the other one turns left onto Duke Street, he cannot press a button on his uniform to say, “Johnny, Constable Brown, man coming left across Duke Street wearing a blue jeans and a red jersey.”

Do you know what our officers have to do after \$30 billion? “When they running down the road dey ha tuh bawl, ‘hole him, hole him; somebody hole him’.” And they stand there and say that they fought crime effectively? Shame! Shame! It is a simple device that has been used in the US since the 1970s for officers to communicate, to know, to help and assist in the interception.

As we are on the point of technology, you must be aware that over the years— and the Minister in the Ministry of Social Development, the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, would help me out here—many gang leaders who were caught without the teeth of this legislation and were imprisoned or in remand yard, they would have cellphones and be conducting their business from the jail, from the gallows, from Golden Grove with cellphones. Can you imagine this? A young man who was helping out in Sea Lots three years ago, a community activist and so on, trying to get kids on the right track, was gunned down because an order came on a cellphone from inside of Golden Grove. Do you remember that, Mr. Speaker? Thirty billion dollars and the former PNM government could not buy cell blocking technology.

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Do you know what cell blocking technology is? It is a device you purchase and you put it in an area and you cannot use cell phones. So it would not matter how the cellphone came in; who squeeze it where; who pass it through where; if it come in carrot cake, rock cake or in sancoche; it would not matter because it would not be able to function. Yet that regime refused to buy a device like that which will stop the gang leaders from operating once our police officers have caught them. They allowed them to continue to operate with cellphones in the jail, but yet they come here and they present an argument to this House that this Government is trying to promote drug traffickers because we stop the OPVs, because we do this, because we do that. Let me use their ridiculous argument for a moment. Well, the failure by that regime to buy a simple cell blocking technology meant that they were encouraging gang leaders to continue to operate. That is the kind of ridiculous logic that they use on that side in this august House.

Moving right along. People say that gangs—and as the Member for St. Joseph would bear me out—are like a centipede. When you cut off the head or part of it, it grows back a piece. So how can the Members on the opposite side say that we must be soft on people whom our police work hard to intercept, get charge, convict and get them locked away; that we must stop and take a step approach?

Miss Cox: No, we did not say go soft.

Hon. A. Roberts: You did not say to be soft? Everything you said was soft and the Member for Diego Martin Central is coming after and you know it “go be soft”.

Anyway, “we going”. As we move along, sticking to the Bill, a person who harbours—the Member for Diego Martin North/East tried to make a point that a parent whose child may be unknowingly in a gang may come—and the parents under this Bill will be liable as having committed an offence by unknowingly, unwittingly, having their child in the house not knowing that he or she is in a gang. Well, clearly, the Member for Diego Martin North/East did not read clause 8. Clause 8 categorically states:

“A person who harbours...”

“Harbours”, Mr. Speaker, has a specific meaning. “Harbour” is a serious adjective. So to attempt to suggest that you are doing more than just your normal existence for a child coming home from school, harbouring connotes that you have knowledge of an illegal act and you are harbouring and protecting, knowingly, a criminal or a young person who has broken the law.

So for the Member for Diego Martin North/East to say that parents could be home and do not know their child in a gang and get “lock up” it is mischievous and I would like the population to understand that is not so. You have to know that your child is a member of a gang. You have to know that your child was involved in criminal activity. If you do not know and you could not know, then you are not in any problem under this legislation. So please do not try to frighten people by saying: “Oh, if they doh know what they child doing they could get lock up.” Absolutely not true.

Also in this Bill, the Member of Parliament for La Brea said in clause 9(2) that—where it states:

“...a person who within five hundred metres of a school or place of worship recruits to a gang a person whom he knows ...”

And so on. He said, “Well, why 500 metres? Because anywhere, anyhow you try to recruit a child or a young person into a gang, it should be illegal.” I like the Member for La Brea a lot, but he did not read the first part of clause 9, because clause 9(1)(a) discusses the fact that:

“A person who—

- (a) harbours or conceals a person whom he knows or suspects is a child and a gang member; or
- (b) recruits to a gang a person whom he knows or suspects is a child,”

So part (b) says anywhere in the country, any nook or cranny across Trinidad and Tobago, if you try to recruit a child you are guilty of an offence. It then went on in clause 9(2) to be more specific, because a lot of the recruitment of gangs occurs where young people gather, which means schools, churches, youth groups and institutions. So it goes on to emphasize that if you recruit in these areas you will be dealt with seriously. So I would like the Member for La Brea to read the whole Bill instead of pieces and just come and talk.

In clause 10—and this, I believe, is the most poignant, pertinent, strong part of this Bill that is going to impact positively on the fight against gang-related crimes. Clause 10(1) states:

“A police officer may arrest without warrant a person whom he has reasonable cause to believe to be a gang member or whom he has reasonable cause to believe has committed an offence under this Act.”

That is very powerful because a lot of what we are seeing is that our children have too much time on their hands, so they are loitering and liming around the block, which gives gang members an opportunity to meet them; try to cajole them,

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coerce them and get them to join the gang. A police officer, seeing this group, without warrant could deal with that situation.

Therefore, taking away or limiting the risk of recruitment, once we start to deal with recruitment, the gangs will eventually die off and that is where we are taking the fight.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin North/East made a good point. I repeat for the *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one more minute.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, “ooooo good”! Well, Mr. Speaker, a little injury time for Member for Diego Martin North/East. Oh “good”! In summing up, let me just say that there is a clear connection between corruption and gang proliferation. So when a government for nine years allowed a gang to run over this country, consisting of Saith, Julien, Calder Hart, Lok Jack, Ramlal, Rao, and they had the insignia of the Balisier, that sort of gang falls under this legislation. Whistle-blowers in the PNM were dealt with in a harassed way. Just like they said gang whistle-blowers have been killed and murdered, in the PNM whistle-blowers were eliminated. Just ask Eric Williams, Franklyn Khan, Camille Robinson-Regis, Roger Boynes, Edward Hart, Diane Seukeran—all of this noise.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Amery Browne (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I pause to allow a sense of decency in the quorum to return to the Lower House of Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] After that performance from a Member who should be hanging his head quite low today, after having to turn back 160 degrees—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: 36(7), Mr. Speaker. That issue is before you, Sir, and you have not ruled.

Mr. Speaker: I have not heard him as yet. [*Laughter*] I have not heard him as yet.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, why is the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara “so nervous? We on this side sat very quietly, no one interrupted him at all and listened to a tirade and rampaged in the Lower House. Now as my contribution begins— What is going on?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like to have your cooperation and your attention. So could we allow the Member for Diego Martin Central to speak in silence, please? Please continue.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I am really curious. It seems that the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara is quite nervous this evening. I detect a degree of nervousness. At the last sitting he was uncharacteristically quiet, and I am hoping that he will extend that period of silence as far as possible because it really would assist with meaningful contributions in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would further advise the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara that the quality and value of a contribution is not measured by the volume of one's voice, it is not measured by the length of time one speaks, and it is not measured by the number of words one crams into a contribution. It is measured by the quality of content. [*Desk thumping*] I would hold up that piece of advice to the Member and I am hoping he has open ears and an open heart, and might learn something during his time in the Lower House. That is my sincere hope.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to spend too much time dwelling on the contribution of the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara because I really would not want to validate the timbre, the fabric, or the quality of what he had to say or the lack thereof. But I notice that he has continued a very interesting and an unfortunate habit of some Members on the other side, of bringing the names of departed persons and persons who have been lost to violent crimes into the House, and really inserting those names and the names of their families into very political statements and into a very political discourse.

I am wondering as a representative of a constituency and a representative of the people, if Members on the other side would seek permission from these families before they bring the names and identities of the their family members into the House, into the Parliament, use them in a very political nature and really bring back the spectre of a loss, bring back the spectre of grief in a very, very unfortunate way. I am wondering what the social workers would have to tell the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara should he take the time—and maybe it is good advice if he would take the time to consult with a social worker or two. I would not dwell much further on that.

The Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara went on, in my view, to mislead the House with regard to his parroting of some statements about the coastal radar system. It is clear that he may have just heard a thing or two maybe on his radio station, and have has come here today to parrot something that is simply not correct whatsoever.

This “ol’ talk” about the coastal radar system being inoperable is simply not true, and it is unfortunate that this Government has seen it fit to dismiss every single member of the national council and all the experienced officers right across

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the board in our protective services. So they really would not have the benefit of knowing exactly what has been taking place, the levels of protection around our country, the unfortunate reality that we have had officers in the coast guard and in other branches of the uniformed services who for several years have had to face the frustration of utilizing this radar system and seeing vessels coming in and out of our shores and not having the equipment and capacity to do the interdiction as has been necessary. That is exactly the philosophy behind the acquisition and pursuit of increased maritime assets by the administration that departed office in May, and that brings us again to the point of the offshore patrol vessels. If the Member were to ask the right questions of the right persons and seek the right answers, he would recognize that it is all a continuum of protection that was being built and sought for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and he really cannot have any idea of the way forward if he does not understand the philosophy that was being utilized.

So you had officers in the past utilizing the radar, seeing the activity taking place, drugs, guns and other illicit activities affecting our maritime borders, not having the equipment and capacity to respond. Steps were taken to ensure that capacity would be put in place, but unfortunately, given the decisions made on May 24, a lot of that has been reversed. So guess where we are now, Mr. Speaker? We are back to the days where we have our officers right now sitting, looking at radar screens—the same radar system that he is denigrating—up and running, conducting surveillance around our borders with no prospect of equipment, machinery or the other assets that would be required to respond and do the interdiction. That is the frustration being felt right now in our uniformed services, and I want to single out the coast guard as one of the branches in this country whose morale is at its all-time low at this point given the decisions made by this Government on the other side. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara really—I would have to say in a very—I do not know if to describe it as brave or brazen, but went even further to raise the spectre of some of his recent activities in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and have come under national attention in an amazing effort to compare his Nicki Minaj fiasco with other concerts that have occurred.

Mr. Speaker: That matter is before this honourable House for a ruling. So until a ruling is delivered, leave Nicki Minaj out of the debate and make no reference whatsoever to that. Please, continue!

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your guidance on that matter, and I do bear in mind that there is a ruling upcoming with regard to the question

of misleading the House, with regard to that question. Not referring to that particular concert, but the Member referred to other concerts and the spectre of other concerts, and there was reference to “Junior Gong”. The hon. Attorney General chose to make reference to a “Junior Gong” Concert which is upcoming in Trinidad and Tobago, and there seems to be some effort to draw some sanctification by associating with other concerts either in the past or in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell Members on the other side—and this Government should really be hanging their heads in shame at this fiasco—that the organizers of this “Junior Gong” Concert—I actually placed a phone call to verify this myself—are very clear that there is a minimum age for attendance, and that minimum age is 18 years of age. [*Desk thumping*] They also have a very strict policy with regard to the use of expletives on the stage. So instead of casting aspersions at other promoters or other promotions, the Members on the other side would do well to maybe call on the organizers and learn how to organize a proper concert which would respect the convention and the rights of a child and respect the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that the Division of Youth under the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is facing a crisis at this time; I have been informed the Division of Youth is facing a crisis of funding at this point in time; and I wonder why that is so. I wonder if \$900,000, at least, is now missing from the budget of the Division of Youth within that Ministry. I have been informed that a proposal for a peace walk in Covigne Road in Diego Martin West, has been cancelled by the Ministry and there has been no explanation to the young people. This is a high-risk area. Young people have come together with a proposal— [*Interruption*]

Miss Roopnarine: Mr. Speaker, the Member is misleading the House. Quote your facts— [*Interruption*]

Dr. A. Browne: That is not a Standing Order. Please have a seat and allow me to continue. That is not a Standing Order. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Members, please! There is only one Speaker in this House. You are not a Speaker. So you would have to be a little more respectful to the Member. The Member rose, and she should have sought clarification and leave. He is correct. You cannot rise on that Standing Order. There is no such point of order. I think you could have been a little more elegant

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on the part of the Member. Member for Diego Martin Central, to tell someone to take a seat, I think we are going too far. Let the Speaker carry out his duty in that regard. Continue.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, to my dear sister and Member for Oropouche West, if I was in—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Apologize.

Dr. A. Browne: Sister! We are all brothers and sisters. Mr. Speaker, if I spoke harshly to her, I apologize profusely and sincerely. [*Desk thumping*] But any half-hearted apology like we get from that side from time to time—

Mr. Speaker: Please, please! Members! Member, you cannot shout across the floor that “anybody is a bully”. That is unparliamentary. So please, do not shout these kinds of expressions that are bordering on this order. Continue.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your protection. I go further. Besides this peace walk in Covigne Road directly related to an attempt by the constituents of Diego Martin West to reduce the violence that is now spiking once again, two HIV Awareness projects planned for this very weekend dealing with a pandemic that has gripped the entire world, have also received a big X within the Division of Youth. I am asking: what has gone wrong within that particular Division; and is there now an acute lack of funds based on very wrong priorities not coming from the professionals within the Ministry, but coming from those who are providing policy direction?

Mr. Speaker, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara talked about the need for brute force and forceful legislation, but I really want to ask: the Government laid this Bill since July 16, why are we now here four months later—a whole four months later—initiating this particular debate? What has transpired between July 16 and today, to account for this call today for brute force and forceful legislation and cajoling the Opposition in a particular way? I am wondering where was the sense of urgency from the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara and his colleagues in Government since July 16. They found all manner of other matters to bring to this House beside the Anti-Gang Bill, and here we are today.

In response to some newspaper articles and in response to a spike of violence, all of a sudden they are now concerned about crime and violence in Trinidad and Tobago. They will fool no one with that type of approach to the welfare of our citizens.

5.30 p.m.

The Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara also had some advice for young people and that was very encouraging. I wanted to hear what this advice was. He referenced the issue of a bully mentality. I could not believe my ears. That Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara was talking and advising people against having a bully mentality. Incredible! I have to tell that irony is alive and well in Trinidad and Tobago today.

Mr. Speaker, instead of offering verbal advice to young people, I strongly feel that the Members of this House, and especially a particular Member on the other side, should seek more to set an example for the young people of Trinidad and Tobago. Talk is cheap; talk is very cheap. It is how we conduct ourselves and how we treat one another that would have a lot more value. [*Interruption*]

I am responding to the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara and I request your silence, respect and consent, the same way we respect Members on your side when you are contributing. [*Interruption*] You do not really need my attention right now.

The Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara spent a lot of time reading clauses and other things, really stretching his contribution significantly. He had some further advice for Members of the Opposition. I think he was begging one of my colleagues: "Do not try to water down the clauses of this Bill. Do not try to water down the clauses; we need strong penalties." I wonder if this is a new position for Members on the other side.

I recall quite clearly and I raised the spectre recently, when they were in opposition, they attacked the Children Bill, which really is designed to protect an even younger cohort in our society. They attacked the Children Bill repeatedly. It ended up that that Bill went to a Special Select Committee of the Lower House because of the same issue of harsh clauses and severe penalties. Now that they are in Government, they are trying to cajole the Opposition and force this admittedly draconian legislation down our throats by saying: "We need harsh penalties and such provisions in the law". I see a bit of a double standard. I see an element of hypocrisy here.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot, when in opposition, talk about the rights of citizens, et cetera, resisting strong penalties and now that you are in Government, there is an attempt to force the very same philosophy down the throats of the Opposition. I thought that was a very key—question the logic of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, and I have to question the logic of the Member on the other side.

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The Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara went on to talk about poverty. I do not know what figures he was referring to because he chose not to share his personal statistics with us. However, nothing he said has found any validity or basis at the Central Statistical Office or among any of the professionals at the Ministry of Social Development. He was really talking "out of his hat" when he talked about increasing poverty under the PNM and provided nothing to back it up.

I want to tell the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara: Do not talk too much about poverty or things you do not quite understand. Certainly, do not try to knock the poor because the worst form of poverty is poverty of the mind and maybe that is where we should focus a little more. Bring programmes to uplift our young people; our young men and women as opposed to throwing away money on mixed priorities and unfortunate decisions.

I have maybe a last bit of advice for the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara while he is in a listening mode. A government ministry is not a talk show programme. The Lower House is not a talk show. Press the reset button and start again with regard to attitude, knowledge and behaviour. That is my advice.

There was such a demonstration of arrogance from the Government, telling the Opposition we do not need you; and this chest beating, squandering the mandate that they gained in May of this year with this show of arrogance and beating the chest; we do not need you; really undermining the very basis of our Parliament. We have the votes, so we do not need you; a really incredible display of arrogance, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I remind the Member and his colleagues in Government: Look at the Interception of Communications (Amdt.) Bill, which we recently debated and passed. Look at the Children's Life Fund Bill and other pieces of legislation that have come to the Lower House during this session. The few pieces that have come, when you look at them, it was the Opposition's advice, the experience and caring of colleagues on this side that was essential in shaping better laws for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

We see the value of the views of the Government, but we on this side recognize the value of views on both sides as opposed to that display of arrogance. It is really ungrateful for the contributions made thus far by Members on that side to bring that type of element into the debate.

The Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara went on to celebrate his PNM roots. I heard reference to parentage and so on. That is up to him and he repeated he was born a PNM. *[Interruption]* Do you have something to share? Clearly, the

Member for Caroni Central is feeling a little left out as he rocks in his chair. *[Interruption]* Why are you trying to distract me, Member?

Mr. Speaker: Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, if you turn and address me, you will avoid the crosstalk. You are going across. Just face me and you will be okay.

Dr. A. Browne: The thing about talk is that it is not really about line of sight; it is about hearing. Even though I am looking at you, there are Members on the other side trying to disturb me. I just want to bring that to your attention. I am looking at you, but I am hearing the chatter and the incessant babble on the other side.

I was talking about the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara and they got a little nervous here because he brought his PNM heritage into the debate this evening. I would like to offer a few words on this matter to the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara. I would say that even though he may have been born to a PNM, as he celebrated here in the House, he certainly does not seem to have been raised like a PNM member. He certainly does not behave like a PNM member and his mannerism and comportment would never be condoned by the People's National Movement.

The Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, my brother on the other side, said that police officers must be held to a higher standard than the rest of the population. That is what he said to us today. I wonder if there are police officers looking and listening right now who must be saying to themselves: you want to hold us to a higher standard, but so must Ministers of Government also be held to a higher standard. If they were listening at the start of today's proceedings, they may have had some questions for the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara.

This has been a very interesting contribution by the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara. He talked about a lack of technology among law enforcement; not realizing that it is now six months into their term of office in government. I do not know if Members opposite realize that a full 10 per cent of their constitutional term in office has already elapsed. Some of them are still mentally in opposition, maybe because subconsciously they feel that is where they deserve to be.

The Member talked about a lack of technology in law enforcement services. You are no longer in opposition; you are now in government. The question I would have on that point is: how many high-tech cameras have they purchased or do they have plans to purchase? We have heard nothing about this. How many

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cell blocking units have they purchased in their six months in office and what are their plans to purchase same? We have heard nothing in that regard. How much communication equipment for the police service have they purchased thus far or what are their specific plans to purchase such equipment? We have heard nothing, but you hear the old opposition-type of approach where they are talking about lack of technology in law enforcement. Mr. Speaker, the population expects more, demands more and deserves more from Members on the other side. Very, very empty!

As I said, 10 per cent of the constitutional term of this UNC-dominated team has already elapsed and they have little to show for it. Unfortunately, we sit here today in the midst of a very brutal upsurge in violent crime in this country; not just murders, it is also brutal housebreakings, rapes, robberies and it is really a crime spree.

The Government sits here today like a deer in the headlights: surprised, shocked, amazed and disturbed by what is happening and hoping that it is an aberration; completely and utterly clueless about addressing the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago. They are now trying to tell us that they are alarmed and concerned; but the reality is that they buried their heads in the sand for six months while in office and I believe they are victims of their own public relations campaign. They underestimated the magnitude of the drug problem in this country. They underestimated the magnitude of the crime problem. They underestimated the magnitude of the gang/drug problem in this country and here we are six months later, the Government is now trying to dig its head out of the sand, recognizing that we have a crime problem in this country. We have a problem of violence.

I refer to the words of the distinguished Minister of National Security. This was in the *Express* of September 15, 2010; an article by Ria Taitt, a nice big bold headline:

“Sandy:”—referring to the hon. Minister—“Crime rate has fallen”.

It was a bit of a celebration; a bit of a patting on the back by the Minister of National Security.

“After three months under the People’s Partnership Government, murders have fallen by 29 per cent.”

...the winds of change are blowing, National Security Minister John Sandy said...—and the—“Government was...encouraged by the fact that while regrettably there were kidnappings...”—they found the victims, et cetera.

He went on to say that:

“...improved surveillance by law enforcement”—look where he was putting the credit—“had also seen arrests in a number of high profile cases and the seizure of a cache of firearms and ammunition in recent weeks.”

Look at where he is putting the credit and, for the sake of politics and distraction, they have switched off the very same surveillance systems they were crediting for a decrease in crime. Now they come here and are expressing surprise and alarm at the crime situation in this country and they are disturbed. I am strongly of the opinion that they should be very disturbed.

The Minister went on to say:

“Because the will and determination to implement were lacking, before those potentially feasible plans”—he was referring to the previous administration—“degenerated into a host of empty promises to the population.”

So he was in a very self-congratulatory mood at that period of time, celebrating a decrease in crime as he was calculating and telling us why the crime had gone. He was crediting the surveillance system, the very same system that he—I do not know if I would want to blame him—I think we know there were some other figures there who should really be bearing the shame of some of those decisions. So that is what we have to treat with.

Members on the other side have accused my colleagues in the Opposition of behaving as if violent crime started on May 24, 2010. They are reminding us that crime existed before. However, I believe that it is Members of the Government who should be accused of behaving as if violent crime started on May 24, 2010. They have forgotten their fancy campaign speeches about reducing the flow of blood. I have them all here, but I am not going to bring back some of those empty words into this House. I want to tell them that the population has not forgotten. All the gimmicks and public relations will not fool people. They remember that this team on the other side campaigned heavily on the issue of reducing violence in this country. That was their mantra; that was their mandate and they have squandered it already.

Do they not remember the pronouncements they made? They used to keep a daily count of murders in this country. We used to be regaled with it every time. They used to read out the names of murder victims; well you still do, Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism, read out the names of murder victims from the week

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before. They used to blame the Minister of National Security for the gang situation. They used to blame the Commissioner of Police; they used to blame the Prime Minister; they used to blame everyone except the killers themselves. Now we are hearing that the tune has changed and they are realizing the chronic nature of crime. Every murder, rape and robbery was used as currency in a very hypocritical, very political game designed to fool the population into believing that they could do something about it. They have proven that they can do nothing about it.

5.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think they remember their specific promises that they made to deal with violent crimes in short order were they elected. It is not me putting these words in their mouths. These are the words they gave in short order, were they elected. I wonder if they remember.

They are always boasting about their 120-day programme of action. These words will have to continue to haunt them, and they must not be afraid of hearing these words. We will prepare an immediate action plan for containing criminal activities and reducing the number of murders. I wonder what “immediate” means? Where is the plan? This is the plan? Member for Mayaro, shame on you! Hold on. Tell me and I will judge you by your own words. The first phase—that is not a display, Mr. Speaker—will be from June 2010 to December 2010. This immediate action plan for containing criminal activities, and—very ambitious but this is what they voted on—reducing the number of murders. The first phase will be from June 2010 to December 2010. June came and went, July came and went, August came and went, September came and went, October came and went, November came and went. December has come and December will go. We have seen no sign of this immediate crime plan. We have seen no sign of containment of criminal activities. We have certainly seen no sign of reducing the number of murders. This Government should be ashamed of itself. Lawlessness—instead what we have—has risen to an historic peak in Trinidad and Tobago.

I am not here to blame a political party and say, because you all are there that is why somebody died yesterday. I am just saying that you campaigned on a very hypocritical—Member for Mayaro, not you personally, but those on the other side, and you are now being faced with the reality of the situation in Trinidad and Tobago. You need to level with the population, if you want people to accept the hope that you have that you can do something about it. At present, human life is at its cheapest in this country. There are so many graphic examples every day. Some, I have been confronted with personally. I do not know if I want to share

some of them. I respect the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara shared that a Member of his constituency—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. A. Browne:—met an untimely end, really horrific. Families have never been less safe in this country than they are today, December 2010. One second, I will give you the opportunity.

The question is, based on their own words, where is that plan? Where is it? Is it on its way? Is it in preparation? Is it completed? Is it a secret plan? Where is the plan? We have no idea. Do know why? It does not exist. It does not exist! Their manifesto talks also of their 120-day plan which has long expired. It talks about flooding the community with police officers. It states:

“Deploy police on the streets, to beat the communities, increase the police presence everywhere within 120 days.”

Where are they? Where is the everywhere?

After we completed the debate on the Interception of Communications Bill, I went home around 1.00 a.m. I received a call from a friend in Central, Trinidad at 3.00 a.m., and a bandit was in the house. I called 999, et cetera, and then I went down myself. When I arrived, it was the same time as the police officers who were literally five minutes away. This is not a story I am making up. Do you know what those officers—the experience they had in responding to that report? There were three officers on duty that night at the Freeport Police Station: two male and one female officer. The two male officers responded to the call. They came out to the report. They were nervous—they did their job—about the lone female officer who remained at the police station. They were worried that maybe the bandits would go there and take over the compound. That is the reality, in December 2010, after a promise within 120 days “we will deploy police on the streets on the beat in the communities and increase police presence.” Where? Everywhere! These are their own words.

The Government cannot come now and pretend that one Bill, or piece of paper is going to absolve them of inaction and something a little worse than inaction that we will talk about, over the last six months, inaction at best and something worse than inaction over the last six months. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: Thank you very much for giving way. But, Member for Diego Martin Central, would you agree what you are saying is contradictory? You are saying that we are doing nothing. Here is a Bill that we have brought to fight the

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criminals within June, or whatever you say, to December. This is December and we have a Bill, and we are asking for your support and you are contradicting everything in the Bill that is there and calling it draconian. Are you agreeing that you are contradicting yourself?

Dr. A. Browne: I thank the Member for his—I would have to consider it a rhetorical question. It is amazing that he would rise and make that contribution, because he is coming in December, presenting a Bill that was laid since July, and now claiming that the Bill covers the Government. Did I hear him correctly, the period June to December? What manner of logic is this? That cannot be accepted by any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, and that certainly does not absolve the Government of complete inaction. What I ask you, Member for Mayaro, is for an explanation as to why it has taken so long after laying the Bill; not to stand and tell us we are in December now and, therefore, it covers the period June to December. [*Interruption*] You had your opportunity. That really was not a good use of the moments that you had.

I would move right along. Basically, the manifesto talked about flooding the communities with police officers. That certainly has not happened and that is yet another broken promise. What we are seeing now is in broad daylight. Our citizens are being cut down like never before. [*Interruption*] Do not make light of it, it is not that it has been happening all the time. Every citizen realizes that we are less safe now than this time last year. That is the reality. Let us not hide from it. The Opposition has said that we are willing to work with you on the other side to ensure that we have good laws to deal with this situation. Do not be nervous to sit here and face the reality. Do not be nervous to do that, because when we were in government, we had to sit here and it was worse. You all came here with lists of names, family members and babies, reading out these things without the permission of the families, celebrating the issue of crime. We are not celebrating it. We are reminding you of your own words and your own lack of action, Member for Mayaro. That is what we are doing. So, have a little patience with us.

In the Western Division, it is a complete—it is open season down there. It is at its worst. Every night, there are multiple house break-ins and multiple acts of banditry. Persons are being held hostage in their own homes. Do you know what some of the reports coming from the police are? Four officers to patrol the West Division a night. That cannot be squared with the promises that were held up to the population in this manifesto and in the 120-day plan. So, the Government has to admit that they probably had a very naive and simplistic view of what it takes to run this country; a very naive and simplistic view of what it takes to deal with

the criminal effort. Maybe even the hon. Prime Minister might be recognizing that the job of Prime Minister was not as easy as she thought it would have been, or is may not be as easy as it looked at that time.

We talked about this plan; the Minister of National Security is asking Commissioner Gibbs for the plan. Commissioner Gibbs is asking his Deputy, Ewatski for the plan. The five-star General Gary Griffith is asking the Minister of National Security for the plan. I do not know who the Prime Minister has to turn to now for a plan. It really is incredible.

One of our champions of reducing homicide in this country—he is not here today—the Member for Chaguanas East; he is either a past champion or a current champion—was featured in an article very recently, entitled: “Cadiz Hears of Crime Woes”, *Express* of December 01 2010, World AIDS Day. Apparently the Minister of Trade and Industry was addressing members of the business community, and guess what came up? It was the number one priority for our citizens; the upsurge in violent crime in this country.

The Minister, as quoted in this article, admitted there was a slowdown in economic activity and gave as an example a 30 per cent decline in the number of yacht arrivals in the country in recent months. He said—these are interesting words coming from this Member—crime was not the easiest issue to deal with, but that he was pushing the Ministry of National Security to get things done.

I thought those words were interesting and they rang a bell in my mind. I went back into the archives and found a *Newsday* article from October 24, 2005, same Member. At that time, he was not a Minister. At that time he was not a Member of Parliament. Monday, October 24, 2005. The title of this article: “We are not going anywhere.” I wonder if he would stand by those words today?

“Chairman of the Keith Noel 136 Committee, Stephen Cadiz, said that his committee was not going to go away until the crime situation was brought under control.”

His committee was not going to go way until the crime situation was brought under control.

“‘We are not going away until the crime problem is solved’...he said in a telephone interview.

...we are going absolutely nowhere, we will not disappear.”

This was right after that Saturday’s death march through Port of Spain which attracted thousands of people, He went on to say:

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“They have to solve the problem.”

He was talking about the Government at that time.

“Something very tangible has to be done... The committee, Cadiz said,—I am reading the article—“had hoped that its petition and”—the—“march would spur the Government to action.”

He then said:

“There is no encouragement from this Government to fix the problem. None.

He said the committee will meet...to decide its next move and ‘they may have to take it to the next level’ but”—they—“would not go away. He did not say what that next level would be.”

Listen to what he had further said:

“‘Since the march, no action, after the petition, no action,’ he said, noting that he wondered if the authorities had not heard or seen what was going on for the last five months.”

He then gave Government, five months after he made his presentation and then he said:

“...he wondered if the authorities had not heard or seen what was going on for the last five months.

He said if that was the case, ‘then we are back to square one.’”

Very interestingly, he criticized the then junior Minister in the Ministry of National Security, Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds, who is now a Senator, who, during a morning interview, had talked about family values and education in outlining how the Government was trying to deal with crime. This is what he said in criticizing the Minister:

“‘I don’t think the Government knows exactly what they have to do.’... ”

While family values and education were relevant, Cadiz said he felt that dealing with these were long-term plans.”

These are the telling words:

“‘TT needs an immediate solution to the killings. You have to deal with the murders right now.’”

That was October 24, 2005, promising the committee would not go anywhere until this is dealt with. Here we were today, after six months’ service in office as a Minister in the Cabinet, with his colleagues on the other side. I wonder if he

would probably be saying the same words: “We are not going anywhere. Trinidad and Tobago needs an immediate solution to the killings. You have to deal with the murder right now”?

I want to be fair to those on the other side. I want to be fair to the Government. They have been taking some action, even in the absence of their promised plan. They have been taking some action. Let me share some of those actions with you.

- Action No. 1: They have cancelled offshore vessels that would have defended our shores from the influx of drugs and guns in this country. That was their first piece of action.
- Action No. 2: They have systematically dismantled all the systems and intelligence services that they were intimately familiar with for over a decade for political purposes.
- Action No. 3: Decapitated, demoralized and abused members of our uniformed services, create disparities where there were none and increased disparities where the disparities existed before.
- Action No. 4: Recruited a foreign Police Commissioner and make him our very latest Canadian millionaire. Ensured that he came from a district where they are more likely to see a blue cow or a visitor from Jupiter than a gang member. That is Edmonton. That is a perfect description of Edmonton; a district where he is more likely to have seen a blue cow or a visitor from Jupiter, as opposed to a gang member. That was not their only action item.
- Action No. 5: Tripled the criminal involvement in the Unemployment Relief Programme, so that gunmen and gangsters have now taken over URP yards across Trinidad and Tobago. That is the literal reality; the gun and gangsters have taken over.
- Action No. 6: Inserted a politician at the head of the Police Service Commission, to treat with the recruitment and management of the service and further demoralize officers in the field.

6:00p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that is the record of action of this Government on crime; six points on entry, six points of dismantlement and the Government should be hanging its head in shame.

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Let me now remind the Government, there is a very interesting article that came out today. There is a report in the *Express* newspaper dated December 02, 2010, which really makes very serious allegations with regard to the head of the Police Service Commission, the Chairman. We had some words from Mr. Gibbs in this regard. It would appear from this article that police officers were directing traffic on Independence Square, and there were three lanes of traffic, one of which was proceeding onto—

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. N. Hypolite*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Member, before you continue. Let us not abuse Standing Order 36(1). We are dealing with an anti-gang legislation, and there are specific provisions, and you are now going into an article. I have given you much flexibility, and you are now going into an article about some police chairman and some event. That has nothing to do with this Bill before us. You are bordering on irrelevance, and I am asking you to kindly link your contribution to the clauses in the Anti-Gang Bill, and do not just go far and “wide, please. So do not come too irrelevant, otherwise I would have to engage in another activity. So just be relevant and connect those areas kindly for me.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, thank you for your guidance. I have a question for the Government and Members on the other side. How can you expect this legislation to succeed when, at the same time, you are trying to crack down on those at the grassroots level, and those at the top of the society are more lawless than they ever were before? [*Desk thumping*] That is what this article is about; an example of lawlessness at the highest levels of society. The example from the top is lacking, and how can they expect to get a response from those at the grassroots level. That is the relevance and that is the connection. We cannot allow the Government to sit here in smug silence while—[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fyzabad has put in an appearance and he is being very disruptive.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What have you contributed for this session, Member of Parliament for Fyzabad?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to appeal to all Members again. I want to repeat that my role here is to advise, to guide, to caution and to warn and then after to enforce the Standing Orders. I just want Members to be guided

accordingly. I do not want to rule, because when I rule there is where this comes into effect. So, I am seeking your cooperation and assistance in maintaining the dignity and decorum of this honourable Chamber. So, I ask Members to kindly cooperate. Could you continue?

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for dealing with that matter comprehensively. Mr. Speaker, the question stands with regard to the Government, because it is really a double standard and an example of hypocrisy, when those at the highest level of society are exhibiting lawlessness in a flagrant manner and are not receiving the attention of the Government, and they are expecting persons at the grassroots level to respond to a piece of paper, a Bill, and the deterrent threat as was mentioned by the Member for St. Augustine—the deterrent threat of harsh action—to respond to the will of the Government. Mr. Speaker, that is an unrealistic expectation and it is not going to work.

Mr. Speaker, how can they succeed with this piece of legislation, when the white collar criminals; the money launderers; the real estate profiteers and the drug lords are getting away with murder and breaking the law like never before in this country? How can you expect a young man from Cocorite or Chase Village to respond on the issue of gang membership when famous captives are sitting comfortably in an infirmary eating pelau and pastelles at this point in time? It does not work like that. How can you expect a young maxi-taxi driver to avoid driving like a gangster on our nation's roads when you have someone high in society driving like a gangster and trying to get away with it by calling the Commissioner of Police? Then the Prime Minister tells the police to go hard—they tell the police to go hard and I hope they go hard on anyone who is found to be defying the police even under the glare of the public. How can we tell our “young people to avoid gangs and gang membership and violence when we are asking them to trust a system that has been treating them very badly over the last six months?

This Government has systematically failed to pay OJT workers and reforestation workers properly and on time. They have destabilized the entire public service, especially thousands of persons on contract, and created tremendous instability, and now they are coming here and asking for the population's cooperation and support in helping to reduce gang membership.

Mr. Speaker, the basic issues of accountability, fairness and transparency are essential if persons are to avoid the temptation of gang life. Mr. Speaker, we had answers right here in the *Hansard* record with regard to filling key positions in various sectors—the Airports Authority, WASA, CNMG and other agencies—

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where the Government has demonstrated a total lack of remorse; a total lack of transparency; and a total lack of accountability. The signals they are sending to the population and the young people out there are you cannot trust the system in this country. It is getting worse instead of getting better.

Mr. Speaker, I would understand if young people are looking at this Government today, stretching this piece of legislation over a six-month period and trying to pretend that this is the response to violent crime, and they are asking the Government, what is the difference? What is the difference? I see the Prime Minister has returned from her travels, and she seems wide awake.

Mr. Speaker, how can we tell our young men that gang leaders want to exploit them for personal gain when every day we see political figures and Members on the other side exploiting young people and their parents for personal gain and political mileage? [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, we have seen too many examples of that.

How can you put an end to organized crime—and this is for the Prime Minister on the other side—when the State appears to be investing taxpayers' dollars into enterprises and then money is being siphoned into the hands of private individuals? How can that be done, Mr. Speaker?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, again—

Dr. A. Browne: That is a question—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: —on a point of order. My point of order is you are imputing improper motives on the part of hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: Diego Martin Central, could you take your seat?

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, what is going on here? What is the point of order?

Mr. Speaker: Madam Prime Minister, Madam Prime Minister [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad Bissessar: On a point of order, Sir.

Hon. Member: You are disrespectful!

Mr. Speaker: Yes, okay, Madam Prime Minister—

Mr. McLeod: You have respect! Sit down! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Members—

Dr. A. Browne: What Standing Order?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, on a point of Order—

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I am on my legs.

Mr. Speaker: Listen! Madam Prime Minister, just a moment. Listen, you are being very disrespectful and, in fact, you are irrelevant. I want to warn you now that you are not only being disrespectful, but you are irrelevant, and this is the final warning I am giving you. If you continue along that irrelevant path, I would ask you to discontinue your contribution, and resume your seat. Okay? I am just giving you the final warning.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar: Standing Order 36(5), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin Central, you said something about money, and you were giving the impression from what you said, as if the Member for Siparia was involved in some kind of activity.

Mrs. Persad Bissessar: Hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: I want you to be very careful, please. There is a trick in the trade that I am familiar with. You are dealing with an issue, but what you are doing is going all over the place and creating irrelevancies. I have asked you to link your contribution to the clauses in the Bill. You have not taken up the Bill for the evening, but you are just speaking. I am asking you to be very careful, and link your contribution; make reference to clause 5 and then link it. You cannot just be going all over the place. So, I am just advising you, if you continue how you are going, I would have to ask you to discontinue. Connect it to the Bill, please.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I remain surprised that a Member on the other side—

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, subject to Standing Order 43(2), I beg to move that the Member for Diego Martin Central no longer be heard.

Dr. A. Browne: Shame on you! [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: A Motion has been put before the floor that the Member for Diego Martin Central be no longer heard.

Question put and agreed to.

The Minister in the Ministry of the People and Social Development (Hon. Dr. Lincoln Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I am happy today to stand to speak on a Bill to make provision for the suppression of associations established for unlawful purposes and for the better preservation of public safety and order and for other related matters, what we are now calling the Anti-Gang Bill.

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I am saddened that the Member for Diego Martin Central had to be silenced, but I understand that he went hemispheric on us. I understand that he drifted all over the place and was unable to keep his moorings. I find it difficult to respond to all his wild allegations and misconstrued ideas—well, if you sit right there I will give you some heat to take—first of all, his misguided idea that we have stopped some programme in Diego Martin, because there is no money, when he did not do his research to understand that there were issues of sustainability, credibility and validity of the programme, and making it relevant to the cause which was the International “Year of the Youth.

I sat here and repeatedly, the Opposition has brought up this idea of the OPVs as the principal crime fighting tool to deal with crime in Trinidad and Tobago, and it is absolutely ludicrous. I am wondering when they will stop bringing up this matter of OPVs and that the People's Partnership Government is dismantling the tools of crime fighting.

They sat here for years doing nothing of significance, while crime kept going up and up and mothers keep crying and boys keep dying, and they did nothing, and come here today to give the idea that we are not doing anything in six months. This is completely ridiculous! The idea that this Opposition cannot make the connection—the Member for Diego Martin Central brought up the whole issue of “Junior Gong” and concert again. I would give him a “Junior Gong” quote to memorize so that they can make the connection between bad education and crime, even as they continue to harp on the idea that an OPV is some major crime fighting tool.

6.15 p.m.

Junior Gong himself said that:

“So, let's face it...A ghetto education is basic..an most dem youth jus waste it.
that's when de drugs an guns replace it

then them don't stand a chance at all

And dat's why a nuff little youth have up some fat matic

With the extra magazine inna them back pocket

And a bleach a night time inna some black jacket

All who not lock glocks, dem a lock rocket

Then will full you up a current like a short circuit

Dem a run a roadblock which part thr cops block it

And from now till a mornin not stop clock it

If the run outta rounds a brought back ratchet”

Junior Gong has made the connection for the Opposition, that there is a connection between bad education and crime. [*Desk thumping*]

They did not know that. It is their own leader and leaders who have foisted upon this nation a bad system of education which left young people exposed to a significant amount of time, where they could get involved in all kinds of things. They become latchkey kids, as they are called in the States, where they are home or on the streets by themselves, late at night or early in the morning, without any supervision and become targets to be recruited into gangs.

They themselves created that bad education system and today we are saddled— It is like the chickens have come home to roost. They have sown the wind and today we are facing the whirlwind, but they cannot make the connection. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Diego Martin Central cannot make that connection between bad education and poverty, that the Member for Diego Martin West—well, he is sitting west now—North/East, talked about the role of poverty in the whole melange of crime and gangs. Most of us here know poverty; we have grown up poor. A certain generation of us grew up struggling and we were not involved in crime. We were sitting on the dock of the bay, as the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre said. We have grown up sitting on the corner, having dialogue, talking, playing sports, going down and playing bare feet on the gravel pit or in the road, playing five a side football. We were not involved in these kinds of activities. It was during these people's tenure.

The Member for Diego Martin Central went on to talk about throwing away money on mixed priorities, suggesting that this Government has thrown away money on mixed priorities. Do you believe that statement? These people wasted so much money in this country that the people from Printeryville had to say to me, “\$300 billion spend and nothing has changed in Printeryville; nothing has changed in Sherwood Park, nothing has changed in Peytonville; \$300 billion and counting.”

“They have spent what we ent even find out and begin to find out as yet”, and now the Member for Diego Martin Central further suggested that the Prime Minister or somebody here is siphoning money. I mean, that is absolutely ridiculous.

Hon. Member: Madness!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Ridiculous!

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: To come into this house and waste his time being hemispheric, as the Member for Point Fortin would say—she went hemispheric on us, and did not come back down to earth about the crime plan before us. “Talking bout they have experience and they have brought experience to things that were presented.” I mean, what is this going on in this place? “Burying heads in the sand” and all kinds of comments like these. I think this is ridiculous.

We have a Bill before us and the Opposition has rightly agreed that we are going to work together on making it a better thing, and that is a good start. Many people have made legitimate contributions to the Bill, and that is fine, and we agreed to talk more about it. So that is important.

This legislation is important because we have been brought to this place in the nation where all of us feel that our rights are being taken away, our freedom of movement, our freedom of speech. You cannot report or talk about what you see on the streets. “Nobody eh want to say nothing, therefore we have a spiral in crime.” Our freedom of association to sit on the corner, as we used to, and lime and have an “ol’ talk”, that and all we cannot afford. Everybody has to get in their house at a certain time and refuse to be on the street by themselves or on the corner because of where we have been brought to.

We have been brought to the stage where gangs went unchecked in this nation of Trinidad and Tobago. They were gradually building up in Maloney, La Horquetta, in the west, in the east and all over this country and they did absolutely nothing, not even take it on, did not even seem to face them—talking about it was their plan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform them that a plan on paper is not a plan; a plan on paper is just paper and ink. It is something that has to be implemented, like a lot of the things that every time they say, “Well that was we own; it was already on paper”. Implement it, “nuh”, bring it here, pass it and then begin to enforce. [*Crosstalk*] No, “But we have it on paper,” and it was their plan. How is that a plan? “You have something written on a paper to build a house and 10 years pass and yuh eh build de house.” What kind of plan is that? “Yuh still in de rain; yuh still homeless.” Nothing has been done.

Talking about homeless, like their homeless plan, their street people plan that has never been brought into fruition, always some wild ideas—and they have one of them still behaving wild, running about holding people, as he said—it is not working.

We all agree that gangs and gang association is a detriment to society, because gangs, as we know it, manufacture and distribute illegal, controlled substances. Gangs participate, coordinate and activate all kinds of intentional homicide. Gangs participate in battery and threats, mayhem, sexual assault, false imprisonment, kidnapping, taking hostage of people, intimidating victims, criminal damage to property, graffiti and unending types of property damage. Gangs continue to do arson of buildings, burning down people's places, using explosives, burglary and theft; "tiefing" people's vehicles—all these things are orchestrated—money laundering, moving of money all over the place. Gangs continue to do these things, prostitution; these are the works of gangs.

We understand that gangs are a threat and a menace to society and that something has to be done speedily and forcefully. So the legislation is brought to this House to deal with the issue of gang involvement, gang association and gang membership, because our young people and this nation are vulnerable to the impact of gangs.

The reason too why gangs are a problem is that a lot of people are bad. They are not so bad on their own. Usually if you have an idea of badness, "yuh kinda bad", but when you meet up with two or three persons and the rule of groupthink kicks in, then the outcome and the possibility of those actions become far reaching. So one man will do something, but when two or three or four of them get together, the consequence and the long-term effect are far greater than just acting independently. Dealing with gangs is a far different thing to dealing with individual acts of badness or individual acts of criminality. This is what I think the Opposition does not understand.

The reason crime is such a problem, and probably they never understood what a crime was—I was reading in the newspapers, and I probably have to get it, they were talking about fraud as a kind of crime or crime in general, and the guy laid out a formula for crime. The formula was: need, plus opportunity, plus justification. Need is like if you want something that you do not have. Like coming to the end of the year, everybody feels they should have money in their pockets, so they would kidnap somebody or try some extortion, because they need money.

Opportunity means that if there is no tough legislation, there is no enforcement and you feel that you could get away with it, you would do it, because there is an opportunity. So you have a need, there is an opportunity.

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Most kinds of activities that they talked about have been dealing with just need and opportunity, but the idea of justification is the reason people commit a crime. Justification has to do with the cultural mores, our values and norms in society. For a long time this administration never addressed the issue. That has to do with people who get together and have a mindset that they do not care, and this is what we see happening in gang violence. People get together and do violent activities, and criminal activities, that normally people would not do. Their justification has gotten warped and out of control. The reason they would kill somebody is not a normal reason.

I remember we had a crime committee. Some people robbed a place and were walking out the door when they stood up and said, "I think we should kill somebody," and they said, "Yes, I think we should kill somebody;" they turned around and killed somebody, just like that. What has happened is that their whole justification, their whole rationalizations and reasoning have gone off. That has happened because people have participated in criminal activities, they have formed gangs, they have produced this kind of groupthink mentality when they do their evil deed, and they have had no kind of redress from the protective services.

Today, the legislation is to make various kinds of statements. First of all, the legislation is saying that we believe in the rights and freedoms of our people and that those rights and freedoms need to be protected. We believe in that. That is why the law must be written to support the people of the nation. The law is not about us and our sophisticated ideas. Usually when people make laws subjectively, they make them in favour of themselves, because you would hardly make a law that would catch you, or something like that.

But this law is designed to protect and support our country. It is designed to deal with every citizen so that you have rights to your freedoms, to your movements, to speech, to association. The law is designed to do that. That is what this is addressing. It is addressing our Constitution; that we are part of this family, that we are a society of free men, that we reserve the dignity of the human person. That is what the gangs have taken away from us. They kill people without regard. They send people on errands to kill people for no reason at all. They participate in acts of violence.

I know people are saying that the gangs in Trinidad are not like the gangs in the United States or the gangs in other places, but that is where it is going. We are getting there. There is a Jamaican gang called the "Shower Posse", because when they are finish with you there are so many bullets that it looks like a shower, like rain falling. We are seeing that kind of mentality, where people do not care about

human lives, where you could shoot an older person seven times or rob a church. These come with the kind of mindset and ideology created by gang affiliation.

We are saying that this has to deal with protecting our people, protecting our freedoms, protecting our rights and sending a strong message that we believe in the dignity of our people, that you cannot just kill people so; “dat eh right”. That is what this law is saying. We are sending the message that we do not believe you should get together to plan evil. My mother always used to say, “Be careful of those that sit together and plot evil”. “It is one thing for a man to do something wrong: running down de road, or get in a fight or yuh hurt somebody or kill somebody, but gangs are organized.” They are groups of people plotting evil, plotting the destruction of people, communities, transshipment of drugs, money or weapons. That is why this has to be serious.

6.30 p.m.

We do not believe in people getting together to do violence against our culture and against our people and the law and this Bill are supporting that. We believe in the rule of law. If you live in this country and you want to participate in this country you should subscribe to the laws of this country. We should not have sub-societies that are organizing things that are contrary to the society. [*Desk thumping*] This past administration has allowed this stuff to go on and on. They did not understand that a great deal of the actions that they were taking were fostering the development of gangs—the movement of people.

I am originally from Arima and I remember when they built La Horquetta, you built that size—30,000-plus, 40,000-plus people in an area and when it was built there was no school, no hospital, no police station; nothing. You take people from all over the place and you move them around, what is going to happen? The obvious results of that—in order for people to locate themselves and find some sense of stability, they formed themselves into gangs. That is when we started having the A-team and the B-team and the C-team; Phase I against Phase II, no idea of what they were doing.

No idea, Mr. Speaker, of the obvious consequence of their action and they come here and try to tell us about experience. [*Interruption*] They did the same thing in Maloney. No thought! Things that people have rejected, that sociology has told us that do not work, they did and created, so now you have the G-unit and the P-unit all over the place because of their actions, saying they are doing development. They do not understand an iota of what they are doing and the obvious consequence is the proliferation of gangs.

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Then they say they have a plan, but it never gets implemented.

Hon. Member: It is on paper.

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: It never reaches here, it is on paper, meanwhile our brothers, our sons and our boys are running about the place shooting each other left, right and centre and at the same time they continue to move forward in a kind of development that is based on technology, saying we are putting up this and this and still not giving the law enforcement or providing the kind of community needs so they could abate what we are going through and they come here to say that we “aint do nothing” in six months.

They were there for eight years you know and eh do a single thing and every year it is getting worse and worse and the Member for Diego Martin Central is trying to make a case that in six months “we eh do nothing”. I do not understand; it blows my mind!

Mr. Speaker, we believe this legislation says that the law must work. If you are going to put a law in place, it cannot be a law that people will ignore. Not when they could say, “I go take meh two years yes.” I have heard men saying that. “Eh, when ah go to jail I have meh three square meals you know, out here ah have to work.” We are not into making laws that will cuddle criminals. We are not into making laws to let people feel that they could take that and then come back out and carry on with their nefarious activities. We understand that our communities and our people stand in jeopardy; that our women cannot run around the savannah by themselves; they cannot take their children to the market; they cannot come home with their groceries.

We understand that, and this is a serious time so the law must work. It must work for the lawless. They must understand that even though you do not believe in the law, the law will have an impact on you and that is the idea. The law must work! For those who have not broken it yet they must understand that there is a serious consequence for breaking it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is right!

Hon. Dr. L. Douglas: There has to be a law! That is what a law is! There was a consequence and there was a time when we did not have law and we just lived commonly among us and people understood that even when you broke the common law that society took action against you. They controlled your behaviour and you could not break the law—even this was not even written—and get away. That has to be true, the law must be seen for all persons whom this Bill seek to

promote. So if you are a gang member and you are sitting in your office and five of you form an association—one of you sitting in the office up so, one of you sitting in the office down so and you have a kind of information passing between you that results in somebody dying, then you are a gang you know, [*Desk thumping*] because they have people—and I do not want it to be misconstrued that gangs only exist in depressed communities.

We have people, Mr. Speaker, who are sitting in spaces that are moving money, goods and things all around and are causing major mayhem and we want this law to say that we will not tolerate that. We do not want people planning and plotting against our society. This is what this is you know. This is a crime against the society. [*Desk thumping*] Gang warfare, gang association and gang development is a crime against the community. It is not like one man gets vex and hits a man with a stone on his head or something like that. This is organized, this is activity that involves bringing our whole community into disrepute and when they are finished, there are drugs and, you know.

Mr. Speaker, I remember I left Trinidad in 1983; when I left my community was a fairly intact—I really did not know anybody who was actively selling cocaine. Those young people there used to take boys to Sunday school and all kinds of stuff. I remember coming back here four years later and friends I know walking the streets, living in the forest selling drugs, little boys I used to take to church had two guns and stuff like that and these things continue unabated. We cannot have that. This has to be serious. This has to be serious and we believe this law is to deal with the protection of our young people and our children. That is why we deal with the issue of—if you are around a school, because it is a different thing as you would know.

Most of the known gangs, like in the US, they started in high school. The Crips and the Bloods started in high school. The Disciples started in high school. These things are starting in high school, in college and they are moving out and we have to move strictly and that is why there is an increased penalty for carrying on gang activity around a school compound. This is a serious matter. Why? Because our society right now, contrary to popular opinion and those who are struck by some OPV mentality, the real problem in our society is the breaking down of our institutions where young people have to come home.

Mr. Speaker, I was doing a research recently, two years ago, on the vulnerability of young people—I will not mention the community—to being recruited by gangs. You know, gangs use various kinds of techniques to recruit young people. First of all, they engage in what we call subterfuge—subterfuge is

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the misrepresentation of what the gang really is—and they would come around and present all this hype like the gang is the greatest thing in the world, that we are just friends, we are providing support for you, we are providing a family structure, we will give you protection, we will help you out if you have any problem so “doh worry nah breeds we go just help you out. It’s alright, you cool with we.” This is subterfuge but really and truly it is a big lie. [*Interruption*] That is the kind of thing that is perpetrated upon—and then they participate in seduction. When you pass by they create these glorified myths of what they are doing, they provide opportunities for you to get involved in, high energy activity that you think is the greatest thing in the world. This is gang recruitment. This is gang recruitment going on.

I was telling you earlier on that I was doing a research in a particular community about young people and their susceptibility to being recruited by gangs and on that thing I have a list of questions like, “what is the worst thing that you have seen on your way to school?” I am talking about 10 year olds to 15 year olds—this is a camp that we had for the summer and I am doing this research—and these are boys and girls talking about stepping over dead people on their way to school in certain of our communities. A young man told me he saw a man got shot and his brain jumped out of his head.

These are young people in the communities that we are talking about and these are gang members who are trying to lure our young people in by providing them with different kinds of information to make them feel that they are involved in an exciting world and that things are okay. They make them feel obligated to them by doing things for them and requesting that they further carry out activities, making them feel obligated and when that fail they go on to coercive activity, threats; if you do not want to be a part of the group, well, you would be dead. I know these things. It is a corrupting thing in society.

Mr. Speaker, where I lived abroad, they engaged in all kinds of sign activities. I would not show you some signs, but they have a sign for the Latin Kings that is very similar to a deaf person making a sign saying I love you and some deaf children walking down the street making these signs and the gang members from the Kings down on the other side and they see these deaf children making these signs thought they were down-signing them. In gang culture if you make a reverse sign it is considered a “diss”. Right. You are disrespecting them, so they write their gang signs upside down or they make the signs upside down. They thought these dumb people—well, they did not know they were dumb, they were standing on the other side of the road and they shot them dead. This is the evolution of

gang warfare! Right in our own communities these things are going on. You live on this side on the street and you cannot walk over there. The other day we had a friend who was running for his life because he lived on Nelson Street and he went to Duncan Street or something like that.

This is the corrupting influence that gangs have in our society. We are saying that we cannot allow this to go on. We cannot allow gang members to be recruiting our young people. Do not come near the school! Do not give them anything to hold for you; do not ask them to protect anybody for you; do not get involved. As the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara rightly said, "we are sending a strong message to the young people that this kind of association will not be tolerated". It is not accepted and should not be happening in our country. So this legislation is important.

We do not believe in association for the wrong reasons. We believe in the rule of law and that the law must work. We believe that our children must be protected and they must not be corrupted by nefarious activities and be used as tools and pawns in evil adults' crazy world. So do not come around the school, do not come around the church; do not get young people to use and to hold weapons for you and to carry things for you. [*Desk thumping*]

You are telling me that this legislation should not be serious. It should not be serious. This is what this is about! We believe that those who enforce the law have a greater responsibility for upholding the law. Too many times we have seen this has gotten out of control in Trinidad. Every other day one of our law enforcement officers is being paraded before us under some suspicion or caught in some kind of thing.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to say that this Bill is a very, very important Bill, as the Member for Diego Martin Central would not understand, in dealing with the issue of gang membership, gang association, gang participation, gang formation and gang activities in general in Trinidad and Tobago. We believe that the law would be important to the extent that we welcome the participation of Members, I do not want to say on the other side, in Opposition. We believe that their participation will be helpful in making it a much—but I encourage them, not to pretend that the issue of gangs is simple or they do not understand the seriousness, the challenge and this is something that has to be stopped, because there is no telling; it gets worse and worse and worse, and after a while it corrupts every—well, they have already corrupted everything almost, but it gets more and more corrupted.

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So, I am happy to support and willing to participate in this legislation because I think it is important and critical for the safety, the security of our freedoms and human dignity in this country.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

6.45 p.m.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to thank all the hon. Members of this House who have thus far contributed to this debate. The debate has been of a high standard, and there have been rather illuminating and enlightening contributions—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: In the main.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan:—in the main, barring a few justifiably and understandably truncated contributions, Mr. Speaker. I have listened with great admiration to Members of this honourable House. Mr. Speaker, this has been a rather important dialogue on a rather critical, pressing and urgent issue affecting most in society; and that is the issue of crime.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the distinguished Member for Laventille East/Morvant express her opinion rather vociferously on the issue. One thing I believe I can safely say is that she agrees to a large extent that this Bill is necessary in the fight against crime. In fact, I think it is safe to say that the common vein and thread that ran throughout the debate, and all the contributions, is that the Anti-Gang Bill fulfils a larger purpose in society, and is an important weapon in the fight against crime and society stands to benefit from it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, unless we start criminalizing the fruits of the poisonous tree of crime—the criminal tree; unless we make it a crime to want to climb that tree and to taste of the fruits without going down the decent, hardworking path of earning an honest day's pay via an honest day's work, Mr. Speaker, we are creating a generation that is bound to be sucked into the vortex of criminal activity and the whirlpool shall engulf them and spin out of control. That is why this Anti-Gang Bill has received widespread support “outside of this Chamber, and that is why society as a whole is reacting very positively and happily that the nation's Parliament is finally willing to empower the law enforcement agencies and improve the administration of criminal justice.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant raised a number of issues which I have taken note of, and we on this side agree that there is a need to continue the meaningful dialogue that has been initiated during the course of this

debate. This dialogue will yield the collective wisdom of both parties and of Members on both sides of the House because it is admittedly a Bill that is draconian in measure because we are seeking to deal with a desperate problem and society is desperate about this problem. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, as the desperation sets in, we on this side who are committed to the rule of law are willing, in keeping with the Prime Minister's mantra and the political philosophy of the People's Partnership, to listen, listen, listen, lead and serve the people by collaboration and consensus. That is why we are willing to this end. We have listened to some of what has been said on the other side and the proposals to reconsider some of the penalties to bring further legislation to reform the system of criminal justice. For example, to include the defence force and the prison service within the definition of law enforcement authorities, hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant; and various other recommendations made. It has fallen on fertile soil and I think it is worthy of further consideration.

I must, however, point out to the distinguished Member that this Bill was not prepared by the Crime and Justice Commission, but rather, the Omnibus Legislation Committee which falls under the jurisdiction and aegis of the Ministry of National Security. That is, perhaps, why there may have been that inadvertent omission on the part of the committee.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to elaborate and delve into any great detail with respect to the other issues which were raised by my learned friend, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, who made a valuable contribution. Suffice it to say, I humbly thank him for his contribution to this debate. [*Desk thumping*] He raised a number of similar issues, and in his usual—I almost said pedestrian, but perhaps I should say pedantic and meticulous—manner he went through the definition of “gang” and “gang member” and raised an issue regarding the right to freedom of association.

I have noted his particular concerns with respect to the possible infringement of rights which the Bill, in its current form, may pose, and this is a challenge perhaps we can resolve by virtue of further dialogue on this matter.

Mr. Imbert: As long as you do not call me a pedestrian, I am okay.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan: I will never call him pedestrian and I shall never refer to him as a “douen”, and Mr. Speaker, I have the greatest respect for the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Imbert: North/East.

Hon. Members: North/East. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan: Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that this Bill, however, is an exceptional and constructive weapon in our fight against crime that shall benefit both private citizens, the corporate world and, indeed, the nation as a whole. The Government intends to safeguard the rule of law and uphold the integrity of the constitutional guarantees. The fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in our Constitution are of paramount importance to this administration, and they remain at the forefront of the legislative process when we bring legislation to this honourable House.

That is why in balancing the competing interests, the first fundamental guarantee in the Constitution, and a guarantee by the State to each and every citizen, is the right to enjoyment of life, liberty, and property. Mr. Speaker, whilst this Bill may infringe on the rights of a handful of teenaged miscreants who may wish to hold this society to ransom, we say that by and large, we must respond to the needs and frustration and the hopes and desires of the large mass of society who feel that they are under attack, and we must ensure that they are able to enjoy their right to liberty, their right to security, and their right to enjoy peacefully, their property.

Mr. Speaker, the Government having listened to the views of the Members on the other side, would wish to strike the right balance in a collaborative and consensual approach. Therefore, we feel that there is great merit in referring this Bill to a Joint Select Committee of this honourable House in order to consider improvements to the Bill for the good of our country, and so that the legislation can go forward hopping and running on both feet so that we can reach the finish line of restoring Trinidad and Tobago to the paradise it once was.

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

Mr. Speaker: Attorney General, you will have to move the Motion that this Bill be referred.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Sen. The Hon. A. Ramlogan: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That this Bill be referred to a Joint Select Committee of this honourable House, comprising an equal number of Members of the House of Representatives

and the Senate, and that this committee be empowered to discuss the general merits and principles of the Bill, along with its details, and be mandated to report in three months to this honourable House.

I thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday December 10, 2010 at 1.30 p.m. and serve notice on our friends opposite that on that day we intend to deal with the amendments to the Children's Life Fund Bill, coming from the other place, and to move on to a Bill to amend the Bail Act, Chap. 4:60, Bill No. 2 on the Order Paper. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question on the Motion for the adjournment, you will recall that a motion was raised by the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East last Friday. Of course, the hon. Minister of National Security was not available at the time to respond and we did agree that he would respond today to this particular Motion. I now call on the hon. Minister of National Security to so do.

Dismantling of Security Systems

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mandate of the Ministry of National Security is threefold: maintaining law and order, public safety and defence against aggression; managing disaster preparedness and relief; and monitoring and controlling the flow of persons into and out of the country. Collectively, they form the national security mandate. Mr. Speaker, this cannot be fulfilled through any single agency or unit, but through the collaborative efforts of the eight primary arms of the Ministry of National Security, as well as other governmental and non-governmental bodies at the local and international level.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, this country's security sector would have to be quite fragile to be dismantled and/or undermined—to use the words in the Motion—by the efforts of the People's Partnership Government to increase their efficiency through review and rationalization of their operations. I want to further suggest that what is, in fact, happening is a restructuring exercise in which key agencies of the Ministry of National Security are being legitimized.

Dismantling of Security System
[SEN. THE HON. BRIG. J. SANDY]

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Mr. Speaker, if this Government is to assure the citizenry of a safe and secure environment, we must be sure that each arm of the national security entity is operating in an efficient manner so as to achieve the best results in the interest of national security. We must be sure that they are well equipped and resourced to undertake the functions assigned to them, and that they remain abreast of international best practices.

Mr. Speaker, as the Government of this country, we must also take all necessary steps to ensure that while the security of the country is not jeopardized, that the rights of our citizens are not trampled upon unjustifiably under the guise of maintaining security. This is a fine line that we must guard assiduously. As I said earlier in piloting the Interception of Communications Bill, Mr. Speaker, public safety and security must be achieved by means of a legitimate comprehensive and well-coordinated security framework.

I also underscored the importance of enacting and implementing legislation to regulate the sensitive issue, so as to ensure the required authorization, as well as the institutionalization of proper checks and balances to guarantee accountability, and the upkeep and respect of basic human rights. Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, this Government is insistent that the security of our nation cannot be compromised in order for us to protect the status quo. Protecting the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago must and will be the paramount consideration. [*Desk thumping*]

In the Motion, reference is made to drug interdiction, which seems to be an allusion to the offshore patrol programme. Mr. Speaker, I have put into the public domain, on more than one occasion, the issues surrounding this Government's decision to terminate the OPV programme. I have also shared with Members of this honourable House this Government's plans to comprehensively review the needs of the protective services so as to systematically determine and address their needs.

This evening, Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to dwell further on those issues, but to apprise the Members of this honourable House of the situation as it pertains to the two agencies mentioned in the Motion; the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Security Intelligence Agency. Erroneously stated by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Mr. Speaker—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: As usual.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:—and I wish to quote here:

“...why has the Government done what it has done; the dismantling of the Special Anti-Crime Unit, the dismantling of the Special Intelligence Agency.”

I wish to state categorically, Mr. Speaker, that neither the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago nor the Security Intelligence Agency has been dismantled. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, when the People's Partnership assumed office, the hon. Prime Minister, together with the Attorney General and the Minister of National Security, noted several concerns being expressed about the modus operandi of the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago and its operations. Having thoroughly considered the information at hand, the People's Partnership Government took the decision that the Special Anti-Crime Unit should be restructured. It was also determined that the proposed restructuring of SAUTT called for a different type of competence more suited to the revised structure.

Having regard to the urgent and immediate nature of the matter, Cabinet, in September of 2010, agreed inter alia to, one, the termination of the appointment of Brigadier Joseph as Director of SAUTT, effective December 21, 2010; two, the establishment of a steering committee to oversee the restructuring of SAUTT, review the operations of SAUTT, make recommendations and report to the Minister of National Security on the outcome of the review, with such recommendations to be submitted for the consideration of Cabinet; and, three, to the appointment of Colonel Albert Griffith as interim director of SAUTT, pending the completion of the review exercise and the submission to Cabinet of the recommendations emanating therefrom.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this honourable House that the work of that steering committee is progressing well, and given the urgency of the situation, the committee was given a three-month period to complete its exercise. As part of the committee's mandate, it has to consider the viability of and produce an administrative plan to, one, streamline and amalgamate all other intelligence units so that they may be housed under one agency with overall jurisdiction and responsibility for gathering criminal intelligence; as well as, two, establish one comprehensive training academy under the aegis of SAUTT.

Mr. Speaker, the findings and recommendations of the steering committee will be used by Government to chart the way forward for the unit, now referred to as the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago.

I now turn to the Security Intelligence Agency. The People's Partnership Government is of the view that despite the significant resources provided to the Security Intelligence Agency during the past 16 years, the successes have been limited and there has been little or no significant reduction in serious criminal

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activities. We are also suggesting that the absence of legislation governing the interception of communications and the functions of the Security Intelligence Agency may have contributed to this unsatisfactory state of affairs.

In the absence of legislation, the information garnered from intercept can only be described, as well as treated as, intelligence which cannot be introduced as evidence in a court. Without intelligence that could be used as evidence, the chances of solving crimes are severely diminished and this runs counter to the Government's initiatives to combat the serious crime problem. The information obtained by means of interception is, therefore open to question.

Mr. Speaker, investigations conducted have revealed that the interception of communication capabilities and activities of the security agencies were improperly used. The absence of a legislative framework to regulate and govern the interception of communication had, therefore, facilitated the misuse and abuse of this capability. In the circumstances, there was a clear need for legal guidance, safeguards and oversight. This will ensure that interception is conducted with proper authorization and used in the fight against crime and the protection of national security.

Mr. Speaker, the People's Partnership Government established an interministerial committee, chaired by the Minister of National Security, comprising the Attorney General, the Minister of Legal Affairs, and the Minister of Justice, which conducted several interviews relative to the issue of unlawful interception and the possible misuse of such information. The committee interviewed several persons and was able to confirm the improper and illegal widespread interception of private communications of several prominent persons in government and in high public office.

There was no clear justification for such interception in gathering such communication in the fight against crime. In the light of misuse and abuse of the interception capabilities, the committee recommended the immediate removal of the Director of the Strategic Services Agency. Mr. Speaker, on a point of clarification, as part of the restructuring of the security sector, the Strategic Services Agency is the main body under which the national intelligence capability is being subsumed. In continuing this process of integration, and in keeping with the recommendations of the Major General Ross Report, the Security Intelligence Agency was placed under the umbrella of the Strategic Services Agency, and a single director appointed to oversee the operations of both agencies.

Mr. Speaker, as the strengthening and coordination of the intelligence sector continues, we must ensure that there is no recurrence of the situation. Cabinet agreed, therefore, that the Ministry of the Attorney General pursue the introduction of legislation to govern the interception of communications. Passage of this Bill was secured in this honourable House only days ago, and in keeping with this development, it became necessary to pursue critical institutional changes. I am advised, Mr. Speaker, that this was assented to by His Excellency the President, and as we speak, it is now law in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in this regard, Cabinet has agreed that in order to meet the primary mandate of the Strategic Services Agency, it is necessary to have the in-house expertise of other senior officers to assist the director. In light of this need, it was proposed that additional positions be established within the Strategic Services Agency; the incumbents of which will report directly to the director, given the critical importance of the role this agency is expected to fulfil.

These activities do not reflect any attempt to undermine this country's security network. On the contrary, they are deliberate and meticulous actions aimed at bolstering that sector. These are the actions that we feel are necessary to ultimately reverse the current crime situation in this country.

Mr. Speaker, national security is a serious issue with serious and far-reaching implications. Each decision that this Government has taken to date, therefore, has required it to comprehensively explore the pros and cons, and to make determinations that given all circumstances, will be in the best interest of all. We feel confident that we have been doing that. We hear the detractors but we continue to keep our eyes on the goal; a safer and more secure Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me assure the citizens of our beloved nation, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of the People's Partnership has their best interest at heart and we will not take any action whatsoever that could be detrimental to this country and the people who reside here. We must return our people and our beloved country to a safe and secure Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Final Sitting of The House

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question for the adjournment, I just want to inform Members that I have been informed that next week Friday, which is the 10th, will be the last sitting before we take our little

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break for the season. This is what I have been informed, so based on that information, I would like to alert Members that we are preparing an end of the year Christmas get-together for all our Members on that evening. So, do not arrange any other engagement for that evening. After the Parliament, when we would have adjourned to a date to be fixed, we will then revert to our get-together in the evening. I would like you to put it in your diaries now so that you will keep it clear for that day. Okay?

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.13 p.m.