

**THE**  
**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**  
**OFFICIAL REPORT**

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON JUNE 18, 2010

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Member of Parliament for Siparia and Prime Minister, is presently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. I have also received communication from the hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, who is also out of the country on Government business and has also asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. And Miss Marlene McDonald, Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South, is unwell and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which these Members seek is granted.

**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**

**The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Mr. Speaker, for the record, the Government is in a position to answer the sole one question on the Order Paper today. There are no questions for written answer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a provisional check by the Government indicates that indeed we do not have any questions coming up in a hurry, so we will deal with the one today and await filing by our very few friends opposite. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Prime Minister of Russia**  
**(Invitation)**

- 60. Mr. Nileung Hypolite** (*Laventille West*) on behalf of Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (Point Fortin) asked the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs:
- (a) Was the Prime Minister of Russia, Vladimir Putin, invited to Trinidad and Tobago?

*Oral Answer to Question*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

- (b) If yes, on whose authority was a decision taken to invite this head of government to Trinidad and Tobago?
- (c) If the authority was not the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, can the Minister state who or what organization issued this invitation to a head of government?

**The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I could respond to the question for the Member for Laventille West, who asked on behalf of the Member for Point Fortin.

Mr. Speaker, question No. 60(a): Invitations to a head of government, forwarded from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago are done, on the direction of the Office of the Prime Minister and approved by Cabinet. Comprehensive investigations with the Office of the Prime Minister and within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have revealed, pursuant to the question part (a); that there has been no invitation issued by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, to the Prime Minister of Russia, Vladimir Putin. Further, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can verify that no other organization has issued any such invitation through the appropriate diplomatic channels.

#### STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I understand that there is a statement under “Statements by Ministers” to be made, but that statement would be deferred and we will want to revert to that matter sometime later on in the proceedings. Do I have your concurrence and agreement?

*[Assent indicated]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

#### SIA FILES/DATA (Government’s Handling of)

[Second Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [Friday, January 28, 2011]:*

*Be it resolved* that this honorable House condemn the action of the Government:

*And be it further resolved* that the Government report immediately to Parliament on how it has handled, and is handling the SIA files/data so as to

give citizens the assurance that the SIA's actions no longer pose a threat to their interest or that of national security. [Dr. K. Rowley]

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** The list of those who spoke thus far is the mover of the Motion, the Member for Diego Martin West, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, and the hon. Minister of National Security.

**Mr. Nileung Hypolite (Laventille West):** We wish to request a suspension of the House for about 15 minutes as we await the arrival of the Member who was supposed to speak on this matter next, who is tied up in traffic right there on St. Vincent Street. [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to understand what is happening here. The Member for Laventille West is not the person to speak. There is a Member who is tied up in traffic from Diego Martin Central, who is in traffic and is not here with us, and we want to suspend or adjourn the House? [Crosstalk] Suspend?

Mr. Speaker, in those circumstances, could we ask the Member on the Government side who is not in traffic and who is present here this afternoon, and is prepared to contribute—I will ask that the Government contribute on this matter?

**Mr. Speaker:** A proposal is before the floor, or a suggestion I should say, and it appears that the Government is not in favour of the suspension. Would you be kind enough to at least respond to his request?

**Mr. Hypolite:** Mr. Speaker, under those circumstances we will of course allow the Government to go forward. [Crosstalk]

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Goopeesingh):** Mr. Speaker, this motion that the Opposition brought out which was Motion No. 1 on the Order Paper, I would like to read the Motion first to give some indication of what the intention of the Opposition was, but in doing so they alluded and accepted that what the Government had been doing on this issue of crime was extremely good. The first part of the Motion says:

*“Whereas Parliament was advised that a component of the national security system (SIA) has for years been operating without the requisite legal authorization and may have violated the constitutional rights of citizens as it collected information of an unspecified nature;*

*And whereas Parliament has acted swiftly to rectify the situation in the interest of national security and the recognition of citizens' rights to unwarranted intrusion into their private affairs;*

*And whereas the Government has failed to treat responsibly with the body of information accumulated by the SIA;”*

*SIA Files/Data*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

**1.40 p.m.**

The first two parts of this Motion indicate that the national security system SIA has been for years operating without the requisite legal authorization. This SIA seemed to have been operating for the last 13 years but, basically, when it came in 2003, we told the Government at that time that they needed to bring legislation to make it legal. So from since 2003—2010 the SIA had been acting and operating illegally over a seven-year period and collecting information and the general public was unsuspecting as to what type of information was being collected.

It was only when we came into Government that we began to investigate some of the allegations that were being made about the information collected by the SIA, and it was when the Prime Minister addressed Parliament in November—I want to quote from some of the areas that the Prime Minister spoke about. She said that the Government was of the view that it had dealt with the problem of illegal wiretapping.

So for seven years the then administration continued to have illegal wiretapping despite the urgings of the population and the Opposition at that time, when we were in opposition, that they should have made that SIA legal. So the government was operating illegally over a long period of time and it was only when the Prime Minister and this Government came into power in November of last year, the Prime Minister discovered that there was a lot of illegal tapping going on. That aroused a lot of anger in the population. My colleague, Minister Brig. Sandy, when he came into Parliament here, spoke about an alarming discovery all engineered and overseen by a sick mind, a manic mind and a manic man.

Hon. Brig. Sandy said that:

“..those intent on being mischievous”—was suggesting—“that the Government was dismantling or undermining national security agencies, systems and strategies...”

He went on to say that:

“What we are attempting to do is dismantle”—is the—“dictatorial power of a sick mind, a manic mind, a manic man. Never again in this country must citizens be exposed to that manifestation of tyranny. Never again!”

What we saw occurring for seven years with the SIA was the work of desperate minds. People felt great discomfort in the revelations made by the hon. Prime Minister that the Security Intelligence Agency had been spying on law-

abiding citizens such as the President and other people. I want to quote from the *Newsday*, of Saturday, November 20, 2010. *Newsday* describes it as:

“‘Outrage! ‘Abused!’ ‘Fractured and violated!’ ‘Under siege!’ ‘Sordid invasion!’ ‘Raped privacy!’ ‘Troubling and vexing’ were some of the sentiments expressed by members of a stunned national community.”

These were some of the statements made by citizens and this was the feeling when it was discovered that the SIA was acting illegally and spying on people.

I quote from November 19, 2009:

“The Judiciary, headed by Chief Justice Ivor Archie, yesterday slapped down the position taken by former Prime Minister Patrick Manning that no law-abiding citizen had anything to fear...”

That is what the hon. Prime Minister at that time said, who was Patrick Manning:

“(from wiretapping by the (Strategic Intelligence Agency) SIA), saying that this ‘bold assertion’ (by Manning) was ‘insulting’ and ‘displayed a shocking disregard for the rule of law.’”

**Mr. Speaker:** I want you to be very careful. I want Members to refer to Standing Order 18(g)(vii). That must be read in conjunction with 36(10). No newspaper article impugning the character of any Member of this honourable House can be used as an excuse by any Member to so continue the assassination or the impugning or engaging in personal reflections, either on the character or the conduct of any Member. I have advised Members, if you want to go that route, please bring a substantive Motion to deal with the conduct of a Member. So I would ask you to refrain from continuing the Judiciary statement that is reflecting on a Member’s conduct in this honourable House. Please be guided.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I am guided, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the guidance. [*Desk thumping*] The article goes on to state—there was:

“...‘systematic and widespread electronic surveillance of private citizens by an agency known as the SIA’, Archie called on the Government to “take steps to ensure the destruction of all illegally obtained material under the supervision of an independent third party’.

‘Given the broad sweep of the SIA’s surveillance’—at that time—“one is driven to the conclusion that the only rational explanation for some of the ‘wiretapping’ is that it was conducted with the hope of acquiring ‘negative’ personal information that might be used as leverage”—against the people.

*SIA Files/Data*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

It added: ““in the case of the Judiciary, the inevitable consequence would be an undermining of its independence and the proper administration of justice.’

‘What cannot be tolerated is any arbitrary intrusion into anyone’s private affairs with no legal or legislative foundation””

We spoke about that for years, that there was supposed to have been legislation, but nothing was done about it and for seven years that administration continued their illegal wiretapping against people and the private lives of people.

The Chief Justice went on to say that:

““The Judiciary is appalled by the apparent nonchalance with which it has been asserted that law-abiding citizens had nothing to fear and that a mandate had been given to the SIA to monitor only those who came to its attention as a result of genuine criminal investigations.’

The Judiciary noted that there was no system in place of auditing or supervision to ensure that the SIA stayed within its mandate.”

So for seven years the SIA worked and continued to spy on individuals and citizens throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Who were they reporting to? Who was the director of SIA reporting to? About three months ago the former Minister of National Security indicated that they were reporting to the then Prime Minister at that time. So all the information that they collected on private citizens—it is important to restate the people and the type of people who were being spied upon during that time by the last administration, from 2003—2010.

The wiretapping and the net cast was far and wide and no one escaped the secret wiretapping operation, as the net was inexplicably cast very far and wide by that last administration, by the people involved in the SIA reporting then to hon. Prime Minister at that time, the Member for San Fernando East. Subjects included members of the Judiciary, trade unionists, editors and journalists, media houses, radio talk-show hosts, comedians, persons in the entertainment industry, former Opposition Members of Parliament, Government Ministers, sports personalities, businessmen, newspaper columnists, advertising executives, county councillors, lawyers and, in some cases, the children of such persons.

Such activity cannot be condoned as it represents a clear and present danger to our democracy. [*Desk thumping*] Words cannot express the deep sense of personal outrage felt by all these individuals who had their privacy tapped. Such an unwarranted and unjustified invasion of citizens’ privacy is definitely a cause

for alarm, and this is why you had the statements of outrage, abuse—the people felt abused. Fractured and violated, under siege, sordid invasion, raped privacy, troubling and vexing, were some of the sentiments expressed by the people of the society.

The tap list went further than that. It had a list of a number of politicians, members of the Judiciary, even my colleague, the Member for St. Joseph's name was on the list. There was Justice Narine, Madam Justice Carol Gobin, the Chief Justice. Sat Sharma's name was on that list as well; his wife.

**Mr. Peters:** My own too.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And who were they reporting to? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney, let us have some silence and I would like you to observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c) respectively. Would you allow the Member to make his contribution in silence? Otherwise, this evening, I want to let you know that if this thing continues, I will ask Members to be excused before I order you to be excused. Could you kindly continue, hon. Member? [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Speaker, their net—that last PNM administration from 2001—2010, went far and wide. It even went to media personnel. Targets included people who were supposed to be looking after the freedom of the press enshrined in our Constitution. The widespread wiretapping of journalists and media houses undermines the important pillar in our democracy. That is what that last administration did; they undermined the institution of our democratic freedom of the press and journalists such as Dale Enoch, Shelley Dass, Francis Joseph, Ian Alleyne, Inshan Ishmael, Ken Ali, Devant Maraj, Peter O'Connor and Camini Maharaj. All their phones were tapped. For what reason? Was there a paranoia by the last administration that everybody was against them? What was the reason for the paranoia? Were we in a Mugabe state? Were we in a state of Ton Ton Macoute? Were we in a state of Guyana when Burnham was in power at the time?

We were subjected to the inhumane erosion of our privacy by an administration which had no bounds to tap into people's private lives. And who did they report to? Who did the SIA report to? The Member for San Fernando East, who was the hon. Prime Minister at that time, has a lot of questions to answer.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member, I have asked you do not raise the conduct or personal reflections, either on the character or the conduct of any Member of this honourable House. If you wish to do so, please use 36(10). Give due notice and

*SIA Files/Data*  
[MR. SPEAKER]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

move a Motion to deal with that matter, but do not refer to any Member of this House in terms of personal reflections on their character or conduct; that goes for all Members of this honourable House. Please be guided. This is my second intervention.

**1.55 p.m.**

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am guided. Mr. Speaker, I am just simply stating that the National Security System (SIA) was reporting to the hon. Prime Minister who was Member for San Fernando East.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I have ruled. Do not challenge my ruling. Move on, please?

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I am guided, Mr. Speaker. There were other prominent personalities, the trade union movement which was subjected to this erosion of democracy; the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre now, Mr. Errol McLeod; Mr. Clyde Weatherhead; Mr. Rudy Indarsingh, now Member for Couva South; David Abdullah now a Senator, Mr. Robert Guiseppi, Mr. Lyle Townsend and there were other prominent personalities.

Even their own PNM officials were subjected to this wiretapping. Former government ministers were also on the subject of wiretapping. They included the Member for Diego Martin North East, Sen. Pernelle Beckles-Robinson, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, Sen. Al-Rawi and even the Member for Diego Martin West was on the list. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant tried to deny that her phone was wiretapped. Do you know what the Member for Diego Martin West said. "Do not blame PNM for the actions of one man, Manning. He condemned the SIA for invading the privacy of citizens including himself and President Richards." That is what the Member for Deigo Martin West said. I want to repeat it again. He said, "Do not blame the PNM for the action of one man, Manning." He condemned the SIA for invading the privacy of citizens including himself. That is now the Leader of the Opposition.

"...Caricom's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), made it abundantly clear that it was neither an error nor a laughing matter"— that is the invasion of the privacy of our citizens. They said that "...extensive and intrusive spying activities"... and spying epidemic, with "... dirty activities by an uncovered... SIA... out of control with millions of dollars and a quantity of sophisticated weapons at its disposal". Mr. Speaker, they had weapons, a quantity of weapons in the offices of the SIA.



There were “...gross human rights violations” and “TSTT and... Digicel were ‘commanded’ to open their facilities to the (SIA) for its wiretapping operations.”— They were commanded. Digicel, however, said that they were”... assured that the equipment would be used solely for investigating issues of national security...” within their compliance but they never knew that—they knew that they were being instructed to participate in something illegal, which was the illegal wiretapping of the phones of private citizens.

MATT, which is the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago, said that it was a... “dangerous infringement on the rights of journalists to effectively and efficiently perform their duties with the freedom enshrined in the constitution.” If it is used for the mandate it was supposed to be used for crime would have been “significantly less today.” The Member for Deigo Martin North East said that it was a distraction.

The former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. ANR Robinson, said he was shocked to learn of its existence, and it undermines the country’s democracy. He said he was alarmed and amazed. I did not think that this was possible in Trinidad. These are some of the statements made by citizens of Trinidad and Tobago when they found that their privacy had been invaded by a government that sought to bring on a dictatorship and tried to get information on the lives of every citizen.

They used blackmail. Lives were at risk. People were being followed by black, heavily tinted vehicles, after their phones were tapped. They got calls in the middle of the night, harassing calls in the middle of the night, by people set up by the SIA at the time. People were being run off the road. There were journalists who were run off the road on two occasions and they tried to kill them. They went through the emails of children and spouses. Mr. Speaker, you would remember one day you yourself, were almost run off the road when you were coming from Rienzi back to your home.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please leave the Speaker out of debate.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Speaker, you know I was only trying to protect—[*Crosstalk*—and you know that I was trying to protect your life at that time. We were in a Gestapo state, with a Mugabe style of dictatorship, and we had no police to report anything to at that time because they were controlled by SAUTT, an illegal arm of the State which was operating illegally from 2004 and was reporting then to the Attorney General.

Almost 600 officers in SAUTT and you could not have made any complaint or anything to SAUTT, because it went back to the head of these organizations. And who controlled those organizations, SAUTT? After spending almost 600 million a year on SAUTT people had no recourse to anything. So they were blackmailed, their phones were tapped and yet still they had no ability to go to anybody to complain.

Mr. Speaker, the industry of professional bodyguards grew. Who were the real police in that time? Who were the secret police? And who were the troops of the former administration? Citizens were left dumfounded; they were confused as to who were the real police in this country, and who were the police operating under the arm of the former administration for their own private business.

Colleagues would meet you in the corridors of Parliament and tell you where you went. How did they know that? Because that administration from 2003—2010 went mercilessly against individuals who dared to oppose them.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Shame!

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And that was an administration that never wanted to fire or dismiss the Minister of National Security at that time, who was Mr. Martin Joseph. It had come to our understanding that the Minister of National Security had handed in his resignation to the Prime Minister at that time, and it was refused. We were made to understand that it was not only once he handed in the resignation, but twice and three times, and it was refused, despite the outcry of the population at that time.

The drug trade was flourishing in one of the piers, owned by a Member of their government at that time. There were drugs found on the airport runway in a diplomatic pouch going to another country, and then there was a pouch found on the runway, empty. What was happening at that time? How many drug lords were operating at that time under the former administration? But they used the wiretapping to get information on private citizens, [*Desk thumping*] when they should have been using the information against the drug lords of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Who did they go after in the Monos Island drug bust? Seven minnows that they held—seven minnows. Was anybody held for that, anybody of any significance? And on the same day that they held the people in the Monos Island drug bust, within 24 hours a warehouse on the Churchill Roosevelt Highway was burnt. What was happening?

**2.05 p.m.**

With the equipment that was brought for the SIA, there was extraordinary abuse of political power aided and abetted by a group of sycophants with no respect for the rule of law. There was abuse of power and this agency abused its power in this country by spying on the President, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Imagine, you are spying on the President who is supposed to be the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

They had access to large amounts of unaccountable cash. Five point nine million dollars was found in the offices of the SIA. With a slush fund they were paying friends and family to spy on other people. They were employing their own people, and they want to come within the last month or so and talk about Reshmi Ramnarine and so on, and a massive destruction for the destruction that they caused upon the citizens of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

The real issue at the time was the illegal wiretapping that was used by that administration for their own purpose, to hound down people who opposed them. There was a deliberate attempt to hound down and get at other people, and the people became fed up. Therefore, when the election was called, the people had no hesitation in voting them out completely, because the people were fed up with what they were doing. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** Vote them out.

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Call one now.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Speaker, they had no oversight by the legislative aspect for these intelligence services. We were supposed to have had parliamentary oversight, we were supposed to have had legislation, and we were asking them for a long time where was their parliamentary oversight for security of intelligence services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on to not only the wiretapping, but emails were being monitored. The interception was not limited to telephone calls, but included the monitoring of people's emails as well. One list that was provided to the Prime Minister by the Commissioner of Police contains the names of every single Government Minister in the People's Partnership. Do you know what is sad? Even the names of children were included on that list. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I have given you and this House today a sample of some of the persons whose telephones were tapped, and whose emails were being intercepted by the SIA since 2003. I gave you this with a heavy heart. The intrusion into the personal and private lives by virtue of this cannot be and should never have been accepted.

So under the former government, big brother seemed to have taken a very keen interest in ordinary citizens' private lives and affairs. What became even worse, there was a question of sanitization subsequent to this. When it was discovered that this illegal spying activity was taking place by the last administration, a massive sanitization operation took place after the general election in May.

Empty folders carrying the names of the individuals who were the subject of interception were found. Other records of taped conversations and transcriptions of conversations had been removed and destroyed. We may never know of all the persons whose right to privacy was compromised by this unlawful intrusion of wiretapping, and this unlawful wiretapping went beyond the May 24th election. The wiretapping continued after the results of the last general election. It is alleged that information gathered by the SIA was secretly being siphoned to a certain Opposition MP.

Mr. Speaker, where we should have been using the instruments, the equipment, to fight crime, it was never used. I want to give some statistics on what happened in this country for years while they had this equipment but nothing was done. Where they should have been using this equipment to fight crime, they were using it to spy on individuals of this country, and that administration has the audacity and the temerity to come and accuse this Government of anything untoward as far as the SIA was concerned. They moved with impunity over the last seven years, from 2003—2010, and destroyed the lives of individual citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Permit me to give some statistics of what happened in this country from 2001, and I have figures up to 2008. In terms of the crime statistics for serious crimes:

- In 2001 there were 15,722;
- In 2002 there were 16,811;
- In 2003 there were 16,890, which included murder, woundings and shootings, rape, incest, sexual offences, serious indecency, kidnapping, burglaries and break-ins, robberies, larceny including motor vehicles, narcotics offences and other serious crimes;
- In 2004, there were 16,387;
- In 2005, there were 17,989;
- In 2006, there were 19,654; and
- In 2007 there were 19,112.

I did not get the figures for 2008, 2009 and 2010.

So for seven years, between 2001—2007 of their administration, there were 127,909 serious crimes perpetrated against this population and supervised by an administration that seemed not to care. With Ministers of National Security who were unable to do anything about it, there were 127,909 serious crimes in seven years? This was inflicted upon this population, and they want to come and say we are not doing anything about crime since we have taken over for eight months? We have placed upon our shoulders the responsibility of their total mismanagement as far as the criminal activity situation in this country over the last nine years.

What they could not have solved and what they allowed to continue for nine years, they expect us to solve in just eight months? They have no moral authority to come and say anything about us.

**Hon. Member:** None!

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** None! None whatsoever!

**Hon. Member:** No authority whatsoever.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Speaker, the kidnappings only started in this country in 2001 when they took over.

**Dr. Browne:** What?

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** In 2001 there were six kidnappings for ransom; in 2002, there were 29; in 2003 there were 51; in 2004 there were 28; in 2005 there were 42; in 2006 there were 16; and in 2007 there were 13. I do not have the figures for 2008 and 2009. Kidnappings for ransom—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** Why it went down?

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** There were children who died as a result of the kidnapping. My recollection is that at least nine children died as a result of it. When they had all the equipment from the Israeli company, which the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago at that time went to purchase, or have some discussion with the Israeli Government or Israeli company to purchase equipment so that they could intercept conversations of criminals—in fact, when that equipment was brought to Trinidad, it was used by the last administration, not to intercept criminal activity, but to intercept the personal lives of people and their conversations, they allowed 127,000 serious crimes within a seven-year period to continue.

What was the detection rate? The detection rate was less than about 5 to 10 per cent maximum. So out of 127,000 crimes, you have a 10 per cent detection rate—12,000 were detected. What was the conviction rate? They had a conviction rate of less than 1 per cent, and this is an administration which said that they were not able to do anything about crime? Nothing! Where they should have been using the SIA to do the work to control the crime and the criminal element, they used it for nefarious purposes and so on. *[Interruption]*

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Hood Report condemned that.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Yes, and the Hood Report condemned that.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to go back to the contribution made by the Member for Diego Martin West when he spoke on January 28, 2011 on this Private Motion. He tried to condemn this administration and this Government and cast aspersions upon the Prime Minister in terms of the information that was collected by the SIA. We came into office in May 2010. Information was collected from since 2003 to 2010. We do not have a clue about what went on with that information, because when the Anti-Corruption Bureau went into the offices of the SIA, there were empty files. All the contents of those files were missing and the jackets were there with the names of people.

We ask: where are the contents of those files? If this is one of the areas that is being asked on the Motion:—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Browne:** In November?

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh**—“...that the Government report immediately to Parliament on how it has handled, and is handling the SIA files/data so as to give citizens the assurance that the SIA’s actions no longer pose a threat to their interest or that of national security.”

we want to ask those on the other side: what has happened to the information and the contents of those files in the SIA’s office? The names of individuals who were opposed to their administration are still there, but the contents are no longer there. Mr. Speaker, I would sit and await an answer from anybody on that side to tell us what they did with the contents of those files for the last seven years. We would like them to answer that because the answer is to them. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. De Coteau:** You will wait forever.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Nobody will get up. They know where those files are, and they know what they were trying to do with those files. Before the Interception of Communications Bill was passed, why was the Member for San

Fernando East so anxious and eager to come and join the proceedings and speak about the SIA? I just wanted to ask that question. Before the Interception of Communications Bill, why was the Member for San Fernando East so eager to speak on this issue of the SIA and about people on this side?

I would not be surprised if that information is held by people or is still being held by individuals on the other side. There is no one on that side who will get up to deny that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). We are not holding any information.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, the Member's point is sustained. Just bypass that point and move on, please?

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I just simply asked a question and I said that I am not going to be surprised. When the Member for Diego Martin West tried to impugn the conduct of the hon. Prime Minister, he knew he had no ground to stand on.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I have ruled on that matter in the last debate on the Motion, and we should not resurrect a matter that I have already ruled on. I have ruled on that matter. Could you continue, please?

### 2.20 p.m.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I just wanted to say that it was important to put into *Hansard* that he had to withdraw and withdrew on three occasions and he apologized; trying to impugn the character of other people, he had to withdraw on three occasions and to apologize, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, under their administration, it even went further than the wiretapping and so on. It went into criminal activity within the prisons service. When they could have utilized the services of the spying SIA to do the correct things, they were not able to do it. I read from an article of Thursday, December 04, 2008 from the *Newsday*.

“The fact that 1,184 cell-phones were confiscated from inmates over the past five years seems to indicate a basic breakdown in the nation's prisons system. However, the extent of that breakdown really depends on who had these cell-phones and why.”

How can a Government and an administration, with all that technology before them, allow 1,184 cell-phones to be in the prisons, in use?

*SIA Files/Data*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

“This number divides to just over 200 cell-phones confiscated every year. Since the average prison population is just under 4,000, this means that only one in every 20 prisoners had access to these phones—fewer, if several of the phones were obtained by particular inmates, or more if calls on the phones became part of the barter system that exists in all prisons. But the phones themselves aren’t the real problem.”

I am quoting from the *Newsday*:

“The real issue is bribery of prison guards and the kinds of calls made on these cell-phones.”

Mr. Speaker, what is alarming, the newspaper report says:

“...the authorities have not been able to catch even one officer supplying the phones to inmates.”

They had all that sophisticated equipment, \$61 million in equipment brought from Israel, but allowing 1,800 phones to be within the prison service and hits being ordered. And you know what the article says, Mr. Speaker?

**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. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The newspaper article of *Newsday* said “Shot call”. So they were using the cell-phones from inside the prisons to make hits on people outside. And do you know what the article says:

“But the even more worrying aspect of this issue is the purpose for which the cell-phones were acquired. Since the authorities have been confiscating them for the past five years, it would seem axiomatic that the National Security Ministry would have used its Israeli spy equipment to monitor inmates’ calls.”

Why did they not do it? And the article says:

“But perhaps they were too busy listening in on Opposition politicians and politicians opposed to the Prime Minister. At any rate, it has long been rumoured that incarcerated gang leaders have been able to ‘call shots’ from behind bars—ie keep their organisations running and put out hits on rivals.”



This was happening. I just want to read this part again.

“But perhaps they were too busy listening in on Opposition politicians and politicians opposed to the Prime Minister.”

Mr. Speaker, it is important for this nation to know, they tried to make a big scene of the SIA and Reshmi Ramnarine and so on but who did they have before? They had a soldier by the name of Mr. Clement, a soldier who, over a period of time, nobody knew, on whom nobody had any information and about whom nobody cared at that time.

But what did he do? Was he an agent of the Government who did the dirty work for the administration at that time? And when the Anti-Corruption Bureau went inside the SIA agency, they found that these files with the jackets, the contents were missing. They found guns and ammunition. They found millions of dollars in cash. What were they being used for? There was money laundering taking place in the SIA at that time. This country must know what happened from 2003—2010. It was heinous acts that were—criminal acts that were perpetrated in the SIA between 2003—2010 by that last administration. Guns were there; money laundering; money was being given to people for spying on other people. That was totally unacceptable. And hear the list of names of the people in Trinidad and Tobago who had been subjected to that type of merciless intrusion into their privacy, Mr. Speaker.

Everyone wondered and everybody in this country wondered: why did the former Prime Minister call a snap election last year on May 24? Nobody seems to know the reason. Nobody saw it coming. I will tell you why; why it has to do with SIA. Not even his closest allies and friends in the PNM, no one knew. None of his Cabinet ministers knew what was happening and many of them have said subsequently, to me and many other members, that they were shocked that their former boss choose to call the election at a time when the MORI Polls they used to waste millions of taxpayers dollars to poll their performance, these same MORI Polls showed that the PNM, and its then leader, the Member for San Fernando East, were at the lowest rating in popularity since the 1980s, when the late George Chambers was the Prime Minister. Why did he call the election?

The then PNM Government could have stayed in office with their comfortable majority and continued for their full term. So it came as a shock that on Thursday, April 08, 2010, last year in the evening, the then Prime Minister announced that

they had dissolved Parliament. Mr. Speaker, it is instructive that this dissolution of Parliament came a day before the then Opposition Leader—the hon. Prime Minister now—had a Motion of No Confidence in the then Prime Minister. That announcement came one day before the Motion of No Confidence in the then Prime Minister.

So what do you think happened in the mind of the then Prime Minister for him to call an election one day before the Motion of No Confidence? Because he suspected what was coming to him. Mr. Speaker, the question remains: what was he so afraid of, that he preferred to risk his Government and the power that he loved so much and so deeply, rather than face 12 Opposition MPs at the time, speaking for 75 minutes each, on a No Confidence Motion against him? We could not have defeated him. We had 12 and they had a majority, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that, what people did not know was that at least three weeks before this Motion of No Confidence, there were a few of us—myself included and two other people—whose names were on the spy list that was read out in Parliament. We met at my then office in St. Clair, Broome Street, to discuss some crucial information to reveal in this planned No Confidence Motion.

### **2.30p.m.**

We had crucial evidence and information to reveal in this planned No Confidence Motion, which could have shown the former Prime Minister's questionable involvement in the Guanapo Church Project.

I am reliably informed—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not want to get into that aspect. I have ruled accordingly, personal reflections. Do not go there. In other words, a substantive Motion on the conduct of any Member must be raised, and that goes for all Members. So, once you are going, Member for Caroni East, to the personal character or conduct of a Member of this House, I ask that you refrain yourself and bring a substantive Motion against the particular Member.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Okay, Mr. Speaker, I am guided. [*Desk thumping*] The point I was coming to is that we were followed to my office and everyone knew that we had information that would have destroyed the government at that time, on the No Confidence Motion. That information was revealed at a subsequent time, during our election campaign, particularly on the Guanapo Church issue. There were many other pieces of information that we had. The

point I was making is that we were followed, because of information collected through the SIA and sent to particular individuals on that other side and because of the information, it allowed the hon. Prime Minister at that time to feel frightened that such a thing would probably destroy his government and he moved to call an election. Thank God he called the election, because we were just waiting for him. [Desk thumping]

I want to tell the country today, that is one of the areas which caused the downfall the same SIA which they were propagating and using to their own benefit, caused the downfall of the PNM administration because they used it and used it and used it until they fell in the same trap that they were using it for. Mr. Speaker, I was reliably informed about this so I am not casting aspersions on anybody, but I am giving the facts because this is what happened.

There were a number of articles written in all the newspapers. Sunday, November 14, 2010, the editorial of the *Newsday* destroyed the former administration and made significant comments about people and about disgraceful statements made by other people. The majority of citizens of the country took offence to what was happening.

The Leader of the Opposition now, the Member for Diego Martin West, described the revelations in Parliament at that time when the Prime Minister spoke, as filling him with shame and sadness. He went on to say:

“...the prime minister in the cabinet, of which I served, was having information which I consider”—and he paused—“I can’t tell you how I feel to know that I was the subject of that...”

The editorial of the *Newsday* said:

“...how can we not, given the fact that the PNM government was comprised not only of a Prime Minister but of many others ably supported by thousands of people who, we suspect, knew what was going on, but turned a blind eye because it was more convenient to do so.”

People of their own administration. Some of them knew what was happening but turned a blind eye because they could not have done anything about it, because it was masterminded and controlled by particular individuals for their own political gain and tyranny against others who dared to oppose them. This is what this country suffered. For seven years we were going through that.

Then they compounded it by introducing the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT). From 2004 they brought an organization that was illegal. The spying even took place in SAUTT. They used SAUTT officers to do the

*SIA Files/Data*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

spying. Nearly \$600 million to \$700 million was spent on 600 officers in SAUTT; hand-picked by an administration to do their dirty work, and even gave them \$5,000 more per person than the normal police service. They created a rift between the members of SAUTT and the police officers. You choose persons—you pick people individually and then just decide to give them \$5,000 more, so that they can do the work of manic minds and manic people.

This is what was going on. For years the SAUTT operated illegally. We in Parliament spoke day in and day out of the illegal operations of SAUTT and nothing was done. This is why this Government has moved aggressively to determine what we are doing about SAUTT because it has been moving illegally over a number of years, from 2004. How long could we have considered this? This is why this administration has made the decision that we are going to restructure SAUTT and the officers will go back to the police service, the defence force and wherever they belong. But in the restructuring exercise, which will take another six months, we are looking at it carefully.

My understanding is that there is an investigation that is going on into the conduct of the SIA, when we found the amount of drugs, guns and money that is available there. I would not even want to go there, because that matter is being investigated and therefore I do not want to make any comment on that whatsoever.

In SAUTT, they brought FBI officers from abroad. They brought a number of British officers from abroad. Over \$120 million had been spent on these British officers. And what have they been able to do about the crime? I gave you some figures, about 129,000 serious crimes, including almost 3,300 murders during that period of time. And what were they doing? Did SAUTT make an impact upon the criminal situation/activity? Not at all! Did the FBI officers who came into Trinidad make any dent on the criminal activity? Not at all, and \$120 million-plus was being spent for years for these foreign officers and the criminal activity continue to rage wild. You had nine years. I gave you figures for seven years; 129,000 serious crimes.

The British spies employed by the State then, each had two years' life insurance cover worth \$1 million, a housing allowance of \$16,000 per month, car, gas and international flights paid for by SAUTT, as well as the equipment paid for by the State. This is why our administration moved to streamline the scattered pockets of intelligence agencies that had emerged in SIA and SAUTT. They earned large salaries and also benefitted from plum employment packages paid for by the

State, even as they conducted illegal surveillance. That is what this country was facing: SIA on one hand, SAUTT on another and all spying on individuals and citizens to the benefit of one individual. The country knew what was happening and the country said: “We have had enough of that and we cannot accept it anymore.”

There was an article in the *Trinidad Express* of December 08, 2010:

“The illegal wire-tapping operations of the SIA were revealed on November 12 by Mrs. Persad-Bissessar, in a statement to the Parliament when she said the SIA, reported directly to the Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister as head of the country’s National Security Council,”

We knew who the SIA was reporting to. They were reporting to the hon. Prime Minister at that time, as I said earlier.

I spoke about the Caricom outrage. I spoke about the use of Digicel and TSTT to continue the work. Then, subsequent to this debate on the interception of communication, the Member for San Fernando East tried to bring out some incorrect type of statements against Members on this side. I just want to read from a *Newsday* editorial of Friday, November 26, 2010.

“True stateswoman”

When the Member for San Fernando East tried to attack her, this is what the editorial of the *Newsday* said:

**Mr. Speaker:** Member—[*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is before the Committee of Privileges, so do not make reference to that please. Move on to some other subject, please.

**Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** All right. There are Members on the other side who do not like to hear the truth. They know the truth and we will not hide the truth from you all. [*Desk thumping*] They tried to make a statement and attack people on this side, but when you try to put it back at them they come to major defence and they begin to—they do not want to hear the truth.

*SIA Files/Data*  
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

These are the areas of SIA and SAUTT which the Opposition has tried to bring in this Motion, to say that they condemn this Government and the actions of this Government, in this Motion they admitted that this Government was moving in the correct direction and they said:

“Parliament”—is moving. “Parliament was advised that a component of the national security system (SIA) has for years been operating without the requisite legal authorization...”

They are admitting in their own Motion that they were operating illegally. How can an Opposition want to bring a Motion against a government and admit that it has been operating illegally? You are admitting what you had been doing and that you may have violated the constitutional rights of citizens. The Opposition who brought this Motion is admitting that they violated the constitutional rights of citizens as it collected information of an unspecified nature. This is their Motion. The Motion states:

“*Whereas* Parliament was advised that a component of the national security system (SIA) has for years been operating without the requisite legal authorization and may have violated the constitutional rights of citizens as it collected information of an unspecified nature;”

They have admitted just two things in the first part of their Motion. First, they were operating illegally. Secondly, they violated the constitutional rights of citizens as they collected information of an unspecified nature. They know what they collected.

**2.45 p.m.**

What information? They even said “...unspecified nature...” because it was a broad amount of information they collected via the wiretapping and:

“Whereas Parliament has acted swiftly to rectify the situation...”

It is this Government that has acted swiftly to rectify the situation. They have admitted, the Opposition has admitted that it is this Government under the stewardship of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, that has moved swiftly to rectify the situation in the interest of national security. In their own motion they have indicated that we have moved swiftly in the interest of national security, and that we have recognized citizens’ rights to unwarranted intrusion into their private affairs.

The second part of the Motion says: “And whereas Parliament”, which is now, “has acted swiftly to rectify the situation...,” so who brought the legislation? It is the Government, our Government, “...in the interest of national security and the

recognition of citizen's rights to unwarranted intrusion into their private affairs;" and then now they want to add we have "...failed to treat responsibly with the body of information accumulated by the SIA."

Mr. Speaker, they have information from 2001 to 2010 or even when the SIA started on a pathway from 2003 to 2010, what have they done with that information? So in the third part of that Motion they are clueless. In fact, that falls right back unto their lap as to what they have done with that information which they collected. When the Anti-Corruption Bureau went into the SIA offices, they found a lot of information missing. So we ask the questions, who has the information, who collected the information and what were they going to do with it? And they know what they were going to do with it, Mr. Speaker.

And that "...this Government must report immediately to Parliament on how it has handled, and is handling the SIA files/data so as to give citizens the assurance that the SIA's actions no longer pose a threat..."

Mr. Speaker, that is before the Anti-Corruption Bureau at this time and investigations are being done in terms of determining what is happening to all the information that they probably have stacked away with them, and possibly wanted to use it, but they have been thwarted in their effort by us bringing the Interception of Communications Bill, which we passed here.

So there were individuals on that side who were trying to use that information that they collected over a period of time, to come back at us on this side to give false accusations, libellous and slanderous type of statements based on hearsay, based on what they feel they have collected from the SIA. But the Interception of Communications Bill thwarted them in their efforts, Mr. Speaker.

So we have answered the Motion, but it is important for me to speak about how this country felt about SAUTT, not only the SIA alone but about SAUTT. There was the *Trinidad and Tobago Express* Friday, November 28, 2008 speaking about sorting out SAUTT:

From day one the Special Anti-crime Unit has been plagued with controversy, allegations and even claims that it is an illegal organization. Such a unit is critical for any country, it is similar to the MI5, CIA and FBI and it is designed to gather accurate information and have it turned into intelligence for national security purposes.

But they used it for the wrong reasons, Mr. Speaker.

If there is no legislation there will be no authorization for an approval in the establishment strength of the police and defence force to increase manpower. So what we see now happening is that the protective services and defence

*SIA Files/Data*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

force are losing personnel from their home bases to the SAUTT and these personnel cannot be replaced with new recruits being enlisted because there is no official establishment of the SAUTT.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is why we have a depletion of the police service, where we are supposed to have a complement of 7,600 police officers, we have 5,900 and from that 5,900 many of them were pulled across to SAUTT and they had no powers of arrest because they were operating within an illegal framework.

There was the question of missing persons or stolen lives. At one time in this country we knew—and even up to today—that people are taken away, people are removed from this country. There are missing people. There are dozens of files of missing people in this country. What has happened? Have they been murdered? Or have they been abducted? What has happened to them? All this happened under that last administration.

Mr. Speaker, the editorials were replete with articles against that last administration that had SIA and SAUTT to do the correct things so that we could have reduced the criminal activity, but they used it for the wrong reasons. The headlines read: “Tackle scourge of drugs in jail,” “Hire and fire”. What was happening with the acting Commissioner of Police? They said that his extension could have hardly been worse coming as it does just a few days after murders crossed 500 for 2008. “Little value for life in Trinidad and Tobago under the PNM administration.”

They had gang busters. They spoke about gangs. The Minister of National Security came to this Parliament at one time and said that there were 65 gangs operating with at least 35 people in a gang. Then he went on further to say that there were 85 gangs subsequent to that. What did they do about gangs, Mr. Speaker? For nine years they did nothing about it, promised to bring an anti-gang piece of legislation, they did nothing, allowed the proliferation of gangs to take place, when they could have used the information that they gathered from the SIA if they wanted to collect information and break up these gangs. It is this Government now that has had to come and bring the anti-gang legislation. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, guarding the guards: nobody in that last administration knew what they were doing. There was nobody guarding the guards. The people speak about emboldened criminals all through. For nine years the people had to withstand the onslaught of criminal activity in this country when the last



administration, from 2001—2010 had the armamentarium, the technology and the facilities available to it to reduce criminal activities but they did nothing about it and they failed, Mr. Speaker. They have no moral authority to come with any Motion like this in Parliament for any debate. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [Desk thumping]

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I call on the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, I would give the hon. Member for Laventille West the opportunity to correct the record, otherwise you would have forfeited your right to speak, as you would recall. You would know that when you rose a short while ago to indicate what was happening, you did not put onto the record of Parliament that you reserve your right to speak, the question having being put, so you would have forfeited your right. So I am asking you to correct the record by simply rising and indicating that when you did rise at an earlier period you reserved your right to speak at a later time in the proceedings.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Mr. Speaker, earlier on in the proceedings when I rose, it was to indicate that another Member would have been speaking. As such, I reserve my rights to speak at a later time within the proceedings.

**Mr. Roberts:** Mr. Speaker, point of order Standing Order 30(1):

“If a Member other than a Minister does not, when called, move a motion or amendment which stands in his name such motion or amendment shall be removed from the Order Paper unless deferred by leave of the House or moved by another Member duly authorised by that, Member;...”

Mr. Speaker, could we have a ruling on that please?

**2.55 p.m.**

**Dr. Khan:** No it was not here, so you have to move it out. [Crosstalk] That is the Standing Order. [Crosstalk] Learn your Standing Order. “Whe de Standing Order”? They have to move the Motion from the Order Paper. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Roberts:** Learn, your Standing Orders. [Crosstalk] Read it first. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, I understand the point that is being made but I would like to ask the House to agree, having regard to what has happened, because someone was supposed to second the Motion at the appropriate time, when they rose on that side, and even reserve their right to speak, after—that was never done. And I

*SIA Files/Data*  
[MR. SPEAKER]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

think what the Member is doing is invoking 31 and I do not want to go that route and I ask the Leader of the House that with agreement, the Member who is going to speak next, at least agree that the Member who is speaking next, Diego Martin Central, move or second the motion and speak at the same time.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, is it our understanding that the Motion moved by the Member for Diego Martin West, is not properly before the House? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** All right, I am advised by the Clerk here that the motion was properly seconded. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Amery Browne** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this Motion, as properly laid by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. I immediately want to begin by condemning the efforts of this Government to stymie the valid debate and contribution of Members on this side. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, what a shameful effort—completely irrelevant. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, could we have silence as the Member begins his contribution? Continue.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, I would begin by offering some response to the contribution of the hon. Member for Caroni East, who has spoken many times in this honourable Chamber, but today he gave us a particularly spurious presentation and it bears some attention from Members on this side.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Caroni East reported on what he describes as the outcry of the population, at that time, for the resignation of the then Minister of National Security (Minister Martin Joseph). The Member seems to be completely deaf to the current and ongoing cries for the resignation [*Desk thumping*] of the Minister of National Security at this time in the year 2011. So do not take us back to those calls in the past if you are deaf to the calls in the present by the population in this country. Very convenient, selective hearing, Mr. Speaker.

I thought when he was addressing this Motion he would have given us some insight into the very unusual interview procedures utilized by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago at this time under the United National Congress. Give us some insight, explanation and elucidation of the interview procedures conducted

by this Government, which should be condemned by every citizen in this country. Mr. Speaker I thought he would have told us a bit about the Trotters interviews that have been conducted in the recent past to fill key positions [*Desk thumping*] in the arms of State in this country.

**Mr. Gopeesingh:** “They jealous!”

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the Member for Caroni East made the unfortunate choice to regurgitate the empty, unsubstantiated phrases that were first floated in this House a couple of months ago by a Member on the other side. Mr. Speaker, we condemn those empty, baseless allegations [*Desk thumping*] with no evidence whatsoever.

The population is expected to take this Government on the faith of their word, and if it is anything that this population has learned, you cannot take the UNC at their word. [*Desk thumping*] They themselves have blazed the trail in this regard from the very first days in office when they deceived 160,000 senior citizens. Since then, every single month, Mr. Speaker, without exception, we have had bumbles, mangling, deceit, deception, hoodwinking, disenfranchisement of citizens in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Sector after sector after sector is upset with this Government, sector after sector is finished with this Government at this time, Mr. Speaker, so I thought he would have given us a little insight into that.

A lot of people are beginning to ask questions about why the Government has attempted to scandalize our security and intelligence sector in the manner that they have chosen. It was their wilful choice and we will demonstrate that. They have chosen to go about it in that manner, Mr. Speaker. There are some who are asking whether this is all a smokescreen behind which they could switch off our anti-drugs efforts in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] They are asking the question.

**Mr. Speaker:** Do not imply or impute improper motives to the Government or to any Member of the Government in terms of the anti-drug efforts. So I—take a seat. I just want to advise all Members, and particularly the Member who is speaking, I would like you to play the ball and not the person in this debate. In other words, do not get involved in personal reflections on anybody's conduct or any Member's character. I will be very strict, in terms of the Standing Orders, when coming to dealing with the conduct or character of any Members in this House.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Sir, I apologize if I have caused offence to the Government with that particular remark. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Seemungal:** What remark?

**Dr. A. Browne:** You want to hear it again? You are asking what remark? Mr. Speaker, the citizens are asking questions of this Government at this time and no amount of public relations, no amount of smokescreens is going to shield them from the glare of those particular questions.

The Member for Caroni East indicated right here on the *Hansard* record that the SIA started operating in the year 2003. He just said that, Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago. The echo of his words are still in this Chamber. He has conveniently forgotten that it was in the year 1996, under the UNC Government, that the SIA became fully operational in Trinidad and Tobago. How can we take this Government at their word when time after time citizens are realizing that they cannot live up to the words that they speak.

Mr. Speaker, we have learned a harsh lesson. The citizens are on to you. Members of the Government, the citizens are on to you. The population is on to you. There is way too much innuendo and ol' talk and they come into the Parliament week after week after week with the same old story. If crimes were committed, why have they not been putting anybody in jail? Where are the handcuffs?

This Government has been bluffing on this entire issue and I want to call their bluff today, Mr. Speaker. They are the only ones at this time who are being fooled by their rhetoric with regard to national security. The citizens have long moved on and realized that this Government is powerless to protect them with regard to the criminal elements. In fact—well, not only powerless to protect them but might be exerting their powers in other directions.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Caroni East also gave us some statistics, but I realized halfway through his crime statistics he hesitated and faltered a bit, because he realized he was presenting this House with evidence of a reduction in kidnapping under the People's National Movement administration. He did not realize what his statistics were telling the population. And that was not convenient to his argument at all, Mr. Speaker because he was presenting an argument that the Government at that time, the PNM was deploying these additional resources—he was trying to present an argument that it was making no difference to the crime situation, but the very statistics presented by their friend, the hon. Member for Caroni East, presented exactly the opposite and a decline in kidnapping in Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to ask the Member for Caroni East, [*Desk thumping*] was that because—what was the cause of that decline in kidnapping? I want to put it to the Member that it is exactly the instruments of State that they are seeking to dismantle at this time that resulted in those gains for the safety of our citizens. He presented the evidence, Mr. Speaker, and I realized he caught himself and he almost wanted to apologize and withdraw his own presentation of statistics over the last four years.

**3.05 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, he failed to tell us it was the genuine efforts of the agents of this State, Trinidad and Tobago; hard-working officers across the board; the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Strategic Intelligence Agency, the Special Anti-Crime Unit, the Anti-Kidnapping Squad and all the other units of the State working to produce those reductions.

The hon. Member for Caroni East also complained about the low detection rate. He complained in February 2011 about the low detection rate for crimes in this country, and this Government is still completely asleep. They failed to realize that they have secured power since May 2010, and the onus is now upon them to demonstrate how they could produce improvements as opposed to rolling back the clock and lowering our detection rate. I am afraid I have to report, Mr. Speaker, that some of the recent actions of this Government will produce a decrease in the detection rate for serious crimes in this country. There is no way to get around it.

There was a recent example of a very young boy who touched the hearts of every single Member of this House and every member of the national community—a complete national tragedy. We were all moved by the representations and expressions of distress by a number of Members, including the Member for Siparia. They were genuinely moved, because I believe those were genuine expressions.

Mr. Speaker, it is very unfortunate that at the same time there were pronouncements by high officials that they would leave no stone unturned and would be bringing foreign experts into Trinidad and Tobago to help solve that crime. I want to ask the Government, when did those foreign experts arrive? I want to tell the Government that I have information that they have been taking steps to remove from this country foreign experts who could have assisted Trinidad and Tobago in solving crimes like this. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, they say one thing, but then they are doing the other. They presented that this was a national emergency, and we agree with that—a national disaster in the loss of this child—but someone has to—he is talking about

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

detection rate—explain to Trinidad and Tobago why if the remains were removed from the river on a Sunday evening, why did Monday morning come and—this was a national emergency. I would imagine that at the crack of dawn on Monday the Forensic Science Centre would have been treating with this issue to try to identify any transient samples. You are talking about a water-damaged body. An entire 48 hours were allowed to elapse. The report coming out of the Government was that there was a backlog of cases at the Forensic Science Centre.

They have been making representations that they have been decreasing murders and crimes in this country, but we were not able to treat as a national priority with this genuine issue, because there was a backlog of cases at the Forensic Science Centre. At the end of the day, all they have been able to comfort the population with or to reveal to the population is that there was water in the lungs and the boy died of drowning.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot do an autopsy by proxy, or I cannot pretend to know what occurred in that case, but I just want to indicate to this Government that we are disappointed—apart from the words that they uttered—in their response to this particular case. [*Desk thumping*] If this was a national emergency, it should have been treated with within 24 hours instead of waiting 48 hours. [*Interruption*]

You see the cavalier approach by the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West. I saw him responding to the cutlass battles that took place in his constituency, and my heart went out, as a colleague MP, to realize that a Member was struggling, in the absence of the police service, to cope with his constituents who were very angry. He continues to disturb me, and I reserve the right to respond. Mr. Speaker, I would move on. My brother is clearly in a mood to disturb today.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will be protecting the Member for Diego Martin Central, so do not engage in crosstalk or in any way disturb the Member. Continue, Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Member complained about the low detection rate, but I believe that they have made matters worse.

The hon. Member for Caroni East, our distinguished colleague, went on to state—I want to quote his words correctly—“We found empty files at the end of 2010.” I want to ask him, was that in November or December that those empty files were found? Mr. Speaker, he does not seem to be aware, so that might be December. He then asked a rhetorical question of the House. “Where are the contents of those files?”

Mr. Speaker, this is a Government Minister of a Government that has been in office since May 2010 revealing the discovery of files within government premises in December 2010, and then he is asking the citizens of the country. “Where are the contents of those files?” Mr. Speaker, you understand exactly why the Member for Diego Martin West, in defence of the citizens of this country had to file this Motion in this honourable House. It was to respond to that cavalier attitude by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, avoid the crosstalk.

**Dr. A. Browne:**—when a government comes into office, it is always advisable that Ministers would visit the offices and divisions under their purview. Some ministries have many, such as the Ministry of Health, and the Minister may not be able to visit all of them, but you would think that a Minister who is based in Port of Spain would, within a seven-month period, find the time and opportunity to visit the known quarters of staff of his own Ministry located in that same city, which is a fact well known to every Member of this Government, but the Government chose not to do that, because they had particular intentions with regard to the SIA and SAUTT.

Mr. Speaker, I am also advised that the hon. Minister of National Security was directly invited to visit the premises of the SIA on St. Vincent Street. These premises were no secret to Members opposite. Many of them have served in a government before, in fact, the very government that established the Strategic Intelligence Agency; the very government that equipped and furnished those offices, the same offices that they are talking about being surprised and breaking through the door—. These are the same Members on the other side. So it is really very unfortunate that we would have these types of representations being made in the people’s House, and these protestations of innocence when the Government was fully informed.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin West has already put on record that since 2005 they were two really reckless acts with regard to the disclosure of national security secrets in this country. In 2005 we had a UNC Member stand in this House and give detailed information to the national community and all Members—the Member for Siparia was very nearby at that time—about the SIA the other elements of Trinidad and Tobago’s intelligence service. He went on to give details of the staff, including names of staff members; he went on to give details of addresses of offices and he went on to give additional operational details.

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

So it is sanctimonious, false and completely unfortunate that a Government would stand here today in 2011 and pretend that it first learned of this agency and its activities in December 2010. I want to condemn the posture adopted by Members opposite in this regard. [*Desk thumping*] They are not ignorant of the SIA, but all of this fits into their approach, and we will talk more about that approach in a little while.

The Member also indicated that he has knowledge of the barter system taking place in the prison service. He attempted to express some indignation in that regard. I want to remind him that, at present, the population of this country is outraged by the barter system taking place for appointments under the United National Congress. In appointing the head of our intelligence services, Mr. Speaker, the question is, was there a barter system in place in that regard? In appointing board members and key staff positions right across the agencies of State, the question is, is there a barter system in place in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago at this time?

With regard to the appointment of high commissioners, the question the citizens are asking is: is there a barter system in place? So you cannot be outraged at a barter system on one hand and then be actually practising and demonstrating it for citizens on the other hand. That would be a bad example. I am not saying the Member is guilty of it at all, but that would be an example of utter and sheer hypocrisy.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Caroni East, as I continue in his regard—I make no personal reflections on the Member at all. He is a very distinguished Member of this House. The PNM on this side does not believe in personal attacks against Members on the other side in responding to any issue, and we will always uphold that. [*Desk thumping*] That is absolutely true, unlike some Members on the other side, and they know who they are. [*Crosstalk*] Not all. Come on!

The Member for Caroni East also said—he got a bit angry when he said it very loudly—“nobody knew who Clement was.” Mr. Speaker, the actual reality is, nobody also in this country knew who Reshmi Usha Ramnarine was either, until the Government themselves made the blunder that they made and exposed this young lady to the population. So it is the fault of the Government on both sides. So in revenge for the *Express* newspaper picking up on the blunder of the Government and holding to its mandate of being the voice of the population, the Government took it personally, as they do with all criticisms, all scrutiny and all accusations, and decided to take vengeance on Mr. Nigel Clement who has served this country for many years. [*Desk thumping*] That was an act of vengeance.



It has now come to the public's attention that this young lady, who we would not speak about too much, just a little, is now on paid vacation being paid for by the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, it has also come to the attention of citizens of this country that bodyguards have been provided, at least two bodyguards—

**Miss Ramdial:** Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5).

**Mr. Speaker:** Continue, not sustained. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker. I would appreciate silence, particularly from the Member for Chaguanas West. He is a special Member of this House. He has always been and always would be.

Mr. Speaker, it was an act of—they took revenge by exposing Mr. Clement as well, and that was very unfortunate. They have provided—it is in the public domain now—paid vacation for this individual who continues to be employed by the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago. They have also provided—it is in the public domain—armed bodyguards to support this individual while on vacation. I want to ask, who is paying for paid vacation or armed security for all the other persons who have been dismissed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago? Who is paying for vacation and security for Mr. Nigel Clement? Who is paying for vacation and security for Brig. Peter Joseph and other officers who were dismissed by this Government?

I want to ask them right now, why would they dismiss 27 employees and not take action against the one employee who every single citizen knows has committed transgressions against the National Security Council, the Cabinet and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, we await an explanation. The citizens deserve an explanation and this Government must provide an explanation on these matters. They cannot hide! I know they want us to move on, but they have always wanted to move on when they have committed errors.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Member for Couva South and his colleagues to know that this country would not move on until there is full disclosure in this matter. [*Desk thumping*] “Don't try that! Don't try that! We are on to you!” Mr. Speaker, they never announced that appointment until the *Express* broke that story. I want to say shame on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in that regard. [*Desk thumping*] Shame on them! They tried to do their business in darkness.

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

Just to wrap up with my dear colleague, the hon. Member for Caroni East, he talked about about—I was shocked to hear this one—their failed No Confidence Motion in the then Prime Minister. He raised the issue in this debate of their failed No Confidence Motion in the then Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, I want to put the Member for Caroni East on alert that he should be preparing for the Motion of no confidence in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago at this time. [*Desk thumping*]

In this regard, the population is way ahead of the curve, the editorials and the letter writers he referred to, and this Opposition will follow in good faith with the citizens of this country. They have lost confidence in the Government and it is their fault. We did not cause it, it was their actions. [*Desk thumping*] They cannot blame us for actions that they have committed. The citizens have lost confidence in the Government of the United National Congress. [*Desk thumping*]

**3.20 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I really want to congratulate the Member for Diego Martin West on the timely laying of this particular Motion because it gives the population some insight into the decision-making processes of this Government and into their assault with regard to the issue of national security and the defence of our citizens. This Government has demonstrated a large degree of recklessness and deception in treating with many sectors in this country, and sector after sector is beginning to recognize that this is a Government of distress for citizens. They came in claiming that they would solve the basic needs of citizens but what they have done, Mr. Speaker, is ensure that more and more citizens are distressed in this land and more and more citizens are asking, “When will we be rid of this particular administration?”

Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation in concluding that this Government is the worst government in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] I will prove it. I will prove it. It is easy to prove. Mr. Speaker, the worst in the history of this country. You want to know who is the second worst? [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, they want to know who is the second worst government—[*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*—Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva South wants to know who is the second worst government in the history of the country. It is also the United National Congress.

**Mr. Imbert:** Who was the third?

**Dr. A. Browne:** The NAR.

**Mr. Imbert:** And the fourth?

**Dr. A. Browne:** The UNC. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, because the citizens are there and this Opposition will represent those citizens. Very deceitful Government, Mr. Speaker, and the best evidence of that reality, Mr. Speaker, and I am referring to you despite the disturbance and the pained expressions that we are getting on being faced with the truth, the best evidence of this, Mr. Speaker, is Exhibit A; their approach to the national security of this nation. [*Desk thumping*] Look no further, Mr. Speaker, than how they have approached this sector. And look at the mood. If we could take the pulse of the police service at this time, their morale has never been lower and Members of the Government are aware of it—never been lower in history and then we see others coming along. The army is beginning to murmur and complain, the prison service—now we might be able to do without the police for a day but the warning in this population, we cannot do without our Prison Officers for even half an hour. It is going to be mass chaos in Trinidad and Tobago. So the Government really needs to change their approach to national security.

Mr. Speaker, their approach to national security has been characterized by scandalization, deceitfulness, treachery and an atmosphere of bacchanal—an atmosphere of bacchanal. No one is happy; no one is benefiting at this time. There are distressed officers who have been dismissed without being given any reason. That is violation of basic principles of natural justice. It is also a violation of basic principles of industrial relations. But it is not just officers in our intelligence service, it is also persons right across the landscape. You could see what is going on.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin North/East, Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, forget the crosstalk. You all are interrupting the Member for Diego Martin Central. Continue, Sir.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, I accept the apology of the Member for Diego Martin North/East and I seek to move—[*Interruption*]—he is still making noise behind me. Mr. Speaker, they are trying to distract me and I refuse to be distracted by this UNC Government, no matter what their tricks might be. I will continue to focus on this presentation.

Mr. Speaker, everyone has been traumatized by the fabrications and representations made on the issue of national security by this Government, and that was a deliberate smokescreen, a cloud of smoke that they threw up inside this

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

House and outside of this House to try to distract the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and we would talk a bit more about why they have been acting in the way that they have been acting.

So many citizens have been disenfranchised, even the young lady whom the Member for Caroni East has been courageously and valiantly and gallantly defending. Even that young lady has been disenfranchised by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, because if they did not make those colossal errors of judgment that they made, if they did not demonstrate the poor political acumen that they have demonstrated already before the citizens of this country, that young lady probably would have still been working at her desk combating the criminal elements in Trinidad and Tobago under the aegis of the Strategic Intelligence Agency.

So she has been disenfranchised as well, Member for Caroni East and Members of the Government and, Mr. Speaker, because, due to the actions of this Government, she is now somewhere in self-exile with two armed bodyguards that I am paying for, you are paying for and the citizens of this country are paying for. So no one is safe from the machinations and the treachery of this particular Government.

That young lady probably would have been working today, as we are speaking, combating the scourge of kidnapping, working to reduce and disrupt drug operations by listening to her telephone, providing her intercepts, doing transcripts, which was her job, decreasing threats to national security, decreasing the threat of organized crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I would characterize the statement made by the Member for Siparia on November 12, 2010, in this honourable House, as one of the single most ill-advised political statements ever made in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. I took note of the fact that the Government might be inviting Mr. Colin Powell to our shores in the near future and, Mr. Speaker, I think he may have a lesson to teach the Government because when he went to the United Nations representing his administration at the time, he wanted also—they wanted also to create a distraction—a pretext for war in a particular country, but they did not just go with an empty political statement written by advisors, typed on a piece of paper.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to distract myself, but I noted the Member for Tabaquite took issue with the Member for Diego Martin West with regard to his attendance in the House but he did look a little further to his left to notice other

Members, very high-ranking Members, on his side who are frequently absent from the House. So in throwing an attack on a Member on this side with regard to an issue of which senior Members of his Government are guilty, I think was a very unfortunate development by the Member for Tabaquite.

I want to ask a question of the hon. Prime Minister today. Why has she chosen to contribute so infrequently to debates in the Lower House of Parliament in representation of the people of Trinidad and Tobago? Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the population has been taking note of the fact that the Government has a propensity to come to Parliament armed with typed, political, ministerial statements, usually with no evidence whatsoever, at the beginning of this session, to read it out for Members of the House and members of the national community and then sometimes withdraw completely from the Chamber, not participating in any of the debates, including the crucial debate on the hanging bill, and Mr. Speaker, I find that very, very curious.

I refer specifically to the statement on November 12, 2010, and to the fact that the Government is proceeding to bring Mr. Colin Powell to these shores—[*Interruption*]—Oh, come on, come on; you of all persons, Member for Oropouche East—Mr. Speaker, to these shores, and Mr. Powell, at least to when he was trying to deceive the United Nations with his administration, took the time—his advisors took their time to prepare some satellite photographs, they took the time to prepare some reports from defectors, they took the time to prepare some allegations of yellow cake and depleted uranium, they took the time to prepare some imagery of mobile launchers and other things because it was a game of deceit, but at least they went there with something that can be called evidence.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has succeeded in traumatizing every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, every single [*Interruption*] not me—every media house in this country. The who's who list of the members of this society, with what? Absolute empty political rhetoric typed on a piece of paper, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Where is the evidence? And when we ask that question we hear a scattering of reactions. The Member for St. Joseph might tell us about the Israeli spies whom he had knowledge of [*Interruption*] two—who came, did damage and left the country while this Government is in office, entering the premises of the Ministry of National Security.

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

**3.30 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, how can we even condone or listen to such machinations?

I want to talk a little about that list, because the population has been spending a lot of time—the Member for Caroni East chose, in his wisdom, to regale us in a further exposition of this so-called list of citizens who were listened to. As a basis for that they refer, time and time again, to empty file folders that they claim were found at the offices of the SIA. I want to tell you, that is not the full story at all, and the Government is fully aware of this.

Mr. Speaker, if you walk into the intelligence or operations headquarters at Langley, Virginia, of the CIA, of the Mossad or any intelligence agency—*[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I would like silence from the Member for Oropouche, please—including the offices and operations rooms of the Strategic Intelligence Agency, there is a particular arrangement that will be universal. It is called an “Association Chart”. Members of the Government would do well to listen to this issue, because they are in complete ignorance—or they are pretending to be.

A specific target of an intelligence probe, whether it be electronic intelligence, human intelligence, communications intelligence, visual intelligence or any other form of intelligence, is placed on the wall. Every contact or associate of a known criminal, drug dealer—*[Interruption]* hold on, Member for Tobago West, “yuh rushing”—narco trafficker, human trafficker or member of an organized crime cartel, is at the nucleus of that particular association chart.

Coming out of that is a spider’s web of all their known associates, all their girlfriends and the telephone numbers that they have called. This is the Carnival season and I know Members of Government are receiving requests. People are asking them, “Come to our fetes, we will send complimentary tickets.” That is fine; they probably do it to Members of the Opposition as well. Those calls sometimes might be made from the telephone of someone associated with the wrong side of the law. It is quite possible, from time to time.

Once that call is made, a voicemail is left, the call might be returned. That number and the data associated with it will find a place on the spider’s web, this association chart. The size of these webs could be enormous, depending on the duration of activity of a particular contact or suspect. So it would be no surprise in a society like ours, or even a society like Washington, DC, to find high members of society being placed as contacts.

The Member for Port of Spain South indicated that she lost a colleague who she grew up with and it may have been violence associated with the gang plague in the country or some other type of homicide. Even someone whom these contacts might have grown up with might find a place on that chart. That is the level of detail; that is “intel” work, but the Government had no interest in the truth, whatsoever. The only interest they had was the maximum scandal that could be extracted from the work of this agency they targeted from day one, since before the election.

If someone were to walk into any of these intelligence agencies, anywhere around the world, and harvest every name from such an association chart, you will have in that particular country the subject of tremendous scandal and national outrage.

I am not saying the Prime Minister did this at all; I do not believe she did, but those who have advised her prepared a list and shared it with the Member for Caroni East, designed only to sensationalize the intelligence sector in this country, and not based on any evidence or facts whatsoever. [*Desk thumping*] If the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has any evidence or facts to present to this nation, it is not too late. I invite them to do so right now. [*Desk thumping*] The game is up for this Government, and we have seen through their smokescreen. It is very, very unfortunate. They have made this country the laughing stock of the intelligence community.

Let me tell you the most unfortunate part of this. When the PNM came into power in the year—[*Interruption*] Okay, Member for Chaguanas East, I hope you have your black jersey ready, because I understand there are persons dressed in black right outside the Red House, and knowing your affinity for such marches, you might be tempted to go and join them. I invite you to pay me the respect of someone who is on their legs in the Parliament or else go and join your colleagues outside.

When the PNM came into power in 2002, in fact, when every administration was changed in this country, the government assuming office would have met security and intelligence capacity in place. So when the UNC came into power in 1995, they would have met the initial establishment of the SIA in place. They would have met other agencies, Special Branch, et cetera, in place; they would have met a National Security Council in place, but the then Prime Minister never

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

made any decision to scandalize or sensationalize. That is why I say there are two UNCs: the one of the present and the one of the past, and the one of the present is the one that is worse. They never made a decision to scandalize any of the services that he found in place.

This same SIA was fully established under the UNC Government of 1995—2001. So when the PNM rescued this country at the end of 2001, [*Laughter*] with the assistance of some on that side—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I crave silence.

**Dr. Douglas:** Well stop telling jokes. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Not in the Parliament; not telling jokes. We do not tell jokes here; Members are making contributions. Could I have the cooperation of all Members, and allow the Member for Diego Martin Central to make his contribution in silence? I appeal to all Members, please.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the manifestation of your role, as you serve us.

When the PNM rescued this country at the end of the year 2001, the Prime Minister or any of the advisors could have walked into any of the offices of our intelligence or security agencies and discovered these same arrangements, these same association charts, the same files and operations as disclosed by the then Prime Minister, Mr. Panday before—it is on the record; I do not need to go through it again—knowledge of monitoring, across the board, including criminals, kidnappers, et cetera, and he whispered once about Members of the PNM side.

The PNM, at the end of 2001, would have met those same charts, the same probably very exciting list of names, very few of which would have been intercepted, but all of which were part of this web of contacts that really comprises a large part of the society of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, that is basic intelligence work. I am not revealing any State secrets. Anyone can go on the Internet and see that, and the Government and their advisors could have done that, but that would not have suited their purposes. Every government, as they came to office, until this one, took a much more responsible approach to our intelligence and security services. [*Interruption*]

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*



**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support of my colleagues on both sides of the House.

It was a very unfortunate and treacherous decision to sensationalize what could have been sensationalized long before, but this is part and parcel of the strategy of this new, more aggressive UNC. There are only two times in our history that such actions have been taken. It really is a very treacherous example. In the year 2005, as is on the record, a Member of this House stood and gave a detailed disclosure, precise disclosure, of our intelligence capacity at that time, complete details. That was done in 2005, and then in the year 2010 we had a Member of this House rising, seeking to sensationalize and create a sense of bacchanal around the intelligence and security services in this country; throwing up a cloud of smoke behind which the Government attempted to make some very strategic decisions, switching off and putting in some of their key personnel.

I want to talk a little about the National Security Council, because the population deserves to get some more information in this regard. There are some on the other side who seem to feel that it is a creature of the PNM or was put into place sometime during this current decade. My records indicate that the National Security Council of this country first met on December 15, 1964, chaired by the then Prime Minister, the late, great Dr. Eric Williams. At that stage, it was comprised of the Prime Minister, who was Chair, the Minister of Home Affairs, the Attorney General and the PS in the Office of the Prime Minister.

Even before that, we had this capacity with the Trinidad and Tobago Intelligence Committee, which takes us right back to colonial times, where you had the Colonial Secretary, an MI5 officer—take note of that—a liaison officer, the police commissioner and the police security officer on the committee.

I fast-forward to July 14, 1994, when the Cabinet approved the creation of the SIA for covert intelligence and counter-intelligence operations, as a result of the events of the coup of 1990. On September 28, 1995, Cabinet approved an organizational structure and terms and conditions of contract staff, et cetera. In 1996, some Members in government, some Members on the National Security Council—sensitive equipment arrived for use by the SIA and were immediately put into deployment with regard to different levels of intelligence gathering—all levels of intelligence gathering, as has already been disclosed by the then Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday.

Then there were amendments from the National Security Council in 1998 to the structure of the SIA. There were also amendments in 2001, both under the UNC, then there were amendments in 2002 and 2004, all seeking to build the

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

scope of counter narcotics efforts, counterterrorism efforts, counter-extortion efforts, counter-kidnapping efforts, counter-corruption efforts and counter-intelligence efforts. So you are talking about an evolution over years, you are also talking about knowledge by anyone who would have served as Prime Minister, by anyone who would have served as Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, by anyone who would have served as commissioner of police, chief of defence staff and all the other heads of the various branches in this country.

So for anyone who would have served in any of those capacities to come to the people's Lower House of Parliament and claim innocence of knowledge of the SIA and its operation, that has to be regarded as sheer and utter hypocrisy. [*Desk thumping*] We know there are Members on the other side who served as Attorneys General on two occasions during that period, and it is really stretching the credulity of anyone in this population to make the kinds of pronouncements we have heard.

Why have they been doing this? Why have they been dismantling some of these key sensitive operations? We really have to ask that particular question. Various governments would have discovered security systems in place, but none of them would have taken the efforts to scandalize them the way the UNC has done on this occasion. Any government has a choice in coming into office. You may choose to understand and comprehend what existed previously; you might choose to make changes as your policy requires, every government has its policies; you might choose to take advice from persons properly qualified to give such advice, and we need to take careful note of that.

**3.45 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, the Government can choose to maintain the secrecy of security operations on behalf of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and they can choose to focus on the big picture, which is keeping pressure on the criminals. Mr. Speaker, but there is another choice available to governments coming into office and only one government in our history has made that negative choice, that is this Government, and that is the choice to create bacchanal, scandal, a circus, hysteria, selfish political diatribe, self-serving innocence and pretence of a lack of knowledge, fabrication of stories, fabrication of lists of names, denigration of workers and persons who put their life—

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Member, you are attributing very strong statements to the entire Government Bench. I caution you, do not go there. Do not go there. You cannot be imputing improper motives to an entire collective, either an individual or a collective, so I want to advise you, especially the context in which

you are using your language, you are calling the Government and the Members of the Government very, very, very—you are using expressions that are bordering on imputing improper motives and you are raising the conduct of people as you proceed. So be guided.

**Dr. A. Browne:** I appreciate the guidance, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the conduct of the Government of the day, but we really have to ask the Government which did they choose this particular route.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's statement that she made in House was really couched in very interesting language. She began her statement, the hon. Prime Minister, sorry, on November 12 by saying:

"I rise today to address the sensitive and delicate matter..."

The rest of this statement from those opening words represents a complete non-understanding of how sensitive and delicate matters of State should be addressed and it is a very unfortunate decision, the entire rest of this statement.

The Prime Minister referred subsequently in these remarks:

"How many men, women and children who were kidnapped or abducted could have been saved we will never know. Let us not forget that some of these children have never been found...."

The equipment was there but it was not being made available to assist in the fight against crime, one of the most heinous crimes in the country, kidnapping of men, women and children.

Mr. Speaker, I do not how to put it any other way than this. Nothing could be further from the truth. And the Member for Caroni East has already presented comprehensive evidence that these resources were making a difference to the same crimes that the Prime Minister was seeking to represent innocence with regard to and that was very unfortunate.

It is interesting—I mentioned about the National Security Council, but the way the National Security Council would operate, it is very difficult to ambush a Chair of the NSC. So, if a matter is raised, Mr. Speaker, it usually in fact, I have been advised—in all cases would have been discussed, or mentioned or briefed with the Chair of the NSC prior to the meeting. It is not a forum for ambush or surprise.

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

Mr. Speaker, I am advised that between May and October 2010 there were only two meetings of the National Security Council. This is a Government that says that it is serious about crime and pulling forces together to treat with crime. Two meetings between May and October, that is the information I have. The Government may wish to correct it. *[Interruption]* You have different information? Well, Mr. Speaker, I would invite the Member for Oropouche West to tell me when, other than the 2nd of June, 2010 and 16th August, 2010 during that period did the council meet?

Mr. Speaker, that is another bluff by the UNC. It is also my understanding that at these two meetings, these two meetings represented the first time that photo opportunities were presented where photographers were invited into meetings of the National Security Council, which is a breach of how that has operated since 1964 under various administrations. It gives you an insight into the mentality of this Government and their predilection for public relation gimmicks, at any cost and in any situation; that gives you that type of insight. *[Desk thumping]* Photo sessions.

Mr. Speaker, and then the Cabinet—matters going from National Security Council to the Cabinet are considered very serious matters and they will not be going there without the blessings of the very highest members of the Government of the day. That is how these operations function. So it would be startling to me—in fact, I have to ask the question of the Government, because this is highly relevant to the issue of the SIA and how things have unfolded—of the Government. Who chaired the National Security Council the day that Reshmi Ramnarine’s approval was shot through the meeting of that Council? Who was the Chair? *[Crosstalk]* We cannot make any assumptions.

Mr. Speaker, I would also want the Government to answer because they want to talk about all the people's names and so on, and we know that from time to time there might be an acting Prime Minister or an acting Chair of the Cabinet. Who chaired that fateful Cabinet meeting when this matter was pushed through without discussion or question at the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago? That Cabinet is an employee of the national society of this country, and given what has happened in this situation, I think the country deserves to know—that is all—who chaired those two meetings. It is clear that—*[Interruption]* the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara is being disrespectful, rude and discourteous.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not know who he is referring to when he says that, but I will ask him to leave that for the parlour. We do not have any “lolly pop” inside here. *[Crosstalk]* We have honourable Members of this House, so I ask the

Members to resist and desist and, expunge that from our record if it is in our record and do not refer to anybody across the floor in those kinds of terms. So hon. Member you may continue.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, [*Desk thumping*] I thank you for your protection, and we know what the constituents of that constituency think about their MP. We all are fully aware.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share with this honourable House, because clearly some Members are ignorant of this fact, what is the role of the SIA under successive administrations: to provide timely intelligence on any threat to national security—human intelligence, communications intelligence, signal intelligence and other forms of intelligence.

The Prime Minister and her Ministers keep referring to fact that the SIA was not doing any good work. Again I would want to know why have they retained the services of someone and then sent on armed holiday someone who has been working in that same agency for so many years? We are going to get to that very shortly.

Mr. Speaker, I have been advised of some of the successes of this agency in collaboration with other agencies in the past and for the information of—and I have removed some from this list because we have always to be concerned about national security. The case of Joseph Soomai who is currently in a US prison, a drug trafficker from Icacos drugs imported from Colombia; close parallel work with the DEA and UK intelligence; from what agency? The SIA!

Mr. Speaker, drug related extraditions from the island of Tobago, Owen Alfred and accomplices, successful extraditions, relying heavily on interception and work conducted by which agency? The SIA! Raymond Akal and Company Ltd.—notice the trend—another narcotics-related case, parallel with other agencies with the key link provided by which agency? The SIA! The legendary drug bust that we heard a lot about from Members of the Government, that took place off the country of Spain in 2010, cocaine seizure in collaboration with UK intelligence with which agency? The SIA!

Mr. Speaker, cases with Inland Revenue including a cartel that has been claiming VAT below \$10,000 from multiple companies, organized crime, the tip of the spear. [*Interruption*] You did not know because your Government wanted to keep you in ignorance, Member for Lopinot. They wanted to tell you about the President and all these other persons, but not about the work that these agencies were doing.

Mr. Speaker, there is another case, the Jamaat Al-Fuqra, Muslims of America. Members were arrested on the US Canada border. They planned to blow up a cinema in North America. Three members were Trinidadians and they were deported here. They even began to establish a commune in Trinidad and Tobago—very, very dangerous development. Persons were coming from the United States to populate the commune—a dangerous organization. There was collaboration with North American intelligence services. They were closely monitored and tracked by the same strategic Intelligence Agency. Maybe some of the same whistleblowers were working on these cases. They detected plans to open a newspaper by this organization their spiritual leader is a sheikh in Pakistan who was linked to the Daniel Pearl execution, so these things have international implications.

**3.55 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*] You see, you would believe a fantasy list but you would not believe a demonstration of successes of work of an agency that was in place, even under your previous administration. Mr. Speaker. What is wrong with this Government? Very interestingly, a diesel trafficking cartel—did we know we have diesel trafficking in this country—taking advantage of fuel subsidies, and I know the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs is interested in this. Those agencies are also important in dealing with the energy sector—diesel trafficking up the islands from Trinidad and Tobago, taking advantage of our fuel subsidies. Maybe the Government has a different cure for that problem but we would see what would happen in the near future, working with other agencies.

Mr. Speaker, working in cases with the Anti-Kidnapping Squad, customs and excise, the defence force, the Organized Crime and Narcotic Unit, inland revenue, SAUTT, immigration, even the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, even the self same anti-corruption bureau, since 1996 to 1999 sensitive equipment has been utilized by the SIA to conduct the same intercepts that the Prime Minister claimed ignorance of. In 1993 they even had parked outside Kaydona a truck which was intercepting signals. So this goes way, way back. These are intelligence forces I am referring to.

I would not even talk about the direct invitations to the Minister of National Security extended by staff of the SIA. I would not talk about that, including up to October 15th: “Please come and visit our offices. We want to share the work with you.” But the Government was very resistant to that type of approach because

they already had their plan in mind way in advance. They did not want to know. They wanted to be able to come here unblushingly read those political statements about whoever—this footballer, that artiste, Destra and all of those other things—very, very irresponsible!

I would just conclude this list. They assisted in disrupting a major visa fraud ring, faked Indian passports and persons come into this country. The SIA was heavily involved; the Vindra Naipaul case—I would not focus too much on that SIA heavily involved and the Member for Caroni East might nod or wink in validation—including Miss Ramnarine, involved in that particular case. Mr. Speaker, customs and SIA interdicting drugs, cartels that were using returning nationals to bring vehicles into this country and sell. Organized crimes, these agencies were involved. Defence Force Intelligence Operations, the list goes on and on, it is a long one, but not everything—but the Government has been presenting a particular case to justify its actions and the Government has been misrepresenting what this agency has done, for their own purposes. [*Desk thumping*] So, Mr. Speaker, that is a bit about the successes of this same strategic agency.

Is it any surprise to any citizen that when all of these operations were switched off, all of this—not just electronic; the human “intel” and all the other capacities are disrupted by the Government of our country, that we have emerged from the bloodiest January in the history of this country? [*Desk thumping*] This is very serious, Mr. Speaker. Highly irresponsible actions by this Government—and then they are talking about cash in the offices. The Government knew and they did not tell us that many of the staff members of the agency, for secrecy reasons, requested payment of their salaries in cash every single month, including the same

Miss Julie Brown that they decided—

**Mr. Imbert:** What!

**Dr. Browne:**—to “throw under the bus,” requested to collect—

**Mr. Imbert:** What?

**Dr. Browne:**—payment in cash for secrecy reasons. They raided just towards month end and then made a—

**Mr. Imbert:** Did they take a salary?

**Dr. A. Browne:** I do not know if they took a salary. I do not want to get into that. Mr. Speaker, this is how the Government conducts itself.

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

I would like to know how staff are screened and so on, and how was this young lady screened when we have an excellent procedure in place at all of our intelligence agencies and I want to know what was the appointment for appointing the director in such a treacherous manner. Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have?

**Mr. Warner:** None! [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Nine minutes.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Oh, Mr. Speaker, you are so generous.

**Mr. Imbert:** Take it all.

**Dr. A. Browne:** I appreciate your support, Mr. Speaker. The Government has some questions to answer in that regard.

The Prime Minister made an announcement. [*Interruption*] This was in her statement and I really want to find the Prime Minister's statement when she announced a particular review team to take care of—here it is, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] November 12th— Mr. Speaker, I think you have warned the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, and he is trying to steal my time and I am not going to allow him. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister announced in that statement,

“We have”—put in place—“a steering committee chaired by deputy commissioner of police Steven Williams...to review and restructure...SAUTT”—very interesting. The other committee members include—and referred to a special advisor to SAUTT—Ms. Jackie Wilson, retired permanent secretary and Miss Julie Brown, acting Chief of Strategic Operations. The same person they chose to throw under the bus. We had Gary Griffith up and down the country saying “She is the one; the buck stops with her” not with any Member of the Government. The buck stops with her, which is a very interesting decision.

Mr. Speaker, what they have failed to tell us—and I am aware of no parallel in this country's history—is that this team was reviewing the operations of SAUTT and making recommendations that affect the lives of citizens and this same Miss Julie Brown had applied to be an employee of SAUTT in the year 2009 and failed at the application.

**Mr. Imbert:** What! [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. A. Browne:** She was unsuccessful.

**Hon. Members:** Whoooooo!



**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, how on earth could a responsible Government take someone who applied to that same agency, was unsuccessful in the application and then bring her back around after they win an election and put her in place to co-author a report to review and dismantle the same agency? [*Desk thumping*] That is the manic mind.

**Hon. Member:** “Oh yes; oh yes”! [*Desk thumping*] Manic mind.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, how could they do that? How could that be good governance? How could that be justified? This is crazy! This is crazy!

Mr. Speaker, it gets worse than that. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Members:** Shame! Shame!

**Dr. Browne:** We are informed that Reshmi Ramnarine is still employed by the agency. We are informed that this [*Crosstalk*] Miss Julie Brown is still employed by the agency. We are advised that this person is the one who advised the Prime Minister with regard to Reshmi Ramnarine and the issue of SAUTT. Mr. Speaker, at the time she was appointed to this committee the Prime Minister indicated that Miss Brown was the acting Chief of Strategic Operations.

I looked at the organizational chart of the SIA—270 persons in this chart. You have a director of the SIA; you have two deputy directors, one is a deputy director of administration and finance under which the administration, the IT department and others fall, and the other is the deputy director of operations and intelligence, under which your electronic intelligence supervisors, your electronic intelligence operators, your technicians and all the others fall, under that deputy director of operations and intelligence.

Mr. Speaker, the deputy director of that is Miss Julie Brown.

**Mr. Imbert:** What!

**Dr. A. Browne:** So this Government came to this Parliament on November 12th, and subsequently all over the country, making protestations and representations of scandal and making a circus out of “intel” when they are relying on the very advice, information and direction from the individual to whom all of those operatives, to whom all of those analysts, to whom all of those technicians reported. Mr. Speaker, that is a scandal and a disgrace to the citizens of this country. [*Desk thumping*] They want to blame the political administration while coddling and preserving the employment of the very person who is at the centre, at the heart of the organization ring of the SIA.

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

Mr. Speaker, how could this Government face this population in the light of their—well, I cannot say conduct—decisions that they have made for the people of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Interruption*] No, I am not going to say it.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have some predictions in terms of the Government's response to this and other matters. They continue to rely on personal attacks and distractions, they continue to say to their convenience an issue is secret but it was not secret when they came and made their scandalous disclosure which has forced the population to require the correct information on these matters. They continue to praise the Prime Minister, as is their right to do so, but there are some questions that need to be answered.

Mr. Speaker, another prediction is that the Prime Minister is not going to enter this particular debate, because she has not done so in the past. Another prediction is that unfortunately the detection rate is not improving in this country and the blood continues to flow. We can predict more public relations from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. We can predict more bad Bills to come from the Government, and you see when they fail in the Parliament they go to their post—Cabinet press conference and outside of the Parliament and try to threaten and bully the—well, we are not ever going to respond to the threats and the bullying of the United National Congress. More bad Bills they will bring and try to force through this Parliament; more desperate public relations, and of course, more bad appointments because we have had several since Reshmi and you are going to hear some more about that.

Mr. Speaker, some questions to the Government: why did Miss Julie Brown address her recommendation to the Prime Minister and not to the Minister of National Security? It is a simple question and we would like to hear the answer to that. [*Interruption*] What?

Mr. Speaker, who chaired that National Security Council when this appointment was pushed through? Who chaired the Cabinet when this appointment was approved with no question or discussion? When asked afterward, do you know what the Prime Minister said? If Ministers had read their Note they would have known. In other words, you had to rely on reading the Note. You could not have relied on any discussion and you could not have relied on any debate.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude—[*Interruption*]—she said it. I am using her words. Mr. Speaker, why are these individuals who the Government has accused directly of these activities still employees of our intelligence service when they fired 27 others? What criteria were used to fire those 27 and preserve these individuals?

Why? [*Interruption*] This is the deputy director of operations, Member for Caroni East, come on, do not try that. You are making allegations about a Member that you cannot support. You cannot support it. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, why—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** If you address me—and the Member for Caroni East, if you can stop the crosstalk—address me, Member for Diego Martin Central. You are looking in his direction all of the time and that is the problem. Address me “nah”? I want you to link up with me on the inside.

**Dr. A. Browne:** He used to teach at Mount Hope, Mr. Speaker, but we would not get to that. Mr. Speaker, why is this individual, who was at the centre of this organization, to whom all of these operatives and analysts were reporting, why is this the person advising the Prime Minister after the Prime Minister has accused the same agency of such conduct? She came here in this House and made those accusations. Mr. Speaker, it is bizarre—I do not want to use the word “schizophrenic” so I would not use that particular word, but something is wrong with the story being presented by the Government.

Why were the Members for Tabaquite and St. Augustine instructed not to apologize after they made certain statements in this House? And I acknowledge the apology of the hon. Minister of National Security. We have never heard for those Reshmi Ramnarine associated statements, and I stand to be corrected if it was made and I did not hear.

Mr. Speaker, why does this Government not do the honourable thing and come clean on this entire SIA debacle that they created or resign—[*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] or resign, because they have lost the confidence of people of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Continuous desk thumping*] They have lost the confidence of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I just ask you in closing, who is unhappy in this country right now? The police service is very unhappy; the fire service is very unhappy; the Members of the coalition are very unhappy; the senior citizens are very unhappy; the labour unions are very unhappy. [*Continuous desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, the defence force is extremely unhappy; minimum wage earners are very unhappy; persons right across the board, in Tobago particularly, are very unhappy right now with this UNC Government. Mr. Speaker, who is happy, based on these—[*Interruption*]—oh, CEPEP and URP workers are desperately unhappy at this time. [*Crosstalk*]

SIA Files/Data  
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, February 25, 2011

On the flipside, who is happy in this country given these developments? Who has benefited with the switching off of our intelligence capacity? Who is happy? The narcotics traffickers, [*Desk thumping*] the potential kidnappers are happy, cartels of organized crime are very happy or anyone who wishes to do harm to Trinidad and Tobago is very happy. Mr. Speaker, this Government wants us to—

**Mr. Speaker:** Your time is up, 4.09.

**Dr. A. Browne:** Mr. Speaker, last sentence—this Government would like us to move on, but the population of Trinidad and Tobago is not moving on because the Government has not moved on from their PR agenda, from their broken promises and from their attempts to deceive the population, deceive the population.

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

**4.10 p.m.**

**The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]—Are you standing or sitting? Mr. Speaker, if today—

**Mr. Imbert:** I got up before you. “All yuh go ahead, go ahead”.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, if today anybody is happy in this country [*By order of the Chair, remarks expunged*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please! Hon. Member, I would like you to withdraw that matter, that expression about the Members in the Opposition. You know, they are enjoined—themselves and—[*By order of the Chair, remarks expunged*]. I think that is unparliamentary, it is unprovoked, it is uncalled for, withdraw and let us move on, please! Thank you.

**Hon. Member:** Expunge it.

**Mr. Speaker:** I agree. Expunge it from the record.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that statement. I will put the statement in a way that is more easily digestible. If anybody is happy today in this society, it is community leaders who were wined and dined at the Crowne Plaza by a former administrator; [*Desk thumping*] if anybody today is happy. You want me to withdraw that, too? [*Crosstalk*] If today the police are not happy, it is because those opposite could not have met and treated with them for three years to increase their salary. [*Desk thumping*] If today, the prison officers and the teachers are not happy it is because the former Government could not bring decent proposals on the table and bargain with them. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central gave today—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, hon. Members on both sides, but I want to deal with the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, please! The crosstalk, please! Let us allow the Member for Oropouche East to speak in silence. Continue.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central made quite an interesting statement in this House and shockingly revealed and advanced what he would like us to believe is the truth—and I have no reason to doubt the Member for Diego Martin Central. He gave us some insider information pertaining to our secret intelligence agency. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, if what he said is the truth it is frightening, because that is not a secret intelligence agency. [*Desk thumping*] But if what he said is not true it is more frightening, because he is misleading the House of Representatives. [*Desk thumping*] I said if what you are saying is not the truth. [*Crosstalk*] I said if what you are saying is not the truth. I did not say it is not the truth.

**Dr. Browne:** Standing Order 36(5), he is imputing improper motives. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I did not really—I will get the *Hansard* record, because I was in discussion with the Member for La Brea, but if you want to rephrase and at least deal with that matter.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** I will repeat because he heard me. I said that if what the Member of Parliament said was the truth it is frightening, because it means our secret intelligence agency is not a secret, because he knows about hiring, about bodyguard of who is on vacation, about internal memo, and, Mr. Speaker, I said if what he is saying is not the truth it is more frightening because then he is deliberately and wilfully misleading the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] Who you think “yuh” dealing with? Mr. Speaker, let me proceed.

**Dr. Browne:** It is in the newspapers.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central came to the Parliament and, as expected, continued with some of the arguments raised by the Member for Diego Martin West on the last occasion and they were zeroing in, Mr. Speaker, on statements made by the Prime Minister last year. But you know what is fascinating, is that those statements made by the Prime Minister in this House were then reflected upon by the Leader of the Opposition who apologized on behalf of the

*SIA Files/Data*  
[DR. BROWNE]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

PNM, [*Desk thumping*] who said the PNM disassociated itself and then led the Opposition to support the Interception of Communications Bill. So on what basis did you support it? [*Desk thumping*]

Are you saying now you supported the Interception of Communications Bill but you were not sure why you did it? [*Laughter*] Or you did not know what you were doing? Were you hallucinating when you voted? [*Crosstalk*] No, but you supported it based upon the presentation and the information released by the Prime Minister. Then you come and say, what is the evidence?

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the Member for Diego Martin Central. He reflected on persons on vacation with bodyguard, internal happenings the SIA, he took us to the Mossad, the CIA, the KGB, to Eric Williams in 1964. I think you left us there, but I could have asked the Member, but what is the evidence? What is the evidence? We hear you, but how could we believe you? Mr. Speaker, at no time am I suggesting that the Member is telling an untruth, because I imagine the Member is honourable.

The Member had some statements that I want to reflect on very quickly. He accused the Government—I was hearing him accusing the Government of what criteria for appointment of jobs; is it a barter system; “a BATA shoes”? [*Laughter*] What is the criterion for jobs, for board appointments and so on, and friend and family? Mr. Speaker, for the record, when those opposite had the opportunity to govern this country, in almost every single Ministry they had a friend and “a family” or a family of a friend. This is it.

Apart from that, the Member spoke so eloquently about when the PNM, what did he say, took charge?—oh yes, in fact you misused the word, [*Laughter*] you misused the word “rescue” in 2001. But the singular first act of the incoming Prime Minister was to appoint his spouse as the Minister of Education. [*Desk thumping*] I make no comment on that. The person may have been well qualified. [*Interruption*] The person may have been well qualified for that position. I make no comment on the individual. I comment on the fact of an appointment, not the individual—and for the Member for Diego Martin Central to raise that.

In the Ministry of Housing Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of Housing had relatives there. Things were happening in the Ministries where a former Minister of Government—I think the Member for Chaguanas West reflected and called her a credit card lady, is it that?

**Mr. Warner:** Yes.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** They had “friend and family” when they were appointing personal assistants; it was sister; someone had a driver who “was husband”. Mr. Speaker, this is the culture we inherited and it is a culture we are trying our very best to change. In the board appointments in this country today we take our time and this is why we delay somewhat, to ensure as best as we can we are not going to be “putting people brother and sister and family that way”.

Mr. Speaker, there is a construction firm, and I am reflecting on Diego Martin Central, by the name of Glenroy. There are three directors: two councillors of the PNM and another member of the general council “and they building house and dah is fine”. [Crosstalk] Dah is fine! [Crosstalk] dah is fine! [Crosstalk] But if you put two UNC councillors and a general member council of the UNC “they jump up here and riot”. “And dah is fine! Dah is fine! [Crosstalk] Dah is fine!

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, please. [Crosstalk] Please, could I have your cooperation? Hon. Member.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, you see, I am responding to the Member for Diego Martin Central. Mr. Speaker, let me move away from that because there are Members in this House here who are contractors of programmes in the Government. [Crosstalk] I make nothing about that. I have no difficulty with that if people are qualified and they are working and so on. That is fine. That is fine. That is fine. Let me move on. Let me move on quickly. I was reflecting on the appointments and so on.

The Member asked the question, why does the Prime Ministry choose not to participate in the debate? But Member, if you listen to yourself in the Parliament Channel you will know why the Prime Minister chose not to participate in a debate. You see, Mr. Speaker, I mean participate to respond to what? To say what? [Desk thumping] To say what? [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, they come here with a level of—I am looking for the lightest and softest word to use—with a level of pretence. They pretend that these things did not happen before, Mr. Speaker. They pretend.

**4.20 p.m.**

The Member began—and he corrected himself as he moved on. Earlier in his contribution he said the SIA was started in 1996.

**Dr. Browne:** Fully established in 1996.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Fully established in 1996, but he knows it was started in 1994.

**Dr. Browne:** I said that?

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** And the first director was appointed by 1995, but he gives the impression as if the United National Congress started the SIA.

**Dr. Browne:** I did not do that.

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** Well, if it is not the impression you gave, that is fine, good—[*Crosstalk*] well, he did not give the impression.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that the intelligence community is a sensitive area; very sensitive. It is an area where one has to tread lightly. The Member for Diego Martin Central, we now know why he may have arrived late. He is conducting intelligence business—[*Desk thumping*]—so he comes late. He missed the campaign in Diego Martin in the local government election. [*Desk thumping*] He is conducting intelligence business. But these are not matters that we must get into. The matter we want to get into is to indicate that this Government came in with a very strong mandate, and a mandate that humbles us. We are humbled by the mandate. Our job is to reorganize the security services of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a demanding task.

Why do we reorganize? They kept using the word “dismantling” and so on. Why are we reorganizing? We are reorganizing because we found the society in a crisis with a murder rate of over 500 per year, with serious crimes on the increase, there is need for reorganization. We cannot come into government, look at the security apparatus and say, “All is well, fine; let us continue.” No. You do not have that luxury when you come into office with a national crisis and following a failed government and a failed crime policy. [*Desk thumping*] We had to act.

The proof is really in the tasting; it is in the statistics. You remember this country was referred to as a failed state, as a banana republic. On the eve of the general election the President’s house “fall dong”. That was a sign. So we have to reorganize our security apparatus and intelligence is fundamental to that. We came in; we met a situation. Information came to us about communications and secret taping. There was a dastardly option that we could have adopted. It was to collect a list of names which are being listened to, intercepted and just change the list; continue as normal. It was an option. We chose not to. We chose to bring transparency, fairness and justice; [*Desk thumping*]—to introduce legislation.

In this society today, we can boast proudly that if the security forces want to intercept anybody, they must do that pursuant to an Act of Parliament and pursuant to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Well, the Member for Diego Martin Central alerts us that they are doing no work, because he knows.



I have a feeling you applied with Julie Browne for some position, you know, [Laughter] and that is causing the problem. But you see, we had to make changes and we will continue to make changes. The Member for Diego Martin Central, a colleague of mine—did not have sufficient time. I am sure if he had another 20 minutes he would have praised the new appointment of Colonel Albert Adolphus Griffith. [Desk thumping] But I imagine the 75 minutes did not give you enough time so that you could have done that.

**Dr. Browne:** Would you like me to praise him now?

**Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:** But you notice they say nothing about a decorated military officer; they say nothing about the new appointment. They are still in the old appointment, because that is part of a campaign. It is a campaign. They are trying to undermine credibility. He began by talking about the Pensions Act and the pension payment. Today, I think it is 52,000 pensioners who benefit from the \$3,000 per month; 72,000 workers benefit from the increase in minimum wages by the Government of the People's Partnership. [Desk thumping] But they carry credibility, and then they ask the question, rhetorically: who is happy and who is sad, and so on. Today, this society is being liberated by a Government committed to justice, transparency and equity.

For Divali last year, the Hindu organization, the Maha Sabha, collected \$1 million for their celebration. Our Muslim brothers and sisters who had problems getting their visas to go on their holy pilgrimage, were facilitated. That is because we are rooted in that pillar to treat all citizens equally. I would say much more about this on the next occasion, but I had indicated earlier, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs would also wish to make a statement to the Parliament. I propose to continue my contribution on the next occasion. [Desk thumping]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I did indicate to this honourable House earlier that under "Statements by Ministers", a statement is to be made and at this point in time I will call on the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs to do so.

#### STATEMENT BY MINISTER

#### **Methanol Holdings Trinidad Limited**

#### **(Ammonia Urea Melamine 2)**

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am authorized by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to make this statement to Parliament following Cabinet's approval yesterday of the Methanol Holdings Trinidad Limited's Ammonia Urea

*Methanol Holdings T'dad Ltd.*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

Melamine 2 referred to as MHTL AUM 2 Project. This project entails the construction of world-scale facilities with nine discrete plants with a projected investment of US \$1.9 billion. [*Desk thumping*]

May I preface this statement by saying to this honourable House that in less than one year the Government of the People's Partnership has made the right moves delivered the right incentives, structured the most appropriate policy frameworks and in so doing delivered a major initiative that would be a major stimulus to the construction sector, add to the productive capacity of the country's important petrochemical sector and demonstrate significant investor confidence in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

On coming into office on May 24, 2010, we recognized that there was a need for a clear and transparent framework for evaluating projects utilizing natural gas. Such a framework should create the conditions which will sustain the energy sector by achieving:

- 1) Transparency in the assessment of projects and therefore greater global confidence in the sector;
- 2) Consideration of the environmental impacts;
- 3) Clear incentives to increase local content in projects and therefore broader local ownership and participation in energy; and
- 4) Impetus for use of energy efficient processes.

In July 2010, the Cabinet of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago approved a revised criterion for the assessment of projects in which gas is used as a feedstock or fuel. As a result, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs initiated a process to solicit proposals from prospective investors in order to allocate a tranche of gas for the manufacture of ammonia and downstream derivatives in Trinidad and Tobago.

Further, the ammonia proposal that was under consideration when the People's Partnership took office was actually returned and a new call was made for proposals based on this new evaluation framework. I am pleased to say that this project passed this rigorous evaluation.

The evaluation criteria of this newly established framework include:

- Degree of value added in the production process (15 marks)
- Environmental impact (15 marks)—this is a new criterion, which included points for the processes to be followed, mitigation strategies and carbon capture mechanisms and activities.

*Methanol Holdings T'dad Ltd.*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

- Capital Expenditure (10 marks);
- Early construction plan in terms of utilization of natural gas (10 marks);
- Degree of local content (10 marks), which included points for ownership, financing, engineering studies and designs, skills and employment;
- Projection of local content during construction and operation of the plant (5 marks);
- Energy efficiency measures (5 marks). This is another new criterion which included points for conversion of efficiency of natural gas to product.
- Extent of variation between key terms and conditions of gas contract with the NGC (15 marks);
- Extent of variation between key terms and conditions of contracts for power and water (5 marks);
- Extent of variation between key terms and conditions of the estate and pier user contracts with NEC (5 marks)

#### **PROCEDURAL MOTION**

**Mr. Speaker:** Members, with your leave, I understand that there is an adjournment of the House pending and, with your leave, the Minister would want to have—how many more minutes?

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Ten more minutes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Could we agree that rather than break, we continue?

**Hon. Members:** No! Private Member's Day! [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not want to go to a division or a vote on the matter.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is private day.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, but do you want a vote on the matter?

**Hon. Members:** Yes.

*Question proposed.*

*House divided:*    Ayes 26                      Noes 10

*Procedural Motion*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

*AYES*

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Warner, Hon. J.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

McLeod, Hon. E.

Sharma, Hon. C.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Volney, Hon. H.

Khan, Dr. F.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

Ramadharsingh, Hon. Dr. G.

Ramadahar, Hon. P.

De Coteau, Hon. C.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

Partap, Hon. C.

Samuel, Hon. R.

Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.

Ramdial, Miss R.

Roopnarine, Hon. S.

Seemungal, J.

Khan, Miss N.

*Procedural Motion*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

*NOES*

Rowley, Dr. K.

Cox, Miss D.

Hypolite, N.

McIntosh, Mrs. P.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Browne, Dr. A.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

Manning, P.

*Question agreed to.*

**STATEMENT BY MINISTER**

**Methanol Holdings Trinidad Limited  
(Ammonia Urea Melamine 2)**

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank Members on both sides of the House, including the hon. Member for San Fernando East because I know he has much interest in this topic. Thank you, Members.

Mr. Speaker, I was referring to the criteria for the evaluation framework and I had reached to the last two:

- Additional benefits including corporate social responsibility (5 marks)—a new criterion, which included points for cooperation with universities, technical institutions, R&D, in-country assets and skills development.

By a letter dated August 16, 2010, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs issued a request for proposals to seven companies which currently or in the past have indicated an interest in developing an ammonia and downstream project.

**4.35 p.m.**

The companies invited were:

- Yara Trinidad Limited
- PCS Nitrogen Limited

*Methanol Holdings T'dad Ltd.*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

- Methanol Holdings Trinidad Limited
- Point Lisas Nitrogen Limited
- Union Estate Fertilizers Limited
- Moore Ammonia
- Energy Allied International Trinidad Development Company

A team from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs NGC was established to review the proposals. Based on the results of the evaluation process, yesterday Cabinet approved the development of MHTL's downstream ammonia complex entitled AUM. The new AUM 2 complex will produce 1,850 tonnes per day of ammonia, which would be used to produce:

- 3,000 tonnes per day of urea
- 90 tonnes per day of melamine
- 750 tonnes per day of ammonia sulphate used for fertilizers and insecticides.
- 30 tonnes per day of melamine urea formaldehyde resin (MUF).

MUF resins have low formaldehyde emissions and are expected to gradually replace the older urea formaldehyde resins in the production of glues, particle board, veneers and other building materials, thus presenting numerous opportunities for downstream in Trinidad and Tobago.

Before I discuss the details of the project, permit me to describe to the hon. Members, through you, Mr. Speaker, and indeed to the people of our country, the transformative initiatives undertaken by the Government of the People's Partnership which has brought us to this momentous announcement.

In the 2011 Budget statement, the hon. Minister of Finance said the Government will institute clear structure to develop the entire value chain of the energy sector from primary product to finished manufacturing industries.

How did we achieve this? Hon. Members will recall that last October the US\$ 1.7 billion AUM Complex was formally commissioned. At this commissioning ceremony, it was announced that the plant would produce 60,000 tonnes of melamine annually. We issued a challenge to the energy sector stakeholders.

Our challenge was to take the tail end of an opportunity and develop ways for our nation to move beyond the manufacture of primary petrochemicals based on natural gas as a feedstock and also to develop strategies to ensure downstream value added development was accelerated and every step of the way was sustainable.

Hon. Members will also recall that on taking up this challenge, the MHTL, the NEC and the Ministry of Energy Affairs brought together a conference on downstream opportunities for melamine. This conference saw manufacturers, academia, financial institutions and energy stakeholders coming together to form partnerships that would see these sectors being linked and the value extracted for our national gas maximized.

This conference heralded the emergence of the melamine model for downstream development. It signalled the model by which our nation would see true development and expansion in the downstream, the likes of which we should have been seeing and benefiting over the last decade during the tenure of the last PNM administration. The melamine model now can be easily used as a template for the development of other downstream projects for future petrochemical plants.

It should be noted that last November, the seminar on Investment Opportunities in Melamine was a huge success. The feedback survey indicated that 68 per cent identified opportunities for developing local businesses using melamine, and a resounding 81 per cent indicated their interest in attending a follow-up seminar on other similar-type investment opportunities, using output from the energy sector. These products can serve to further increase the impetus for development of the local manufacturing sector, as these products can create the stimulus for linking the manufacturing sector to the energy sector.

Subsequent to the hosting of this conference, NEC is currently working on the development of melamine profiles that can be used by manufacturers and entrepreneurs in a meaningful way to create, develop and now grow local manufacturing enterprises using the output of the energy sector. Furthermore, dialogue will be held with manufacturers, bankers and State organizations in developing these profiles. It is expected that these product profiles will be ready by June of this year.

It is expected that this model will also be used for melamine urea formaldehyde (MUF), as it becomes available from the current AUM 2 project, so that local manufacturers can bridge the gap and develop viable business opportunities from the output of the energy sector.

*Methanol Holdings T'dad Ltd.*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

Therefore, a conference seminar hosted in conjunction with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, MHTL and NEC will be staged, similar to that which was done for melamine, for MUF and the business opportunities that lie therein. Hon. Members, this is a new approach to linking energy to manufacturing, which I have alluded to.

At the melamine conference, I also made a commitment on behalf of the Government of the People's Partnership not to make the fundamental error that was repeatedly made by the previous administration. This error, as you know, was to tie our natural gas into projects that would focus on the manufacture of cyclical commodities without any substantial strategy for the downstream.

Our commitment is aimed to develop energy related projects together with the domestic manufacturing sector, from the very beginning. This meant that participants at that conference would not have been called to attend a conference on opportunities for downstream after the product has been manufactured, but would rather be called before the production of the commodity begins.

In evaluating this project on a new system designed to deliver maximum benefit from every cubic foot of gas utilized, Trinidad and Tobago has now entered the fourth stage of gas development. Local manufactures would now be fully involved and this is not something we met. This is something we developed, implemented and delivered in under one year. [*Desk thumping*]

Among the benefits that will accrue to the country from this project are:

1. Capital investment in the order of TT\$12 billion over a 44 month period;
2. Peak employment of some 3,500 persons and an average employment of 2,500 persons during the construction period;
3. Creation of 450 permanent jobs for the operation and maintenance of the new facility, plus an additional 500 equivalent full-time jobs to support this new facility;
4. This project will have minimal environmental impact in terms of carbon, as it is estimated that 2,270 metric tonnes per day of carbon dioxide in the production of ammonia will be consumed by the urea plant and the company's other methanol plants. No net carbon dioxide will be released into the environment;



*Methanol Holdings T'dad Ltd.*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

5. It is expected that local content would be maximized to the extent that local financial institutions will be encouraged to participate in the financing of this project; an agreement to provide local banks with an opportunity to participate in the funding of AUM;
6. MHTL intends to locate a cadre of young local engineers at the offices of the various technology licensors for the duration of the design and engineering phases of the project;
7. MHTL will expand its employment of a wide range of local contractors and consultancy services;
8. MHTL will fund a programme on construction technology and related programmes to train members of the immediate community to access employment opportunities on the AUM 2 construction project;
9. MHTL will commit US\$5 million, that is equivalent to TT\$30 million, to local educational institutions as follows:
  - a) US\$1 million—that is about TT\$6.3 million—to the University of Trinidad and Tobago;
  - b) US\$1 million—that is TT\$6.3 million—to UWI;
  - c) US\$0.5million—that is close to TT\$300 million—to the National Energy Skills Centre (NESC);
  - d) US\$2.5 million—that is more than TT\$15 million—in a fund for scholarships and bursaries for students of University of Trinidad and Tobago and UWI. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that Clico's shareholding in MHTL amounts to 56.53 per cent. Cabinet has therefore mandated that the dividend income on the shareholdings of Clico in MHTL be assigned to meet Clico's debt. [*Desk thumping*]

In addition, given that 21.52 per cent of MHTL's shares are currently in the Statutory Fund, the Minister of Finance will admit the additional shares of 35.01 per cent of MHTL's shareholding to the Statutory Fund resulting in 100 per cent of the Clico's shareholding in MHTL being held in the Statutory Fund. [*Desk thumping*]

*Methanol Holdings T'dad Ltd.*  
[HON. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

**4.45 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, in what we feel is a landmark shift, I am also pleased to announce that there has been an agreement to extend the club of banks to give local financial institutions in Trinidad and Tobago an opportunity to participate in the financing of this project. [*Desk thumping*] It is estimated that about TT \$2 billion will be directly spent on local labour, materials and services during the engineering and construction phases of this project. During the operational phase, the project will contribute approximately \$2.2 billion per year in the local economy.

Even further, this project will involve the training of young national engineers at the offices of the various technology licensors for the duration of the design and engineering phases of the project, and the project will also benefit the deepening of project management capabilities, as well as logistics and marketing capabilities.

It should also be noted that the NEC and MHTL will hold further discussions to develop and construct a Pier 5 at Savonetta to cater for the export requirements of this complex. This will be an extension to an existing pier facility at Point Lisas. NGC and MHTL have also agreed on a term sheet for the price of gas for this project. In addition, Cabinet has also mandated that the project development and implementations for this project be monitored to ensure conformity with the bids submitted by MHTL. Therefore, a project monitoring team comprising members of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, NEC and NGC will be established for this purpose. A project agreement for the development of this project will be executed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, NGC, NEC and MHTL.

Mr. Speaker, this approach by the People's Partnership Government is to ensure that when these projects are signed off on, the take or pay penalties that are incurred by the National Gas Company will be paid for by the downstream projects, in order to ensure that what happened over last eight years does not repeat itself when the NGC was left holding take or pay penalties for contract agreements on projects that never materialized. [*Desk thumping*] So when the Member for Diego Martin Central talks about rescuing this country, I wondered if they rescued this country in 2001 for NGC. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** This is a debate?

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** No, Mr. Speaker, but—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** One project? Come on!

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not think that in a ministerial statement you should be responding to a debate. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:** Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But the Government of the People's Partnership took the careful route of ensuring that, as we move forward, we do so on solid ground, based on a solid framework that would deliver maximum value and benefit to our people and our nation. I am sure, hon. Members, that there is no need to define the total departure from the past, in the manner in which the Government of the People's Partnership will approach large-scale industrial projects.

We are taking influence out of the hands of a few and delivering more participation, ownership and benefit to Trinidad and Tobago stakeholders and our people. As we developed new frameworks, we faced accusations from those opposite that we were doing nothing. They said that everything that we were doing was what they planned. Quite apart from that fact, what it all amounts to, is that they have accused us of doing as they did, nothing. This accusation also makes clear to us, as Government, and to the nation, that the former administration had completely lost its way and was woefully incapable of delivering. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, with the tectonic shift in May of last year, the people of our nation chose to elect a Government that could deliver. Today, it is with a great sense of pride that I announce, on behalf of the Kamla Persad-Bissessar People's Partnership administration, that we have effectively removed some of the major vulnerabilities of our local economy. [*Desk thumping*] No longer is our future hinged only on oil production and, more so, on the production of natural gas and the use of gas for primary production.

Yesterday, Cabinet agreed that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs would invite proposals for the utilization of natural gas as a feedstock for the establishment of other chemicals and downstream derivative projects which add value to the natural gas resource of our land. As such, a request for proposals will be issued for such a project, and, based on the experience drawn from this new evaluation framework, such decisions to move forward and implement projects can be made in a shorter time frame.

Our future is now hinged on global competitiveness, investor confidence, a re-energized manufacturing sector, an expanded strategy for the use of our natural resources, and indeed, a nation that is ready to rise, not only to challenges, but rather the opportunities that are there for the taking.

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

*Adjournment*

*Friday, February 25, 2011*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Monday, February 28, 2011 at 1.30 p.m., and to indicate to Members opposite and the national community that it is the intention of the Government to resume the debate on the Constitution (Amdt.) (Capital Offences) Bill and indeed to take it to its full conclusion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.52 p.m.*