

Leave of Absence

Friday, March 25, 2011

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 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. Winston Dookeran, Member for Tunapuna, is presently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period March 23rd, 2011 to April 1st, 2011. The Hon. Dr. Lincoln Douglas, Member of Parliament for Lopinot/Bon Air West is also out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period March 23rd, 2011 to March 25th, 20011. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

LETTER OF CONDOLENCE

(JAPAN TRAGEDY)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we were all shaken by the horrific events that took place in Japan on March 11, 2011. On behalf of this honourable House I have sent a letter to Mr. Takahiro Yokomichi, the Speaker of the House of the Representatives of Japan, expressing sentiments of sadness after the devastating earthquake and tsunami that swept the north-east of Japan on that tragic day.

On your behalf, I conveyed condolences to the hon. Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives, as well as the people of Japan over the lost of so many precious lives. I offered our prayers that the resilience of the people of Japan, for which they are well recognized, will be strengthened as they strive to recover from this tragedy.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Couva-Tabaquite-Talparo Regional Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2005. [*The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee

Papers Laid

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2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Agricultural Development Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2009. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee
3. Administrative Report of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation for the period 1st October, 2004 to 30th September, 2005. [*The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Chandresh Sharma)*]
4. Annual Report of the Government Human Resource Services Company Limited for the fiscal year 2009. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
Statutory Authorities and
State Enterprises (Group I)
(Presentation)**

Mrs. Patricia McIntosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

The first Report of the Joint Select Committee established to enquire into and report to Parliament on Ministries (Group I) and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises falling under their purview.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, for the record the Government is in a position to answer all three questions on the Order Paper for oral answer, and there is today, Mr. Speaker, on the Order Paper one question for written answer, question number 69, and the answer to that question will be circulated during the proceedings.

**Subnaik Park Santa Flora
(Details of)**

61. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) The date for the commissioning of the floodlights at Subnaik Park in Santa Flora?

- (b) The date for the installation of floodlights at the following recreational grounds:
- i. Vance River Recreation Ground;
 - ii. Lot 10 Village Recreation Ground;
 - iii. La Brea Community Recreation Ground;
 - iv. Erin Recreation Ground;
 - v. No.4 Road Recreation Ground;
 - vi. Palo Seco Settlement Recreation Ground?
- (c) The names of the contractors who will be installing the floodlights at the above recreation grounds?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George):
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to speak in this august House though what I say here would be brief. Mr. Speaker, I wish to reply as follows, with respect to item (a) of question No. 61, the commissioning of the flood lights at Subnaik Park in Santa Flora will take place before the end of April 2011.

With respect to item (b) of question No. 61, there is no date set for the installation of floodlights at the named recreation grounds. The position with respect to the installation of floodlights at the named recreation grounds is that although the request for lighting at the Vance River Recreation Ground, Lot 10 Village Recreational Ground, the La Brea Community Recreation Ground, the Erin Recreational Ground, the No. 4 Road Recreation Ground, and the Palo Seco Settlement Recreational Ground were made in the first quarter of 2010 and were listed for implementation at that time. The work was, however, never undertaken.

Given the answer to part (b) of the question, item (c) of question No. 61, does not arise.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**La Brea Constituency
(Road Repairs)**

62. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister state the date on which the following roads will be repaved:

- (a) Siparia-Erin Main Road;

- (b) Southern Main Road from La Brea to Point Fortin;
- (c) Carapal Road, Erin;
- (d) Grant Trace, Rousillac;
- (e) Sobo Village Road, La Brea;
- (f) Sobo Circular Road, La Brea;
- (g) Boodoosingh Circular Road, La Brea?

1.40 p.m.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Jack Warner): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is as follows:

- (a) No work on this road has been scheduled for this or the forthcoming fiscal year;
- (b) Works on this road are scheduled for the forthcoming fiscal year 2011—2012;
- (c) No work on this road has been scheduled for the forthcoming fiscal year;
- (d) Works on this road are scheduled to commence at the end of April 2011;
- (e) No work on this road has been scheduled for this or the forthcoming fiscal year;
- (f) No work on this road has been scheduled for this or the forthcoming fiscal year; and
- (g) No work on this road has been scheduled for this or the forthcoming fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

**La Brea Constituency
(Drainage/Watercourses)**

63. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister state when drainage works (widening and clearing of vegetation and silt) on the following river channels will commence:

- (a) Santa Flora to Erin Main watercourse;
- (b) Los Charos River in Palo Seco;
- (c) Merrimac River (North), Vessigny Village;

- (d) Lorensotte River in Rancho Quemado;
- (e) Parrylands River in Parrylands;
- (f) Paria River in Paria Gardens, Aripere;
- (g) Lake Canal, La Brea;
- (h) Salazar Trace River in Point Fortin?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Jack Warner): The answers are as follows:

- (a) Desilting works on the main watercourse from Santa Flora to Erin, that is the Erin River, were completed on January 31, 2011. However, it was an area where access was denied by the farmers;
- (b) Works are scheduled to commence in May 2011;
- (c) Works are scheduled to commence in May 2011;
- (d) Works are scheduled to commence in April 2011;
- (e) Due to the existing pipeline infrastructure in the area, equipment cleaning is not advisable, as such, manual cleaning will commence on March 28, 2011;
- (f) Works shall begin in mid-April 2011;
- (g) This is a concrete drain which requires manual cleaning. This cleaning will begin in May 2011; and
- (h) Desilting works were completed on September 01, 2010.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

ORAL ANSWER TO WRITTEN QUESTION

The following question was asked by Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (La Brea):

**On-the-Job Training Programme
(Details of)**

69. Could the Minister state:

- (a) The number of trainees on the On-the-Job Training Programme (OJT) for each of the following months from June to December for each of the years 2008 to 2010?
- (b) The number of trainees on the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme (MuST) for each of the months from June to December for each of the years 2008 to 2010?
- (c) The number of students who have accessed the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP) for each of the months from June to December for each of the years 2008 to 2010?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim): The number of trainees on the On-the-Job Training Programme (OJT) for each of the following months from June to December for each of the years 2008 to 2010?

Number of Trainees on OJT Programme June – December 2008							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Trainees	5690	6406	4947	6319	5492	5278	4772

Number of Trainees on OJT Programme January – December 2009							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Trainees	6010	6088	4176	6432	6929	7355	8326

Number of Trainees on OJT Programme January – December 2010							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Trainees	7998	7708	6811	6333	5874	5772	5620

- (b) The number of trainees on the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme (MuST) for each of the months from June to December for each of the years 2008 to 2010?

Number of Trainees on MuST Programme June – December 2008							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Trainees	2713	2713	2925	2631	2731	2028	2227

Number of Trainees on MuST Programme June – December 2009							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Trainees	2235	2442	2608	2555	2504	2144	695

Number of Trainees on MuST Programme June – December 2010							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Trainees	1621	1389	1482	1353	1236	1246	846

- (c) The number of students who have accessed the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP) for each of the months from June to December for each of the years 2008 to 2010?

Number of Applicants that accessed the HELP Programme June – December 2008							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of	98	168	222	270	358	324	187

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Applicants							
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Number of Applicants that accessed the HELP Programme June – December 2009							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Applicants	91	147	290	303	284	306	220
Number of Applicants that accessed the HELP Programme June – December 2010							
Particulars	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Applicants	166	131	302	293	271	332	133

STATEMENT BY MINISTER
Report on Commonwealth Week in the UK
(Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar's Visit)

The Minister of Trade and Industry (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words on the recent trip that was taken by the Prime Minister and a delegation of business people and local government to the UK.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of objectives to this visit to the UK:

- The fulfilment of duties and responsibilities of the hon. Prime Minister as Chair in the Office of the Commonwealth as primary—continuing to raise the profile and attractiveness of Trinidad and Tobago as a preferred destination for investment and visitors, again a primary reason;
- The launch of the Children's Life Fund to the diaspora and other socially oriented organizations, another primary reason;
- To launch the Caribbean Investment Forum in conjunction with the Commonwealth Business Council, which, of course, would be held here in Trinidad and Tobago, June 13 and 14, 2011, just before the trade and industry convention put on by the TTMA;
- Meeting with the Head Crown Prosecutions office of the UK—that is, of course, our DPP—to discuss matters relating to improving the criminal

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justice system and to introducing mechanisms for delivering speedier justice;

- Another objective, delivering the feature address at the Commonwealth Local Government Conference;
- Meeting with major oil and gas investment partner, British Gas;
- Meeting with Mrs. Helen Clarke, the former PM of New Zealand and head of the UNDP and Mrs. Cherie Blair, wife of the former Prime Minister of the UK, Tony Blair, to discuss a proposed colloquium of women's leaders on the margins of the UNGA 2011 and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly in the Caribbean and wider Commonwealth;
- To address a meeting of women leaders in the UK and from Commonwealth countries on the theme, "The role of education in transforming the lives of women and girls"—this took place at the grand committee room of the House of Commons which was also attended by the Lord Speaker of the House of Lords; and
- To also address a meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association of 50-plus youths from the 50 Commonwealth countries on the theme "Women as agents of change".

In addition, the Commonwealth Day observances were marked by an interfaith service at Westminster Abbey. It was attended by the Queen and about 2,000-plus guests in a filled to capacity Westminster Abbey. Trinidad and Tobago played a very special part in the ceremony with a well appreciated and highly applauded performance by none other than our Denise Plummer, and with a reading by the Prime Minister from the *Bible*. This provided an opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago to be further known throughout the UK and the Commonwealth.

It is significant, Mr. Speaker, that on Commonwealth Day itself, the Commonwealth Secretariat released the results of a piece of research which showed that Trinidad and Tobago is the third best country in the Commonwealth to be born a girl. New Zealand was the first and Barbados ran a very close second. However, of the 50 countries surveyed, 11 Caribbean nations featured in the first 23. And why does Trinidad and Tobago feature so highly?

In the Prime Minister's previous stint as Minister of Education, she had introduced universal secondary school education, bringing an end to what was

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viewed by many as a discriminatory practice, wherein thousands were denied education at the secondary level due to a lack of school places. As a country we are one of the few in the world to have surpassed the MDG requirements for universal secondary school education, and today, more women are in our university system than men.

We have placed a very high value on early childhood education and the provision of Early Childhood Education Centres, since no child must be left out in any part of the country. We must continue to provide a human values-based education for our children as early as possible to stem the loss of the minds of our children to alternative cultures. Mr. Speaker, families in our country must be congratulated for their vision to educate their children. We must pay public tribute to the very dedicated teachers at all levels of our education system. We must also pay tribute to the mothers and grandmothers in particular, who insisted that their girl children and grandchildren go to school, changing years of tradition and culture in which girls were seen as mere mothers and wives.

The results of the survey in the Commonwealth give us an opportunity, not only to celebrate as a Government and a country, but also to celebrate the parents, teachers and the Ministry of Education. We must now go further and set our goals for meeting and exceeding the MDG for both early childhood and primary school education.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, one of the Government's concerns, and indeed that of the Prime Minister, continues to be the readiness of the criminal justice system. As you are also aware, in her Cabinet, the Prime Minister has set up a Ministry of Justice to achieve reforms in the quickest possible time, something that the previous administration found it very difficult to do.

In our meeting with the Director of Public Prosecutions in the UK, it became quite obvious that there were numerous reforms which, if undertaken, would deliver justice in a more timely fashion and at a reduced cost to Government and taxpayers. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. We can benefit from the best practices of the UK and other Commonwealth countries with which we share a common jurisprudence. The UK and Canadian governments have provided support for an expert to work with us for the next three years in the matter of legislative and systems reforms.

The Prime Minister has already announced on her return that it is her intention during the coming week to meet with the Minister of Justice and the Attorney

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General to chart a programme which would also look at the 462,000 cases backlogged at the Magistrates' Court—462,000 backlogged and that did not happen from May 24th last year.

Miss Mc Donald: We did it?

Hon. S. Cadiz: You are very right on that, Member for Port of Spain South. As she said on her return to Piarcó on Monday 21st, "Justice delayed is justice denied, but justice delayed also causes the criminals to scoff at the justice system." The Government's legislative agenda would reflect this reform initiative.

At the launch of the Commonwealth Local Government Conference, she met with the head of the unit which delivers training and has asked the line Minister, hon. Chandresh Sharma, to initiate in partnership with the UWI and the Commonwealth unit for local government training, a comprehensive training programme to develop the competencies of our local government representatives.

As she had said during her speech at the conference, she intends to effect the following, and for the first time giving constitutional protection to local government, where, no longer can any administration keep on delaying and delaying local government elections, as has happened in the past. I do not know, there must be a reason why they delayed those elections for so long:

- Increasing the financial resources available to local government authorities, and even allowing some level of borrowing for special projects;
- providing state-financed offices for local government representatives so as to impact upon more effective representation—no longer would the local councillors have to be scrounging around for space to conduct the people's business;
- amending the laws to limit the terms of councillors;
- giving the constituents the power to recall local representatives;
- examining functions which are now managed by central government and delegating these to local government given the affinity of the function to local communities;
- creation of full-time local government representatives—yet another step in providing service to the people;
- construction of town halls in every district and utilizing them for regular

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town meetings—again, another step in the right direction of providing service to the people;

- increasing the involvement of NGOs in the work of the local authorities, especially social service delivery;
- training of local representatives in management and leadership skills, as well as skills related to the organization of people and communities;
- formulating national budgets with greater inputs from local communities, thus creating a needs-driven, a needs-fulfilment model of governance.

Local government must be assisted to fulfil a primary mandate which is people-centered development and the election of three special representatives in each local authority via male and female youth representatives and a representative for women and children.

The hon. Prime Minister is of the view that these are changes which would bring about a more empowered local government authority, which would also be more responsive to current issues and create wider participation of young people in public governance. Mr. Speaker, it is about time we see this level of governance in Trinidad and Tobago, moving it away from everything being the central government and bringing local government to the people.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by a powerful and most representative business delegation from Trinidad and Tobago to the UK. We had in excess of 20 businessmen and women travel to the UK and surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, at their own expense. This Government did not spend one cent for any of these business people to travel or for their hotel, lodging, taxi fare or anything like that. [*Desk thumping*] That is very uncommon for the Trinidad and Tobago Government, because in the previous regime it was a free-for-all. That is no longer the case. We thank these business people for their patriotism and commitment to the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot sit here in Trinidad and Tobago and expect the world to come and invest. We are competing with many other countries that have had a lot more experience than us in attracting foreign direct investment, especially in the non-energy sector. In fact, when you do the research you would find that there has been little or no foreign direct investment in the non-energy sector, and with our diversification drive this administration would change that. We have to find ways and means of attracting additional investment outside of the energy sector.

In addition to assisting in the launch of the June 2011 Caribbean Investment

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Forum, where they will give short addresses on the advantages and ease of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago, they also made presentations at another interactive session with 54 business leaders representing a wide range of investment interests, interest in energy downstream industries, interest in financial services, interest in back office support, interest in eco-industries, interest in tourism, entertainment, education, amongst others.

This session, held at the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission, saw our businessmen make presentations to their UK counterparts. Business people all over the world speak the same language, they understand each other, and hence the reason for us taking these businessmen there, instead of Government standing and mouthing about what Government is going to do and what it cannot do and what it can do; let business people speak to business people. It is something that has never happened before and that is why we have had that dearth of—*[Interruption]* several opportunities would now be explored.

I wish to compliment all members of the business delegation and the staff of my Ministry, as well as the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission in the UK, for their obvious hard work, and again to thank the business delegation. The response from the UK business sector was very encouraging to say the least, and, Mr. Speaker, one of the main comments that came out of the presentations was the fact that the comments heard were that finally Trinidad and Tobago was now ready for business as against the numerous promises being made and no action by the previous regime. It was all talk, talk, talk. *[Desk thumping]*

1.55 p.m.

So finally, the business people are seeing where Trinidad and Tobago is serious about business, and not just “ah set ah “ol talk”.

Mr. Speaker, accompanied by the Chairman of the National Gas Company, the Minister of Trade and Industry, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister met with senior executives from British Gas. In light of the nuclear meltdown in Japan, the world will have to take a fresh look at the alternative sources of energy.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago needs to strengthen its partnership with the energy partners and this meeting provided an opportunity for us to discuss British Gas’ future plans for Trinidad and Tobago. British Gas has a major investment about to start in Brazil, and we have had discussions about Trinidad and Tobago being able to supply goods and services for this investment. There are local companies already supplying services and goods to the energy industry in Brazil.

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British Gas has offered to assist local Trinidad and Tobago companies in exploring the Brazilian energy industries. In view of this, another trade delegation would be invited to go to Brazil at the end of April 2011.

Further, noting that Trinidad and Tobago has now signed contracts with Ghana, British Gas has suggested that we begin to speak with the same British Gas about Tanzania and Kenya since, as they expressed, Trinidad and Tobago has the knowledge and experience, and has had excellent working relationships with them, British Gas. The possibilities for Trinidad and Tobago are immense and the Prime Minister will be discussing these opportunities with both the Minister of Energy and the Energy Chamber. The latter has been pioneering the sale of services in oil and gas to African countries and also to Suriname, in some of which Trinidad and Tobago companies are already operating.

Some on the other side have questioned why the Prime Minister is making these visits overseas. You really have to wonder why they would even question that. We are convinced, Mr. Speaker, that these investment seeking missions must be led from the very top. Investors have many alternatives and opportunities. We are not the only ones seeking their investment dollars and technologies. The Prime Minister is able to answer questions on the spot to give legitimacy to the missions and convey the seriousness and commitment of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I am of the view that this exercise of branding Trinidad and Tobago as open for business is beginning to yield results as the interest of interested investors is increasing.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, given what has happened in Japan, there might be investors seeking alternative countries. We need to be there to market our country. This is also the duty of the Prime Minister to the people. It is imperative that the Government work hand in hand and side by side with our private sector and state companies. In the transformation of our industrial and manufacturing sector in our bid to become less oil and gas dependent, we have to partner with the private sector.

At the Ministry of Trade and Industry we have consulted with every single private sector organization on coming into office, because it is the only way to move this thing forward. Sustainable jobs, well-paid jobs, a vibrant economy and taxes to fund development are all dependent on a successful private sector. This UK initiative is a demonstration of our commitment to work in partnership.

Mr. Speaker, just recently the city of London was voted by the Global Investment Index as the number one place for both asset and wealth management,

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and hence the reason the business community went to England. Locally, the environment for investment will be further discussed with them. Last year on a similar trip to Singapore and China, I was made aware as how little people knew of Trinidad and Tobago outside of the energy sector. I know that we would like to think that Trinidad and Tobago is on the world map for investment, but this is not the case, not outside of oil and gas, and you have to understand that.

If you go back and do the research from 2001-2010 and you look to see how much foreign direct investment came into Trinidad in the non-energy industries, you might very well end up with a big, fat zero. [*Crosstalk*] That is the problem, Mr. Speaker, with the other side. Every time you talk to somebody they want to know if you sign a contract. This is business we are talking about. This business has to be developed over a period of time. Where it is Trinidad and Tobago was devoid—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: In statement, you cannot “extempo” or extemporize. I would ask Members on the other side—the crosstalk. So could you stick to the text of your statement and do not elaborate from what you have stated there?

Hon. S. Cadiz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will read it again, Mr. Speaker, because, I know that we will like to think that Trinidad and Tobago is on the world map for investment but this is not so. It is therefore absolutely critical that we fly the flag of Trinidad and Tobago as much as possible and as high as possible to gain the attention of the investment world. These promotional ventures, coupled with the creation of an investor-friendly climate, can only benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and contribute to a better quality of life for all.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank again all those persons who made this trip the success that it was, and to look forward to the Trinidad and Tobago business sector partnering with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to continue building our country. Thank you, Sir.

ASSOCIATION OF REAL ESTATE AGENTS (INC’N) BILL

Question put and agreed to, That a Bill to provide for the Incorporation of the Association of Real Estate Agents and for matters incidental thereto, be now read the first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

DR. ERIC EUSTACE WILLIAMS
(RECOGNITION OF CENTENARY)

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Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, renowned academic, scholar, author, intellectual, politician, visionary, regional integrationist, humanitarian and longest serving Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, is widely regarded as the “Father of the Nation”;

And whereas September 2011 will mark 100 years since his birth in Trinidad and Tobago on September 25, 1911:

Be it resolved that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with the widest national and regional participation take tangible steps to mark the centenary of the birth of Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the region:

And be it further resolved that this honourable House direct the Minister of Education to declare 2011 “Dr. Eric Williams Year” and take all the necessary steps to ensure that the work and life history of Dr. Eric Eustace Williams feature prominently as part of the National School Curriculum at all levels of the education system during 2011 and beyond.

I beg to move, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I know what has happened again, but I just want to guide you. The only time you move your Motion is when you complete your presentation, otherwise you would have just ended your contribution. So I understand what has happened and I seek the indulgence of the House to allow the Member to continue. Continue Member!

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I am always willing to learn, and when I am so guided I assume that this was your instruction. Anyway I am glad you have clarified it. [*Crosstalk*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, next time I will guide myself. [*Crosstalk*] I suspect that the Member for Oropouche East is behind this. [*Laughter*]

2.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this year is 100 years since the father of our nation was born and it does provide—[*Interruption*] If I am 100 years, I am sure you are about 250. It

provides us as a people with an opportunity to treat with possibly a unique situation in the history of any Caribbean country. Eric Williams, a household name in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider region, was born on September 25, 1911. Eleven years later he entered Queen's Royal College on one of eight government-financed, so-called College Exhibitions. What that means is that, at that time in 1911, there were only eight places available to young people in Trinidad and Tobago whereby they could have entered secondary school as non-paying students—eight for the entire country.

Eric Williams won one of those places and entered QRC. There he performed very well; did well in the exams at Junior Cambridge, Senior Cambridge and by 1931—and again, look at the climate, Mr. Speaker. In 1928 he made the highest score in Senior Cambridge, but that did not get him where he wanted to go. He had to do the exam again. He placed third in among the seven awarded higher school certificate successes, but to go to university, he had to get that island scholarship, because that was the only avenue available to him to get into university. So he wrote the exam again in 1930 and won the Open Island Scholarship. That was how Eric Williams entered university, as an island scholar.

In 1932, he then entered Oxford University on the basis of that island scholarship which he won. By 1935, three years later, he got his degree and, in getting his first degree, he made history at St. Catherine's College in Oxford where he got a first honour in Modern History for the college. It was the first time in the history of Oxford University that that college had got a first in history in the examination for his undergraduate performance.

He then proceeded to do a doctoral thesis on the subject, "Aspects of the Abolition of the West Indian Slave Trade and Slavery". I may point out that when Eric Williams won the Open Island Scholarship, he could easily—and, in fact, from those who claim to be in the know, it is said that his father was quite disappointed that he did not set about to become a lawyer or a doctor, which would have made him self-sufficient as a professional in the years ahead, but he chose to study history. Having got his first degree at Oxford he went on to do this doctoral examination of the history of the people of Trinidad and Tobago against the background of slavery, and his doctoral thesis was based on the aspects of the abolition of the West Indian slave trade and slavery.

One can assume that, had he become a doctor or a lawyer, he might have joined the ranks of the many distinguished doctors and lawyers we produced, but here was this historian, embarking on a path that was to make him great in

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Trinidad and Tobago and outside Trinidad and Tobago, and to end with the accolade of “Father of the Nation”, a historian.

This was the work which eventually was published in that famous document, *Capitalism and Slavery*. In 1942, arising out of the work he did on the slave trade and its economic and social effects, Dr. Williams became an author, publishing his work in a text called, *The Negro in the Caribbean*. In 1944, his doctoral thesis was published, *Capitalism and Slavery*. One may want to look at how that work was received by academia, but permit me to go through, briefly, the life pathway of Dr. Williams before I come back to that.

In 1948, Dr. Williams returned to Trinidad as deputy chairman of the Caribbean Research Council, which was a unit of the Caribbean Commission. In 1950, he published another book, *Education in the British West Indies*. Between 1955—1956—interestingly enough, in 1955, Dr. Williams was fired from the Caribbean Commission for taking issue with the status quo. At that time, it was not the accepted thing to do, to take issue with the status quo, especially when one was in a position of authority on the facts. In taking issue with the British government over how the Caribbean was being managed and how the future of Caribbean people, especially the people of Trinidad and Tobago, was being stifled, his contract was not renewed in 1955.

Dr. Williams responded to that in the following way. He came to Woodford Square a month later and he had this to say—and one must take this in the context of all that happened after. He said, and I quote—talking to the people of Trinidad and Tobago at what was then dubbed the University of Woodford Square:

“I was born here, and here I stay, with the people of Trinidad and Tobago, who educated me free of charge for nine years at Queen’s Royal College and for five years at Oxford, who have made me whatever I am, and who have been or might be at any time the victims of the very pressures which I have been fighting against for twelve years...I am going to let down my bucket where I am, right here with you in the British West Indies.”

That was Eric Williams declaring his entry into the political arena in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Caribbean, in confrontation with the British colonial power. That was 1955.

Dr. Williams embarked on a series of lectures, educating the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and, by extension, the rest of the region who listened to what he had to say. In January 1956, it resulted with the formation of a political organization in Trinidad and Tobago called the People’s National Movement—we

recognize the birthday of the PNM as January 24, 1956.

History would show that nine months later the People's National Movement scored a significant victory; while not resounding, but important enough where 13 of the 24 seats were won by the People's National Movement which was formed nine months before. One may want to look at what was the result of that. But suffice it to say that there were some highlights, and the highlights of the post-1956 period saw Dr. Williams presenting to the people of Trinidad and Tobago a series of five-year development plans, which initiated the development of Trinidad and Tobago in a way that it was not even contemplated before.

In 1957, one year after the PNM won that election, Dr. Williams engaged in discussions about the ceding of Chaguaramas to the Americans, and I will come back to that. By 1965, Independence was with us as a result of the championing of that cause by Dr. Williams. During the period 1966—1970, Dr. Williams published three other texts. He published: *British Historians in the West Indies*, he published his autobiography, *Inward Hunger: the Education of a Prime Minister*, and he published his seminal, *From Columbus to Castro: the History of the Caribbean, 1942—1969*, all that while being Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

There is a point of view that during that period, 1966—1970, Dr. Williams focussed so much in being an author that he had not noticed that the politics was getting away from him and 1970 saw the disturbances where the very people who supported Dr. Williams from 1956—1970 were taking strong issue with the fact that the PNM had not delivered what the people expected and the changes that we were expecting, the social and economic changes. The social order, the economic order were not being transformed fast enough, and 1970 is for another debate for another time.

Suffice it to say that Dr. Williams was severely challenged. Arising out of those challenges from the people of Trinidad and Tobago, led largely by the young and the unemployed in the urban areas of the East/West corridor and spread across the country and to Tobago, Dr. Williams responded, through the PNM, by developing the *Chaguaramas Declaration, Perspectives for the New Society*, wherein he recommitted the PNM, that national organization, to delivering to the people of Trinidad and Tobago what we initially expected from the People's National Movement, and a road map was prepared and this whole question of nationalization and national development was accelerated between 1970 and the time when Dr. Williams passed on in 1981.

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Those of us in Trinidad and Tobago who take it for granted that Dr. Williams was here; he is gone. I want to mention today some of the accolades that had been heaped on Dr. Williams by persons who acknowledged the significant role that he played, not only in our own development, but in their development wherever they were. Dr. Williams was recognized in a way that we, as a people, in Trinidad and Tobago, do not always acknowledge that he should be recognized in this way.

In 1969, when man was about to set foot on the moon, the Americans invited a number of world leaders to write and have placed on the moon a text of their thoughts. Dr. Williams was one of those leaders and he had this to say, and I quote: “It is our earnest hope for mankind that while we gain the moon, we shall not lose the world.” That was Dr. Williams’ contribution to the moon landing expedition.

Then the well-known Colin Powell, US Secretary of State in 1998 said, and I quote: “No one was a greater fighter for justice and equality; no one was a greater leader.” That was Caribbean man, Colin Powell, describing Dr. Williams. “He was a rare gift to this world’s inhabitants.” That was the view expressed in 2000 by the President of Zambia, President Kenneth Kaunda. US President, Bill Clinton in 2001, described Dr. Williams as “Trinidad’s man for all seasons”. The President of the Dominican Republic in 2005 described Dr. Williams as “the great thinker”.

Former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, described Dr. Williams as, “that great West Indian historian and Prime Minister”. Interestingly enough, so influenced was Thabo Mbeki, who became President of South Africa—so influenced was he—by the intellectual and other contributions of Dr. Eric Williams, that Thabo Mbeki dedicated his autobiography to Dr. Eric Williams, and that should mean something to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, especially those who believe that Dr. Williams is somebody to be caricatured and dismissed for their own liking.

2.20 p.m.

And Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Vice President of India in 2006 described Dr. Williams as “the greatest Trinidadian of the twentieth century; a friend of India.”

There is a comment made by Prof. Arnold Rampersad who is Professor of Humanities at Stanford University, and he had this to say about Dr. Williams

“he made us proud to be who we were, and optimistic as never before about

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what we were going to be, or could be. Bliss was it that dawn to be alive, and nothing that has transpired since... can negate Williams' gift to his people, or his triumph of intellect and spirit."

The Guyanese author, Ian McDonald, had this to say:

"There is a sharp distinction between the very good and the truly great between the man of talent and the man of genius. The man of talent is the marksman who hits a mark that others cannot hit. The man of genius is the marksman who hits the mark they cannot even see"—describing Dr. Williams standing head and shoulders above others. And what did Dr. Williams himself have to say that should be of interest to us as we today in the 100th—year reflect on his presence and his contribution? Mr. Speaker, permit me to quote four or five statements from Dr. Williams that will always be with us. In 1962—this is 1979 actually at a PNM convention September 29, 1979. Dr. Williams had this to say to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, still relevant today. He exhorted us to and I quote:

"...build the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, bringing in all the races; acknowledging all the races, acknowledging all their contributions, elevating lowly castes, dignifying despised colours, achieving a syncretism here and a new autonomy there, raising up the poor and the lowly and giving them a positive stake in our society...The humblest antecedents are not inconsistent with greatness of soul."

That exhortation is as poignant today as it was then, and at the coming of our independence Dr. Williams presented the people of Trinidad and Tobago with a gift—historian that he was—a book entitled *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* and from that text I quote, page 282

"On August 31st, 1962, a country will be free, a miniature state will be established, but a society and a nation will not have been formed. After August 31, 1962, the people of Trinidad and Tobago will face the fiercest test in their history—whether they can invest with flesh and blood the bare skeleton of their National Anthem"—which says—"Here, every creed and race find an equal place.' That is their challenge. They may fail... But merely to make the attempt, merely to determine to succeed, would be an enormous tribute to their capacity, a powerful inspiration to frustrated humanity."

And Mr. Speaker, in talking to us about us and our relationship with others in the national society, and putting us on our guard against those who will seek to divide us for their own narrowness, based on ethnic and other lines Dr. Williams had this

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to say and I quote:

“Together, the various groups in Trinidad and Tobago have suffered, together they have aspired, together they have achieved. Only together can they succeed. And only together can they build a society, can they build a nation, can they build a homeland. There can be no Mother India, for those whose ancestors came from India...there can be no Mother Africa, for those of African origin, and the Trinidad and Tobago society is living a lie and heading for trouble if it seeks to create the impression, or to allow others to act under the delusion, that Trinidad and Tobago is an African society. There can be no Mother England and no dual loyalties...There can be no Mother China, even if one could agree as to which China is the Mother; and there can be no Mother Syria and no Mother Lebanon. A nation, like an individual, can have only one Mother. The only Mother we recognize is Mother Trinidad and Tobago, and Mother cannot discriminate between her children.”

Eric Williams *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* page 279. Mr. Speaker, permit me to quote his exhortation to the young people in 1962 at the Independence Youth rally August 30th, 1962. Dr. Williams had this famous exhortation to our young people, and I was one of them, Mr. Speaker, and I suspect that you were one too. He said:

“You the children, yours is the greatest responsibility to educate your parents, teach them to live together in harmony...To your tender and loving hands, the future of the Nation is entrusted. In your innocent hearts, the pride of the Nation is enshrined. On your scholastic development, the salvation of the Nation is dependent...you carry the future of Trinidad and Tobago in your school bags.”

These are the exhortations that came from the Father of the Nation, Eric Williams, scholar and politician. It would be interesting to look back 50 years later to see how well we have done against the background of that exhortation.

I distinctly recall where I was standing when I heard those words and I am sure there are many of us serving in this Parliament today to whom those words were directed as school children at the time, and if we would like to measure the nature of our success we may want to compare our achievements as a country, and even at the personal level, against the background of the exhortations of that day.

Permit me to mention something else that was said by Prof. Arnold

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Rampersad. Prof. Rampersad who happens to be the Sara Hart Kimball Prof. in the Humanities at Stanford University and I quote: “Single-handedly and single-mindedly, Eric Williams transformed our lives. He swept away the old and inaugurated the new. He made us proud to be who we were, and optimistic as never before...”

We would have great difficulty in taking issue with that statement for it is an unchallenged truth, and it is on that basis that in this hundredth year, as we acknowledge what Prof. Rampersad said, that I am saying to us as a people this Motion is being put to the Government only because the Government has the authority and the resource base to have us appropriately acknowledge this centenary, why this Motion is directed to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is required so to be procedurally, but it is really an exhortation to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, through the government that represents all of us, that we do what civilized people would want to do recognizing what we have benefitted from the life of this great citizen who dedicated his life to make our lives better, that we acknowledge in this hundredth year, in the most tangible way, not just for this year but for the years ahead, that we colleagues in this Parliament agree to work together to make 2011 the year when we recognize the 100th year of the birth of Dr. Eric Williams.

2.30 p.m.

I would be most surprised indeed if there is one Member in this House, regardless of political persuasion, who would have difficulty in accepting and acting appropriately, against the background of the position as said to us by Prof. Rampersad, that Dr. Williams changed our lives and I dare say for the better.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Williams’ work was truly the work of a scholar and those of us who had exposure to scholastic work and academia would understand what it means to see that:

- in 1984, there was a publication of *British Capitalism and Slavery* by Boston University—a conference was held there on Dr. Williams’ work;
- in 1998, we had the inauguration of the Eric Williams Memorial Collection at the University of the West Indies;
- in 2000, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean*, was published in Japanese;

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- in 2000, Eric Williams and the Pan Africanist Movement Conference at Wellesley College;
- in 2002, Florida International University, Prof. Ken Boodhoo's *The Elusive Eric Williams*, history project;
- in 2002, as well, Eric Williams: His Scholarship, Work and Impact Conference, New York Public Library;
- in 2004, *The Economic Future of the Caribbean* Conference; book re-issued by Eric Williams;
- in 1944, that was the Howard University and the compilation of work done there by Dr. Williams;
- in 2006, Eric Williams and *The Making of the Modern Caribbean*. This is Princeton University, Prof. Colin Palmer's biography of Dr. Eric Williams;
- in 1999—2007, the FIU series of conferences.

Mr. Speaker, these are all highly acclaimed international institutions, which, recognizing the quality of Dr. Williams' scholastic presentation and achievement long after his death, seek to use these works as part of their ongoing offerings to generations who came after Dr. Williams on a subject which will never go away in the history of mankind—the subject of slavery and man's inhumanity to man. I think Dr. Williams was 30-odd years old when he did this thesis.

Suffice it to say that Dr. Williams' thesis, *Capitalism and Slavery*, did not go unchallenged. In fact, the finding of that thesis was that slavery was not abolished out of any humanitarian consideration, but was abolished as a result of economic considerations, notwithstanding that there were humanitarians who saw the bitterness of the human condition. In fact, people like William Wilberforce very well made an argument for the abolition of slavery on the grounds that it was too inhumane to be continued, but you must remember, slavery continued in the United States up to 1865 when it was abolished in the Caribbean in 1838. So it was not a humanitarian revolution.

Dr. Williams, a young Trinidad and Tobago scholar at Oxford, in the heart of academia in the British Empire, took on the issue and told the British to their face that it was the failing economics of slavery that really brought about the demise of slavery. In fact, he pointed out that on the ending of slavery, when compensation was being paid by the Empire, the compensation was not paid to the abused; it

was paid to the slave owners who lost their property.

That is the history, and many academics take issue with that. Even today, after rigorous challenges, it has stood the test of time and continues to be one of the seminal works produced in the British Commonwealth by any scholar. We in Trinidad and Tobago, as we talk about honouring Dr. Williams, should look at it against that kind of background.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about some of the things that Dr. Williams did, some of the benefits that we the people of Trinidad and Tobago had from Dr. Williams. When Dr. Williams came into the political arena, the term that could aptly describe Trinidad and Tobago as a British colony then was a “backwater”. We were a British colonial backwater and all the connotations that go with that were applicable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

It was Dr. Williams’ understanding and the vision of how it could be different if only we could get the colonial master to understand that that is not how it ought to be; and that is not how it will be if the sons and daughters of Trinidad and Tobago take up the responsibility for their own destiny. So when you enter the political arena—that political victory came in 1956 and within a year, Dr. Williams, with the support of the political party, the PNM, and the wider national community, set about to change this country in a way that those who were present and alive then, before Dr. Williams, did not think possible.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Williams gave the party, and by extension the country, something called the People’s Charter, in which he outlined to the PNM—but talking to the country—where this country would go under. I do not want us to see this as a PNM thing. It was Dr. Williams leading Trinidad and Tobago as first Chief Minister of the country because, before then, we were governed by a Governor who was free to do as he pleased, accountable to no one, except, of course, the Queen who appointed him to represent her.

The Governor of Trinidad and Tobago was a law unto himself as long as he did not offend Buckingham Palace, and that was so until 1956. When the people of Trinidad and Tobago listened to those lectures that Dr. Williams carried out through the country and believed that we could be better; that we could do differently, if we followed, very much like the Pied Piper, Dr. Williams, that boy who did so well at QRC, who did so well at Oxford, who left the Caribbean Commission, who came back to Woodford Square, who put his bucket down and said: “If you follow me, I can make you proud of the nation that we can build”, so the People’s Charter outlined what the people of Trinidad and Tobago could

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become.

There is a road in Tobago from Roxborough to Bloody Bay. If you travel on that road you would see a series of bridges, curb walls and culverts. What is interesting about that trip is that whenever they built one of those bridges, curb walls or culverts, they put the date on it. The first date you would see when you leave Roxborough is 1957, and then, along the trip, you could see the growth of the road and the date of each one, '57, '58, '59, '60. This was the first five-year development programme, building a road from Roxborough to Bloody Bay, because, before Dr. Williams and the PNM, there was no road. Today we can drive past there as a tourist attraction, look at the forest and so on and assume it was always so. That is a microcosmic expression of how the whole country changed during that first five-year development programme.

Dr. Williams brought, in the second period, a series of legislation to the Parliament, after Independence, which we should pay attention to, because, very quickly, not accepting office as an arrival and satisfaction, Dr. Williams moved our status. I do not know if you will recall, Mr. Speaker, our constitutional arrangement was about the poorest in the Caribbean. Barbados, Jamaica and others had better arrangements than Trinidad and Tobago with respect to their Constitution.

Chief Minister in 1956, very quickly, Dr. Williams became a Premier by virtue of arrangements which we inherited and we got the cooperation of the colonial powers. So Chief Minister, Premier, Prime Minister, improved control of Trinidad and Tobago by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago through representation and responsibility of the managers to the population. The Governor's power had been removed or replaced by the power of the people. Dr. Williams led that charge in Trinidad and Tobago, but if I may refer to the important legislative package which is still at work in Trinidad and Tobago today, managing our affairs in the way that we are managing them, notwithstanding any difficulty that may arise there, I make reference to the Civil Service Act, the Police Service Act, the Prison and Fire Service Acts, the Education Act.

Permit me to dwell a few moments on the Education Act. There is something in that Education Act discussion on the legislation that I want to emphasize to the people of Trinidad and Tobago who today take it for granted that we always had what we have and they had to give it to us. Dr. Williams at the time had this fight to fight which caused him to have to take this position in legislation, and I quote:

“No person shall be refused admission to any public school on account of

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religious persuasion, race, social status or language of such person or of his parent.”

That does not sound very important today in Trinidad and Tobago.

Where over time this has become the norm, at that time when Dr. Williams took issue with the status quo to want to fight this fight, what prevailed in Trinidad and Tobago was that access to secondary education was very restricted; not only on the ground of economics, but also on the grounds of religion, race and social standing. Dr. Williams led the fight to remove that from the landscape of Trinidad and Tobago, so today we take it for granted that any child can walk through any door in any school in this country as a matter of right and based on merit. That is one of the most fundamental changes that ever took place in Trinidad and Tobago. It changed the whole social and economic complexion of Trinidad and Tobago—education; and education in a way—[*Desk thumping*] unrestricted, unfettered education.

What that means is that today it is common practice, accepted practice that whereas we have Catholic schools, we have Anglican schools, we have Presbyterian schools, we have State schools; even though the denominational bodies still have management control of the schools that they have built and operate, the State assumes responsibility for the education of all citizens. Even where there are denominational schools, the State accepts the responsibility to pay for every teacher and to support those institutions because they are public institutions. On that basis, the agreement was had that no public school can deny access to anybody in this country on the basis of race, colour, creed, class or religion. That is why, today, Hindu children are in Catholic schools and vice versa; Baptist children are in Anglican schools, children of no religion are in schools and in Trinidad and Tobago it is no big thing.

2.45 p.m.

When there was an issue of a child wearing a hijab in a Catholic school, whereas in other parts of the world that might have been the basis of great discord, it was very quickly and easily dispensed with. Today you can go to Anglican schools and see young ladies wearing hijabs. You can go to Catholic schools, and in the people of Trinidad and Tobago’s face, that is not the basis of discord. I must say, that is against the background of the exhortations of Dr. Williams saying to us that we live together as one people and those differences that could divide us should not divide us, and every citizen in this country should be free to aspire to have what the country has to offer, regardless of race, colour,

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creed, class, social standing or geography. For that alone, in this hundredth year, we should acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Williams towards the building of this nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is common for us, at carnival time and other times, to go down to Chaguaramas and to enjoy what Chaguaramas has to offer and assume that Chaguaramas is as an integral part of Trinidad and Tobago as anywhere else. I am sure many young people in Trinidad and Tobago today, as miseducated as many of them are, do not know, and if they do know, do not appreciate what went on to allow Chaguaramas to become a part of Trinidad and Tobago.

When we became independent—in fact even before we became independent—the whole question of the naval base in Chaguaramas was something that rubbed Dr. Williams the wrong way, because he understood what was happening. What was it? The British colonial power, without consulting, far less to get agreement with the people of Trinidad and Tobago whose islands are these—these are our islands—but so insignificant were we in the eyes of the British at the time that they made an arrangement to lease for 99 years the Chaguaramas territory to the United States, without let, hindrance or consultation with the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

That existed during the war until Eric Williams came, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago accepted it. But Dr. Williams saw the impertinence of that and saw it as something which the people of Trinidad and Tobago, as human beings in their own rights, should aspire to change for their own dignity, and he mobilized the people of Trinidad and Tobago to see it for what it is, an affront and an injustice. What was the assignment? The assignment was Trinidad and Tobago under this Prime Minister, who was a little man from a little country, taking issue with the British who assumed that imperial power would always be superior to any nationalistic ideas that may emanate from Port of Spain or elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Dr. Williams took on the English over Chaguaramas on the grounds that Trinidad and Tobago belonged to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And Chaguaramas was in fact questioned, I think on three grounds, that contract. First, if the British had to lease Chaguaramas land to anybody, the people of Trinidad and Tobago should have been consulted and the Legislative Council at the time, which was the so-called Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, was not consulted, and on those grounds that the contract between Britain and the US, the lease, was therefore illegal, because it never had the sanction of the Council in Trinidad and Tobago. That was the first ground.

The second ground was that no financial consideration came to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The British leased Chaguaramas to the United States and the British got destroyers to fight the war. What did the people of Trinidad and Tobago get? The laws required if you sell or dispose of crown lands, there must be some remuneration to this territory and on that basis Dr. Williams argued and he eventually—so forcefully and effectively did he argue that it brought the British foreign secretary to Trinidad and he won the argument. Dr. Williams got the British to accept that in consideration for the lease for Chaguaramas, the first thing that should happen is that the lands that were not being used by the base, which were being held by the Americans, should be returned to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and that was done. We got back a piece of Chaguaramas immediately.

Secondly, for the lease that you gave for free to the Americans and got the ships for your use, the people of Trinidad and Tobago got US \$30 million, where the British undertook, I think the Americans paid it, that they would spend moneys on the UWI, to create and expand UWI, and there were other things that were done with that money, including infrastructure payments, where some infrastructure in the country was funded. At that time, US \$30 million was a lot of money. We did not only get back Chaguaramas, but we got remuneration for the time that it was used and for which we were not recognized. Mr. Speaker, the whole question of what Dr. Williams means to us can only be fully understood if we know our history as a people, otherwise we can pass it over; we can just pass over it. If we do not benefit from that knowledge, we would be depriving ourselves of the opportunity to go forward.

I mentioned a moment ago a packet of legislation which formed the foundation of public management of the police service, the prison service, the fire service, civil service and so on. There was one other piece of legislation which I think my friend from Pointe-a-Pierre was very familiar with. It is the Industrial Stabilization Act, which is not popular across the board. I know there are a lot of people with whom it is not popular. But, at the time when that Act was put in place, a period of turmoil and industrial disturbance was the order of the day in Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Williams, being the man that he was, was not afraid to confront the issue; the same way he was not afraid to confront the British Empire on the real story about the abolition of slavery and to tell them that it was about economics and not humanitarian considerations. Dr. Williams did not back away from the fact that what Trinidad and Tobago needed, as he saw it, was a piece of legislation that

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gave rights and responsibilities to capital and to labour, and that was the basis of the enactment of the Industrial Relations Act/Industrial Stabilisation Act, and it was something that brought order to our labour environment, and it was something that brought responsibilities for those who employed labour, and the Industrial Court is a fixture in our landscape.

I know in very many political arenas and on very many platforms, in the heat of the moment, many persons who were not happy with that IRA/ISA arrangement gave the impression that it should not exist as legislation and there should be unfettered contact between those who offer labour and those who use labour. But, I am wondering, just wondering, if today, where labour forms a significant part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, whether any person would be seriously contemplating the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes? Is it the Government's—[*Interruption*] I hear my colleague from Oropouche East saying sotto voce, yes, but I think he is just being mischievous. I am not talking about amendments here. Amendments are always available to improve legislation. I am talking about having it on the books as a piece of legislation. If the answer is yes, as you are saying, we look forward to the debate as we go forward.

We also had the Finance Act, which Dr. Williams himself championed, in order to bring order to the use of capital in our development and to ensure that development had a place in Trinidad and Tobago using the resource, both human and others, guided by the appropriate legislation, so that Trinidad and Tobago things give Trinidad and Tobago people their best opportunity to participate in their country.

It was not by accident, Dr. Williams called his political party the People's National Movement, because his whole approach to managing the affairs of people of the region, not just Trinidad and Tobago, was nationalistic. It was about building an identity, building a nation and standing up to be counted. One of the things Dr. Williams did was to project and portray Trinidad and Tobago as a nation to be respected. As soon as we became independent we took our place with great pride in the international bodies; not just take our place, but, under Williams' guidance, played a significant role in handling the affairs of not only ourselves but that of other people.

Mr. Speaker, I know some people will be tired of hearing about Dr. Williams,

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but I begin by asking you—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: We want to hear about Dr. Rowley.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am just a voice crying in the wilderness. I should hope that today it would not be a wilderness.

Dr. Williams did not only confine his interest to the people of Trinidad and Tobago's business, because, as the Motion says, he was a man for the region. It is interesting that, when there are important occasions, countries would issue stamps to mark important occasions, which take note of the fact that Guyana, in 1981, issued a \$100 stamp and on that stamp is a picture of Dr. Eric Williams. It does not matter how much it is worth, it is the thought and the acknowledgement behind it.

Mr. Speaker, why would Guyana do that? It was because of the role Dr. Williams played, among other things. Dr. Williams was in the forefront of the creation of the Caribbean Free Trade Area (Carifta), which was the precursor to Caricom. And Dr. Williams would have been right there in supporting the idea of bringing Guyana on board and in having located in Guyana the headquarters of Caricom when it happened, not grabbing it as Trinidad and Tobago could have been, but agreeing and advocating that it be located in Guyana.

More importantly, when Guyana came under pressure from Venezuela, with respect to its territorial integrity, Dr. Williams played a significant role in bringing about some standstill in that potentially explosive arrangement where Venezuela was about to take action to recover what it considers Venezuelan territory up to the Essequibo, which in fact we know as Guyana. The people of Guyana have been eternally grateful for that. So, when you see Dr. Williams' picture on a \$100 Guyanese stamp, they know what they are talking about and it behoves the people of Trinidad and Tobago to also understand the value of Dr. Williams.

It was not only Guyana, another Caribbean territory was in a similar situation. Guatemala was laying claim to the entire territory of Belize. Belize's independence was in the balance. Even after they became independent, they were threatened by Guatemala, because Guatemala always sees Belize as Guatemalan territory to the extent where, for many years, the British had to station a squadron, I think of carrier aircraft, in Belize to respond to Guatemala.

3.00 p.m.

Dr. Williams was in the middle of those discussions to bring about peace,

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calm and reason between Belize, Guatemala and the colonial power to allow the people of Belize to enjoy independence against a possible threat of military intervention with respect to Belize and its existence on the Yucatan Peninsula.

So, Dr. Williams is not a Trinidad and Tobago icon, he is a regional icon who made tangible and important contributions to people around the region. And it was not only there, Dr. Williams did not only confine himself to the big things, the apparent small things that were important to the people of the region were also of his interest. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, West Indies cricket—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: “Ummm!”

Dr. K. Rowley:—and now is a bad time I understand, now is a bad time to mention West Indies cricket, but given the fact and my reference—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: “Ummm!”

Dr. K. Rowley: “Do not treat them so bad”. I mean, they deserve—we will talk about that after—but, Mr. Speaker, when West Indies cricket was in its ascendancy we had the issue in the region that captaincy of the West Indies team was reserved and our best player who should have been the captain, wanted by the people of Trinidad and Tobago—

Dr. Moonilal: Daren Ganga.

Dr. K. Rowley:—Daren was not born yet. Frank Worrell, one of the famous 3Ws, was supposed to have been the captain of the West Indies team, but because of the societal status quo there was every possibility that Frank Worrell would not have been the captain on one basis, as up to that point no black man had ever captained the West Indies team and there were people in the region who were prepared to maintain that position, and it would surprise and shock many people.

Mr. Speaker, recently I was reading the autobiography, or the biography of Keith Miller, the great Australian all-rounder and Keith Miller said, when Australia came to the Caribbean they looked forward to playing against the 3Ws who were the outstanding batsmen of the era; it was the challenge of the era to play—Keith Miller, Ray Lindwall and that group, to play against the 3Ws. And they had some serious cricket, not like what is going on now, not this Mickey Mouse thing, real cricket, played by real cricketers and the West Indians were giving an account of themselves.

One evening there was a party for the players at the home of a senior official in West Indies cricket, the Australians went and when they got there the 3Ws were not there. And Keith Miller asked where is Worrell, where is Weekes, where is

Walcott? And the official said to him, “We play with them but we do not socialize with them”, and Keith Miller left the party.

It was against that background that Worrell’s captaincy—that was the history, that was where we were in the Caribbean—and captaining the West Indies team was a big issue. I was a little boy then, and I distinctly recall how emotive that argument was. Dr. Williams intervened to bring his prestige to bear so as to facilitate the coming into being of Frank Worrell as the captain of West Indies cricket. Frank Worrell went on to become, arguably, the best captain of the West Indies and probably one of the best captains the game has ever known. When Frank Worrell’s team lost in Australia that famous tour in the 50s, a hundred thousand Australians came out to see the West Indies team off, after they had lost the series. Compare that with yesterday and you will see how far we have fallen—

Mr. Sharma: Blame Dr. Williams

Dr. K. Rowley: And you would not be so obscene, would you? I hear that.

Mr. Speaker, so Dr. Williams intervened in the sporting arena. Gary Sobers, the greatest all-rounder the game has ever known in his heyday probably did not understand what it meant to the people of the region, especially those like Dr. Williams who was fighting to create the regional and national identity against the colonial behaviour, went to play cricket in Ian Smith’s country and his career was almost ended.

For that his career could have ended because—for Gary Sobers there were great interventions from those in authority. Sobers or no Sobers if you could do that to our people then we could do without you. Dr. Williams intervened, recognizing the infraction, and if there was any person who could have intervened to throw cold water on that conflagration and to save a career that needed to be saved, Dr. Williams had the moral and other authority to do it and he did not hesitate to do it and Gary Sobers’ career was saved.

Dr. Williams saved quite a few citizens of Trinidad and Tobago too who probably did not understand what was required of them, but he understood human frailties as well, and did not hesitate to intervene to ensure that the wider good was preserved while he treated with these human frailties.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to have this Motion—I should not say that I do not want to—I would not like to have this Motion drag on as most private Members’ Motions drag on, for the simple reason that the date of Dr. Williams’ birth is in

September and what I would like of my colleagues in the Parliament is to take a decision now in March, and I will come back to what that decision could be, so that we can act upon it as we go towards the date.

Mr. Speaker, after Dr. Williams died, his daughter, Erica Williams, took it upon herself to seek to preserve not for herself, but for the country and the region, and I dare say the world, the legacy of Dr. Williams. I did not try to go this afternoon into chronicling the entire legacy of Dr. Williams, that would take weeks and months and probably years, I did not try to do that but what I want to do is to acknowledge that Dr. Williams himself had cautioned that he did not want any accolades or any recognition, but he cannot legislate beyond the grave and it falls to us as a people, for our own good and for the good of our children, to decide how we would respond to that presence that he had here.

Those persons, including Erica Williams who decided—notwithstanding the fact that Dr. Williams said that he did not want any accolades or he did not want any recognition—people would say, “Oh, you want a holiday for Dr. Williams” because in Trinidad and Tobago there are three things we get immediately as soon as you talk about any acknowledgement, you talk about “ah mud mas” coming down Frederick Street, but that is out; talk about a holiday, we are not advocating that; talk about a statue, we are not advocating that; what I am advocating, Mr. Speaker, and this is why I am asking the Government today—to agree that a joint select committee of the Parliament be appointed in short order where the Government, the Opposition—and allow access to the committee by Independent Senators by virtue of it being joint, and let the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, very quickly, look at the Dr. Williams that I just spoke about, his role, and decide—as I think we have decided long ago as we called him Father of the Nation—decide what we will to as a people—

Mr. McLeod: Mr. Manning is what, then?

Dr. K. Rowley: Member of Parliament for San Fernando East. You are a mischievous “fella” you know—Member of Parliament for San Fernando East. And I—Mr. Speaker, I am coming to the end of my presentation; no injury time here please. Yes, what I would like, that committee of Parliament should very quickly decide as a nation how—what would we appropriate—

Mr. McLeod: Would the Member give way? Is the Member saying that it is true as Dr. Williams himself may have said, that we can have only one mother, but perhaps three, four fathers?

3.10 p.m.

Dr. K. Rowley: You must be familiar with the quote that success has many parents; failure is an orphan. Are you going there? You are not saying that. Mr. Speaker, two minutes' injury time for that, please. I am winding up.

What I would like is for the Parliament, on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, very quickly to determine the appropriate response to the Williams centenary so that as a people we could demonstrate our civility and, I dare say, our gratitude to this outstanding son of the soil who has served us so well.

We have only to look at what the Puerto Ricans did in honouring Muñoz Marín, who is in a similar situation to Dr. Williams; the person who charted the course for them as a people, exhorting them to lift themselves up by their bootstraps; who took Puerto Rico from the depths of poverty to where it is today, on a foundation and a vision of Muñoz Marín.

Let us see what they did. We have to reinvent no wheel here, but I would like to make one specific request. Up to now, Dr. Williams' memory and the preservation of his legacy, tangible and otherwise, have been done by the Eric Williams Memorial Committee at UWI. One of the things I would like to see the Government do is to commit, at the level of the State, to support the Eric Williams Memorial Collection—not leave it to happenstance and cake sales—as part of the University of the West Indies.

This should be provided with accommodation and the relevant staff so that Dr. Williams' work and his legacy could be, in perpetuity, available to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the world. Specifically, it could be made available in the context of that museum, that building we have across the street where Dr. Williams conducted those famous lectures. The library, architecturally superb, is being left unattended to rot. This Government, with our support, could make that building available to the University of the West Indies to house the Eric Williams Memorial Collection as a museum.

It could not be a more fitting place, right next door to Woodford Square, marrying the library with its history of Dr. Williams and Woodford Square and the history of Dr. Williams. If we do that, we would create in Port of Spain pretty much a shrine for academics and a visitor centre for any person who knows our history and who respects us to walk into our city and into the life of Eric Williams as he knew it and as we know it now.

I do not want to detain this House any further. It does not fall to me to convince anybody in this House or this country that the one hundredth anniversary of Dr. Eric Eustace Williams is worthy of the highest celebration. I am asking that we, the politicians, demonstrate that it is possible, within the

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political arena—there are events that bring us together in a celebratory mood; we have been known to come together to mourn—that we can come together to celebrate. If there is one development in the history of this country that warrants a celebration, it is the centenary of Dr. Eric Eustace Williams.

I beg to move.

Miss Marlene McDonald (*Port of Spain South*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion and I reserve the right to speak.

Question proposed.

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to participate in the debate on a very interesting Motion filed in the name of the Member for Diego Martin West and Leader of the Opposition.

The mover of the Motion has given the Parliament, I think, the benefit of some historical data and evidence to establish a case for recognition of the life and work of the first Prime Minister and Chief Minister, Dr. Eric Williams. There can be little doubt that Dr. Williams made an extremely significant contribution to the development of Trinidad and Tobago, the region and by virtue of the highest elected state office, contributed to the Caricom, the Region, the Commonwealth and those areas in the world that look to places like Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica for post-colonial leadership.

I had the privilege several years ago to study in Europe and to interact with students from all over what was known then as the Third World. Somehow that is not in vogue now; we prefer to use the euphemism “developing countries”. When you studied with students from Asia and Africa and indicated that you were from Trinidad and Tobago, they would reflect and discuss Eric Williams because he had an impact on those other Third World areas by virtue of his participation in the non-aligned movement with the former Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi and others.

Eric Williams remains today a defining figure in the history of the Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago. There can be very little doubt about that. Students from Africa reflected on the influence of Dr. Williams on their own independence struggles and on the political philosophy and ideology of their post-colonial leadership, particularly leaders such as Kenyatta, Nkruma, and others; Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, the famous Ujamaa Movement leadership. They reflected on the inspiration of Dr. Williams, Norman Manley, the father, Alexander Bustamante and others in the Caribbean. Dr. Williams was part of a group of leaders in the

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Caribbean who contributed to placing this region on the map as far as philosophy and ideology go.

There can be little doubt and debate on the contribution of Dr. Williams. I will not detain the House by reading from *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, from *Capitalism and Slavery*, from *Eric Williams the man, his ideas and his Politics*. This is a very interesting social psychological portrait by Prof. Ramesh Deosaran in the immediate aftermath of the passing of Dr. Williams. It makes for interesting reading.

I could not help but reflect on the quotation by the Member for Diego Martin West, from page 281 of the *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*. He ended his quote a few lines before Dr. Williams indicated, at the end of the paragraph on page 282:

“For I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord”

It was not Lenny Saith. It was not Prakash Saith either.

The Member has brought a Motion—and is entitled to every minute of his time—to convince the House and the nation on the rightness of the Motion and of his resolution. What the Member would like the House to resolve to do is to declare the year in honour of Dr. Williams and to take action pursuant to that.

It was not the objective of the Member for Diego Margin West to speak about the frailties, the errors, the human weaknesses of Dr. Williams as others have done. That could not have been an objective given the tenor of the Motion. It is not my objective either, save and expect to indicate that Dr. Williams, like any other leader and historical figure, particularly charismatic leaders—and Prof. Ramsaran speaks at length of the elements of charisma and defines Dr. Williams within that perspective—it is not our intention today to dwell on his errors and weaknesses, but Dr. Williams’ daughter at some time—there was a reference to it—did speak to those qualities.

The Member for Diego Martin West did mention the Industrial Stabilization Act, which at the time and today is still regarded as the most draconian piece of legislation to be tabled and passed in the Parliament in one day. In that debate, Dr. Williams accused the leadership of the trade unions of being involved in a conspiracy to undermine the government and indicated that the communist and socialist elements were undermining the nation through the use of the trade union movement.

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This was the justification for the Industrial Stabilization Act that led to the mobilization of the political opposition and in some way to the events of 1970—I want to get my history as well—that then led to 1971 when there was a no-vote campaign and the distinguished Member for San Fernando East emerged uncontested replacing, I believe, the hon. Gerald Montano, who was sent to Brazil as ambassador and the Member for San Fernando East found his way to this House uncontested. That was in the Industrial Stabilization Act. It was later replaced by the Industrial Relations Act, which went some way into dealing with some of the more draconian measures of the ISA.

There were other issues one could now dwell on: the famous line in Moruga, “Keep on looking forward”. A reporter asked Dr. Williams: “Could we look forward to more press conferences?” He told him he should keep looking forward. He was well known for his idiosyncrasies and habits. Notwithstanding that, there was a great purpose rooted in his intellectual upbringing and in the contribution to education and other civic areas. We are not disputing the contribution because when it was the privilege of the UNC to be in government—it was March 22, 1998 that the government of the United National Congress pioneered and installed at the University of the West Indies a tribute to Dr. Eric Williams. [*Desk thumping*]

3.25 p.m.

On March 22, 1998, under the Government, the Eric Williams Memorial Collection at the UWI Library, St. Augustine was established and the government at the time invited retired US General, Colin Powell, to open the Eric Williams Memorial Collection 1998. On that day present, Mr. Speaker—I will like to remind the new leader of the PNM that the PNM was represented on that day by deputy political leader, Mr. Ken Valley, but the political leader of the PNM was not present at that function at the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker, it was in recognition of the enormous contribution of Dr. Williams to the development of Trinidad and Tobago, and particularly education that the then government established a memorial foundation, established the Eric Williams Memorial Collection at UWI, for the use of students to scholars. All can go there. That collection which I have had the opportunity to visit—we also have there the famous chair of Dr. Williams which was taken from Balisier House. His chair that he worked on at Balisier House is at the University of the West Indies and at the collection. [*Crosstalk*]

You know, it might be a genuine question the Member for Fyzabad is asking

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of the Members of the Opposition. How many have visited the Eric Williams Collection at the University of the West Indies? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Warner: None, not one!

Mr. Sharma: Many.

Mr. Roberts: Shame!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the collection is there for all students, scholars—you just call and you go and visit.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You have achieved?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I have had an opportunity to go and it is quite a moving experience to look at that collection. And I dare indicate, Mr. Speaker, and remind you that it was done on March 22, 1998—[*Interruption*] My friend from Port of Spain South will contribute, but may I take this opportunity as well to congratulate the deputy political leader of Dr. Williams' party [*Desk thumping*] on becoming the deputy political leader legislation, I believe. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, “my horse lorse the race”. I thought the Member for Diego Martin North/East would have triumphed, but he was beaten by a credit card. [*Laughter*] Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*] who was out of the country for three years preceding the election. But this is Dr. Williams' party and, as you know it was a great legacy of his that he left, but he left it in the hands—

Today while the Leader of the Opposition is seeking to debate and resolve on commemorating and reflecting on the years and the contributions of Dr. Williams, you may also want to put on record—the Leader of the Opposition—that the Member for San Fernando East led that party for—is it 23 unbroken years—and would have taken that party from the three seats in 1986, I think, back to government by 1991 and would have also retaken—I believe Tobago—Tobago would have been retaken as well, under the leadership I think, of the Member for San Fernando; Tobago where the Leader of the Opposition comes from was retaken, I think—you lost in 1981, so that would have been by the late, 80s, somewhere there.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Member for San Fernando—I am sure that the distinguished Leader of the Opposition will in due course also initiate and pilot a Motion that will honour the contribution of the Member for San Fernando East, [*Desk thumping*] his contribution to the party. [*Crosstalk*] He will sponsor an appropriate Motion.

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Mr. Speaker, another missing element from the contribution of the Member, because the Leader of the Opposition gave us some history, I will like to just make that discussion and this debate more contemporary, and not a history debate—the books are there, we can recommend all our books for the students. I do not want to take us through the history so much, but to look at the contemporary—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: Tedious, tedious!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—tedious and I certainly do not want to repeat quotations from *Inward Hunger* and so on but, Mr. Speaker, I ask humbly and respectfully, what has the People’s National Movement done to honour Eric Williams? Today the Motion invites us, the Government, to do something—and I will come to that in a minute—but what has the party that Williams gave birth to with Kamaluddin Mohammed—and who else? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: Gerard Montano, Errol Mahabir.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—Montano—what has the party done? If I can find out what the party has done, I may be able to discuss with my colleagues what we can do to complement and supplement the work of the party. Because you know, in this country today, Mr. Speaker—I just want to remind the national community that—in Couva, in all fairness to the United Labour Front and the United National Congress, there is a Rienzi Complex, named after an inspirational leader of the labour movement. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: You mean you squat!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: At the OWTU, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record, at Fyzabad there is a statue of Tubal Uriah “Buzz” Butler erected by the Oilfield Workers Trade Union. [*Desk thumping*] So you have the Rienzi Complex.

Mr. Warner: What have you done?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And I want to tell you in a few weeks at Debe we will put up a statue of Sundar Popo. [*Desk thumping*] What have you done to honour Eric Williams? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Warner: Not even Balisier House.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You would think Balisier House will be today Eric Williams House. You would think that there would be a statue of Eric Williams in the car park. [*Crosstalk*] You would think that they would paint over the house. You will think that—I am giving you ideas, “eh”—there would be a foundation, a

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scholarship established in the name of the founder of the party and every year children will benefit by getting the Eric Williams scholarship sponsored by the PNM. You do not have that. You would think that there is some exhibition at the Balisier House—well, there is an exhibition there, but you would think that there is some educational exhibition on the life and work and times of Eric Williams, the founder of the PNM—nothing. Mr. Speaker, they have done precious little or nothing but come today to tell the Government what we could do.

Mr. Roberts: Shame!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That really is the issue. If you can tell us your contribution to Dr. Williams' legacy, we will be quite prepared to discuss ours and the Government's approach to this, but, Mr. Speaker, there is none, there is none. And the former leader of the party—because, you know, when I read this Motion in preparation, I myself was a bit puzzled, I saw the Member for Diego Martin West declaring that "...widely regarded as 'Father of the Nation'", but Mr. Speaker, I recall—it was on May 27, 1995, with a straight face—the Prime Minister at that time, the Member for San Fernando East, told the country, and I quote:

"...today, I speak to you as the father of the nation, and as the leader that you have chosen, not because I may, but because I know I must." [*Crosstalk*]

Which father are we talking about? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: Stepfather.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: "I aint sure." Because I know some regard Dr. Williams as the "father of the nation". On May, 27, we had the father— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: The stepfather.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—the Prime Minister at the time, the Member for San Fernando East, declaring himself as the—"and I must say "father of the nation", clearly—and referred to the national community as his 'political children' upon whom he called to make sacrifices to transform the vision..."— [*Interruption*]

Mr. George: Upon whom the vision?

Mr. Sharma: I disown that father. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So, Mr. Speaker, as he concluded that address to the nation, he said.

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“...you”—have chosen—“a leader, believe in your leader and God will do the rest.”

[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: The leader gone with the rest.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, so we were a bit confused as to which father and which leader we were talking about. But, I want to indicate on two fronts that the Government is not against an initiative or a resolution to give due honour and regard and recognition to Dr. Williams for his contribution to this country—not at all! [*Desk thumping*]

3.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind you that next year is a very significant year in the history of this country, and we will be celebrating 50 years of Independence. In that year, it is the wish of the Government that we engage in an entire year of celebrations of different sorts, and we will use the entire year to mobilize our national community—the children, the elderly, women, youth, the churches and all segments of the national community—in celebration of the 50th anniversary of our Independence. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, it is the commitment of the Government that Dr. Eric Williams will be duly recognized and duly reflected in the celebrations of our 50th anniversary as a nation [*Desk thumping*] along with other leaders.

Incidentally, just for the record, today is also another significant day in history, but few persons would know because of the nature of our history. Today is also the 100th birth anniversary of another pioneer, and that is Albert Gomes. Through a maze of colour, today March 25, 2011 is Albert Gomes, 100th birthday. So, we give regard not only to one, but to all, and next year it is our intention that we will recognize the contributions of Dr. Williams, but also the other towering figures in our political history, many of whom were at Marlborough House when we negotiated our Independence, like Rudranath Capildeo and other figures like Tajmool Hosein and others.

When we were in Opposition for 10 years, I recall speaking on several occasions about the issue of heroes. The nation must have heroes, and our legacy must not only be the buildings and systems, but political and social personalities so that our children can emulate and live up to. Dr. Williams is clearly a towering figure, but there are others. It is also the intention of the Government to have discussions and to develop a national policy on heroes, a heroes’ policy, and we

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can then include all the heroes of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

There was another hero, and I just want to put on record again, because I have spoken before on the other side on this matter. How did we treat another hero, Noor Hassanali, a former President and a gentleman well regarded as the epitome of dignity, humility and decency? Mr. Speaker, in his retirement years, he had to beg the then PNM Government for a Priority Bus Route pass; he had to beg for VAT and tax off a motor car, Noor Hassanali.

Mr. Warner: Who was the Prime Minister then?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The Prime Minister then was the Member for San Fernando East.

Mr. Warner: Shame!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Mr. Speaker, we must treat all our heroes in an appropriate manner. In Caricom territories they have a park, Heroes Park, where their figures are on display. There is literature and children can go and read about trade union leaders, political leaders and dynamic church leaders. We must create that type of environment for the children so that they can go and reflect. If you go to Rienzi Complex, you will find a collection on Rienzi and related matters of labour as well as the pictures and so on. We need to develop a national heroes policy that will lead us to the programmes and projects that will promote and sustain ongoing education and social awareness on our heroes, and that is a commitment that we will give and develop in consultation with the appropriate stakeholder community.

Mr. Speaker, at this moment, we are advised that the Ministry of Education will embark upon consultations on the development of the primary school curriculum. It is our intention as well that the work and the legacy of Dr. Eric Williams and others should be reflected further [*Desk thumping*] in the primary school curriculum and the secondary school curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to do history as well, and we have read the work of Dr. Eric Williams. We are familiar with the thesis on the economic underpinning of the movement away from slavery. We are familiar with the theory, but few children would have ever listened to a contribution from Dr. Williams, for example. While you can look in the book, see the speeches and read, we may have to develop the audio-visual support to broadcast speeches and contributions.

We were told of this debate between Dr. Eric Williams and Dom Basil Matthews, and I believe it was at St. Benedict's College at the library. In fact,

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when we sit and congregate with those of the generation of the Member for Diego Martin West, we are told of that debate, and later I believe Lloyd Best intervened. In fact, we were told that Dr. Williams was the third brain in the world, but we did not know who the first was and second. Had it been today, we would have known who was the first and who was the “smart man”, but we are committed to recognizing the contribution; that is the issue. You can do it through the curriculum; you can do it through a heroes policy; and we will do it in the 50th anniversary celebrations.

Mr. Speaker, the Member also raised the issue of Caricom and Dr. Williams contribution. We cannot forget either that Dr. Williams had his difficulties with leaders in the Caricom territory. There were leaders in Caricom whom Dr. Williams never spoke to, but there were persons in Trinidad he never spoke to, far less Caricom. You see, Mr. Speaker?

I think from 1971—1981 and his death, he could not have recognized the Member for San Fernando East as a minister of government. He did not recognize his ability to serve as a minister. I think he was a parliamentary secretary, unless I am mistaken, in government, but later, I think under Mr. George Michael Chambers, the Member for San Fernando East was elevated to a minister of state. I am not sure that he had the privilege to serve in the Cabinet of Dr. Williams. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, as is customary, the very distinguished Member for Oropouche East I think it is, is totally incorrect. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I am making a statement as to whether or not the Member for San Fernando East served in the Cabinet of Dr. Williams. If I am incorrect, it means he served. Dr. Williams had a knack for picking brilliance; this is why he had you elected.

Mr. Speaker, so the contributions are there, but we should not forget, and let us not rewrite history. There is a tendency—history is really what people write, because we were not there, but let us not try to rewrite history as we go along. Dr. Williams had his strengths and he had his weaknesses, and one of that really was in his relations with Caricom territories and Caricom leaders. This is why he had asked the minister with responsibility for CARIFTA, the distinguished Kamaluddin Mohammed, to assist in some of the work in the Caricom area, and to help build bridges when leaders in Caricom were not even on speaking terms with Dr. Williams. There was a time we were told in the ‘70s when he would not even speak to members on his own side. This is part of the history. [*Crosstalk*] Mr.

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Speaker, what we are saying is that we should not forget that part of the history.

Today, the Member for Diego Martin West spoke in glowing terms of the contribution of Dr. Williams to the freedom movement and the liberation of several areas in the Third World, and that is correct. So, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition spoke in glowing terms of the contribution of Dr. Williams to the development of other countries in the Third World, and when you place that in the context what happened after, it is also reason to be concerned with what has happened after.

It was in 1985 when an English international team came to Port of Spain at the Queen's Park Oval. In that team—I want to continue the cricket analogies too—there were players who had links to South Africa, apartheid South Africa. It was in 1985 that the weight and brutality of the State came down at the Queen's Park Oval when citizens of this country were brutalized and beaten for protesting and standing up against the apartheid system in South Africa. One wonders whether that would have happened under Dr. Eric Williams who stood tall against the policies of the regime in South Africa and against Botha and others.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to remember his legacy, we must also use this opportunity to commit and recommit to some of the principles which he outlined and articulated.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You should use that policy.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I am hearing the Member for Point Fortin. I wonder what Dr. Williams would have said if he had cast his eyes on her with President Obama at the airport; what Dr. Williams, a man of such decorum and class would have said? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: Under Dr. Williams, she would not be there.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, the Member for Chaguanas West indicated that if Dr. Williams was there she would not be here.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(10), please ask him to withdraw that statement?

Mr. Speaker: I think that we should not get too personal. I would like to suggest that we refrain from making such remarks, because it could really be a question of personal reflection on an individual, and I do not think that we should be charging in that direction. So, I caution the Leader of the House not to go in that direction, and just be cautious.

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Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for your guidance. I would move on from that matter. I was really reflecting on the principles of Dr. Williams, and asking the question really, has the party that he formed in 1956 stayed steadfast and faithful to those principles? When he left, did they stay faithful to the principles of Dr. Eric Williams?

Had they, we would not have had that incident in 1985 outside the Queen's Park Oval. I could never forget that day. We came from the University of the West Indies to the Oval to protest, and the next day the newspaper had a headline in bold on the front page—the West Indies played England on that day—“Licks Inside Licks outside”. That was the brutality of the Government at that time, and that would not have been consistent with Dr. Williams' approach.

You see, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Williams also articulated early in his career the need for national unity, the need to develop the nation as one, and since then we have had several attempts to derail that approach to governance—that approach to mobilizing all the resources of the country towards the development effort which we believe Dr. Williams in 1956 or thereabout genuinely felt, and genuinely believed that this country needed a programme of national unification. The decades after proved that we came very far from that ideal of unifying this country along the lines that Dr. Williams would have articulated in his writings.

Mr. Speaker, in recommitting, the country as a whole can reflect on the work of Dr. Williams, on his principles and on his liberation theory so to speak, but we also need to reflect on the politics of the day and his contribution to that politics and, indeed, his contribution to the party.

I noted that the Leader of the Opposition stayed away somewhat and, certainly, was not in a hurry to speak of Dr. Williams' contribution to the party, but I do not think that you can recognize Dr. Williams in the country without also reflecting on his contribution to party politics. It is a fact that the People's National Movement founded by Dr. Williams exists today as a unitary political party, and this political party that Dr. Williams founded has had, I think now, three political leaders, and has survived through the decades while other parties appeared and some disappeared and some remain.

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we are also extremely proud that on April 30, 2011, the United National Congress would be in existence for 22 long years. So, for 22 years the United National Congress would be in existence, but the PNM is, indeed, the oldest political party and remains a unitary party. It may well be a good time to

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reflect on the purpose and relevance of unitary political parties, given the challenges of the day, to unify the country.

This, Mr. Speaker, is an interesting point, the relevance of the unitary model towards political development in these plural societies given not only what has happened in Trinidad and Tobago, but what has happened in the United Kingdom, Australia and elsewhere. Notwithstanding, all the difficulties and challenges, there is now that movement away from the unitary party and the PNM has remained in that mould.

I am sure that the new leader of the party and the new Leader of the Opposition would have his work cut out for him to build and rebuild Dr. Williams' institution, which was created with a particular vision in mind. In fact, I took note, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition has indeed supported the approach in terms of deepening the democratic process, and when we speak about political parties we are not speaking about one party as opposed to two or three, we speak for all, and political parties are critical for the democratization of any society.

Dr. Williams, in fact, in doing our research, Mr. Speaker, spoke so much about political education and using the party as an instrument for political education because, at that time, of course, there were so few institutions that could have been used for education. It was not like today where you have all types of institutions and you have electronic technology and so on. In those days, Mr. Speaker, when "yuh hear Dr. Williams coming to Mayaro to speak under a house, we would full up under a house because the Doctor coming."

You know, Mr. Speaker, there was a famous line, I think it is from a current academic at UWI. He said when he was young he went to Woodford Square. I do not want to name him because he is still "around on the scene". He said he went to Woodford Square where Dr. Williams was giving a lecture. He said he listened to Dr. Williams, he was there, he stood in awe, his mouth agape, listening. He said: "I did not know what Dr. Williams said but it sound good." Such was the capacity of Dr. Williams to lift from the masses as well, to speak on more thematic and analytical issues confronting that time, in fact, is to speak in glowing terms of the intellectual capacity, as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, the party faces challenge, Dr. Williams' party, and that is an important point as well for democratization. Democracy is important and political parties are important, and we welcome the news from the Leader of the Opposition that they support the one man, one vote, even in the People's National

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Movement, an approach taken some time ago in other parties with challenges. But I am sure the Leader of the Opposition would have learnt, I imagine, from some of the challenges that other parties face in instituting this raw form of democracy to allow every member of the party to vote.

I think the only dissenting voice came from the delegates from San Fernando East, I believe, and the Member for San Fernando East could explain that, in fact—yes, the only dissenting voice came from San Fernando East against the one man, one vote method of electing leadership—[*Crosstalk*]. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe another remarkable event happened there, because we are dealing with democracy—Dr. Williams contribution to democracy.

The Member for San Fernando East, I think, indicated to his delegates that they were not to vote, and the Leader of the Opposition quite rightly pointed out: “But how could you conduct a democratic exercise if you ask people not to vote?” Maybe it is the “no vote campaign” from 1971 that was responsible for his elevation, when he encouraged 45 delegates not to vote, and the Leader of the Opposition made a good observation. So if I could just repeat the very good observation of the Leader of the Opposition, that you cannot promote democracy and support participation if you tell persons not to vote. You cannot support democracy that way.

Mr. Warner: He said it is most unusual.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, the Leader of the Opposition used a nice line, he said “It is most unusual that they would do that”, but be that as it may, I think there is a commitment from the leader of the party of Williams, that the party will now embark upon a one man, one vote approach, to allow all members—and it is good for the democracy that Dr. Williams gave birth to in 1956.

You see, Mr. Speaker, we cannot help but talk because their democratic party credentials were exposed over the last few days. I think one writer in the newspaper described it as the new adventures of the old PNM, because they were in their own party struggle. But, Mr. Speaker, I am sure in due course—I have given enough help—the PNM will appropriately recognize their founder, I do not want to say founding father, but their founder and will reflect that contribution at Balisier House and elsewhere.

I am sure that in winding up this Motion the Leader of the Opposition will announce to us all the initiatives of the party to properly honour the founder of the party, and maybe properly honour the Member for San Fernando East who gave

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23 years to the leadership, and there are separate issues. He will appropriately honour the Member for San Fernando East as well, who is responsible for his elevation and ours as well, so on our behalf he will thank him.

Mr. Speaker, I also noted that the Member in the tail end of the presentation amended the Motion somewhat. The Motion spoke about the declaration of the year, but coming down to the end the Member made some suggestions which deviated, or were not dealt with in the Motion. The Motion did not capture a key suggestion that came at the end, which is the establishment of a Joint Select Committee of some sort to reflect on the contribution of Dr. Williams and what the Parliament in the first instance and the national community and the government may do.

Mr. Speaker, that came very late. First it was not part of the Motion, so that we could not have properly contemplated the suggestion, and other suggestions as well, and I am sure, Mr. Speaker, as the debate continued—because I have taken notes as well of the request of the Leader of the Opposition—the feeling was that we could have a short debate and end and determine, because of the nature of the Motion.

Mr. Speaker, there are Members on this side, I want to alert you, who are extremely eager to speak on this matter. Clearly the Member for Chaguanas West, I do not believe anyone can hold him back from contributing on this matter; and the very distinguished Member for Tabaquite, who himself has done a lot of research on this matter, will want to also participate in the debate on honouring Dr. Williams and clearly you look forward to those contributions. So, Mr. Speaker, we cannot at this time give the assurance that the debate could conclude swiftly.

Mr. Speaker, as House Leader, they are breaking down my door to speak on this matter, so we cannot give that assurance, and it is not my belief either that this debate will properly conclude on this day. We may have to continue for a few Fridays well if I am to allow Ministers to have their say, which they are entitled to on the Motion. But as the debate develops, Mr. Speaker, it may well be that we can properly discuss and consider somewhat the amendment to the Motion from the Leader of the Opposition to reflect on a committee of Parliament of some kind, to promote and prominently recognize the contribution of Dr. Williams, but because it came very late it would not be proper to pronounce on that now.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving way. I just want to ask the

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Member, based on the eagerness of his Members to contribute, whether he does not think, notwithstanding all the kind understandings expressed, that it will defeat the very purpose of the Motion if we spend month after month talking about it, eating up the time that we should prepare and, in fact, carry on the celebration.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the Motion does call for the declaration of the year and we are already one quarter out, so it is really the declaration of three-quarters of the year.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*—well good, we have time before September 25 to discuss it, but it will not take long. I think one sitting again and we should properly ventilate the issues and consider the new suggestions made by the Leader of the Opposition as to an appropriate way of recognizing Dr. Williams.

May I also add that it is not a one-way street. The Opposition has clearly asked for something; that is the purpose of their Motion. They have started to build a case for it, but we have also made suggestions on a national heroes policy on curriculum development. We have also suggested to you ways in which your party can also honour Dr. Williams, and maybe you would also like to reflect and give us the benefit of your consideration on these matters, so we can have an integrated approach to it. [*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. [*Hon. A. Roberts*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, you can really speak at length on this matter of Dr. Eric Williams, because I had no idea the time was going so fast. There are a couple more points I would like to make before winding up.

One of the challenges currently with properly recognizing Dr. Williams' contribution is internationalizing his recognition. In several areas today, in several territories, persons themselves may not properly know of the contribution of Dr. Williams. It was recognized in 1998, when the then UNC Government initiated the establishment of the memorial collection at UWI, that we had to go further than that. That was a collection at the University of the West Indies; you can walk in, read and look.

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Dr. Rowley: Erica Williams that did it, not the UNC.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It may be that we must take suggestions that were made on that day. On March 22, 1998, at that ceremony, there were other suggestions, and had the leader of the PNM been in attendance then, he would have heard, because clearly it cannot stop at the University of the West Indies library. If we are to continue, this is something that must develop, but it must also be driven with a policy for international recognition of the work of Dr. Williams.

As the so-called old-timers pass on, who would have the stories, who would have read even, another generation would not have the value of the knowledge, of the writings, of the teachings even, because a new generation may not be reading as much, they may not have access. They use a lot of information technology, and it may well be that we have to look at developing programmes and policies at the National Library to portray Dr. Williams on the Internet, through cyberspace, to ensure that his records and contributions are there as a benefit to children and citizens throughout the world. I am sure that is something Members opposite would support—they must support it—if they filed this Motion and if they stick to this Motion.

I recall there was another Motion that the Member for Point Fortin filed and withdrew hastily. I am certain that the Member for Diego Martin West will not withdraw this Motion before us, because we do not want to file a motion and then withdraw it. I am certain the Member stands by this Motion which he has duly filed. The internationalization of the recognition of Dr. Williams through the Internet and through appropriate teaching programmes are issues which we would like to consider.

I also want to note that significant on that day in 1998, I recall, was a quotation taken from *Inward Hunger*. The book was introduced by the Leader of the Opposition in this debate. On July 06, 1968, in the book *Inward Hunger*, Dr. Williams stated, and I quote:

“A high priority must be the elimination of the eleven-plus exam and the automatic movement from primary to secondary education.”

Dr. Williams in 1968 spoke of the elimination of the Common Entrance Examination and the automatic movement to secondary school. It took the Member for Siparia, as Minister of Education in 1999/2000, to remove the dreaded Common Entrance Exam. [*Desk thumping*] It took the Member for Siparia, as Minister of Education, to commit and to give effect to a yearning, an objective and an ambition of Dr. Williams since 1968.

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Dr. Williams also spoke about a highway to Point Fortin. He had those ideas which, today, the Government attempts to give effect to his policies and programmes. Mr. Speaker, you must permit me to speak as well to Government policy, how we intend to remain faithful to the principles of Dr. Williams. He spoke about national unity. It was the UNC government then, and today the People's Partnership Government, that promoted the Equal Opportunity Commission, a method of providing equal rights and equality of opportunity to all citizens, which we believe is a fundamental principle underlying Dr. Williams' struggle. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Not in CEPEP and URP!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We have given effect to that through the Equal Opportunity Commission. I would also indicate to you that it is the intention of the Government to bring an amendment to the equal opportunity legislation, to further strengthen that institution to protect the rights of all citizens. [*Desk thumping*] That is how we intend to give effect to Williams' vision for national unity.

Dr. Williams dealt with governance issues, and it is no secret that under the People's Partnership we have enhanced the governance institutions to ensure that we account to the people. I do not want to make this a personal statement, but to this day the Government has answered, in a timely manner, in this session, 69 questions. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Warner: "Yuh hear de number, 69?"

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, I will not make anything over the number. [*Laughter*] Let me turn around from that. "Yuh see, what happen is that both the Member for Diego Martin West and dey does jump up when dey hear that."

Dr. Rowley: And the Member for Chaguanas West.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We have answered the questions—and you responded.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: A fundamental element of our parliamentary democracy is accountability to the people. When the Opposition poses questions, that is how the Government accounts to the people, by way of their questions and our answers. If we have answered 69 questions in record time, we have delivered on governance and accountability. [*Desk thumping*] So we are speaking of Dr. Williams' principles, and governance is a key principle.

If they encourage me, I will read from one of his speeches at Woodford

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Square. If they encourage me, I will quote extensively. I think the Member for Port of Spain South really would like to hear about Dr. Williams in his discourse at a PNM convention.

Mr. Warner: Last week Sunday?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “No, last week Sunday had no convention.”

Dr. Williams at the convention of the PNM spoke of national unity. In 1961 he called upon the party members to stop “once and for all this infuriating nonsense that every Indian is anti-PNM”. We understand that in 1961 he sought to unite, in his own party, the different races. He spoke about mobilization of the people. Should I quote more? I do not think I need to quote more. Dr. Williams spoke to the issue of governance and the role of the party.

In fact, I want to suggest that the contribution given by the Member for Diego Martin earlier in the proceedings was very rich in history. That should be mandatory reading for all new members of the executive of the PNM. They should get the *Hansard* and circulate it, because Members may not have the appreciation of the great founder of the party. That is a discourse that should be presented at the general council and the executive, so that we can encourage the new members of the executive, some of whom were not in Trinidad for many years, so they could understand the founding principles of the leader and founder of their own party.

I am sure the Member for San Fernando East shares my congratulatory message to the Leader of the Opposition on his contribution, rich in history and rich in outlining the practices and principles of the founder of the PNM. I am sure I speak on behalf of the Member for San Fernando East in indicating to you that you made a very sound contribution. It is a contribution we think would benefit some of the members of your new executive. It may well be that you should circularize that speech at the general council level.

Mr. Speaker, it is not our business, of course, to advise on that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: Correct!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Had it been our business, we would have given better advice to you. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] But it is not our business. As a political party, we meet and treat with anyone who comes in front of us. They can come from wherever. They could come back from Canada, we meet and treat with them. They could come from the Middle East, we meet and treat with them. They

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could come from anywhere, Europe, we meet and treat with them. Whoever is elected, we respect that. That is the democratic process.

We are just sorry our friend from Diego Martin North/East, after so much years of service to the party, was booted out in such disgrace. We are very sorry, because he is our colleague in the House, so you must understand we would have liked him to be elevated. I am sure he would agree with me that those who choose not to support him were “nonsense”, [*Laughter*] “errant nonsense, rubbish”. I am told in the build-up to the campaign he was very affable and friendly, he was all over the country shaking hands and encouraging, kissing babies and so on. [*Laughter*] I am sure, as he did on the last occasion, he would rebound. I only hope that would be the end to these motions on the adjournment that you were coming with every week. I think that is the end of that, because the campaign is over and they need to move on.

So, Mr. Speaker, education is clearly one issue. I want to get to the other issue of public symbolic recognition, because that is not just education, it is visible. There is, of course, the Eric Williams Medical Complex and the Eric Williams Financial Complex, the towers, so we do have some physical and visible elements that recognize Dr. Williams’ contribution to Trinidad and Tobago.

In all the long years, the party he founded and served till death it may be that we should consider doing more at those institutions that reflect his name. It may well be that one has to consider encouraging those institutions to promote some type of awareness, so that when members of the public come, whether into the Central Bank, the Medical Complex or wherever, they also have, as part of just being there, an exposure to Dr. Williams in some way. It may not be in books or literature, but in some way you have an exposure to him.

4.15 p.m.

When you name a building after someone, you expect that when you go into the building there is something, Mr. Speaker—many of us, I must say, have had the opportunity to travel to developed countries. If you were in the Hoover building in the United States—I think it housed the FBI unless I am mistaken—and if you go to the Hoover building and other buildings named after United States presidents, you would see that there is some area, generally on the ground floor, where members of the public can come in and they can read something, they can learn something about the person in whose name the building was erected.

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Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to go, would you believe, to the Office of the Commissioner of Police in New York where we were engaged in discussion on crime fighting and so on—

Mr. Manning: In what capacity were you discussing—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We were discussing you. [*Laughing*] So Mr. Speaker—it is not a good day for you—we were in New York in Office of the Commission and would you believe that even in the Office of the Commissioner of Police they had a room, a waiting room, a reception area which was very big, and they gave honour to former Commissioners of Police, and you would see their picture and some literature and whatever artifact and so on, that spoke to their contribution. Whether it is something from their household, a chair, a pipe that they were smoking or whatever, but they had a presence of their heroes, and those buildings that have been erected in Trinidad and Tobago and named after Dr. Williams, it may well be that we look at those buildings with a view, Mr. Speaker, to having some type of walk-in facility where we can promote adequately—

Hon. Cadiz: What about the Diplomatic Centre?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, with leave of the Member for Diego Martin West maybe you would have recommended at another time that we have such a museum in honour of the Member for San Fernando East at the Diplomatic Centre, but maybe you would have recommended that at an earlier time, not today, Mr. Speaker, but clearly the Member for San Fernando East would be appropriately recognized by the Member for Diego Martin West in particular.

Mr. Warner: Not in this life.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I said appropriately recognized by the Member for Diego Martin West in years to come. So, Mr. Speaker, another concrete idea is to get those buildings that reflect the name of Dr. Williams to equally reflect his work, his teachings, because, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is very serious about. We take lightly the defeats of our colleagues opposite, but the issue of recognizing heroes—

Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind you and put on record, that a few months ago, when the former Governor General of this country passed on, it was the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago who announced in record time the establishment of a Chair at the University of the West Indies in honour of Sir Ellis Clarke. [*Desk thumping*] That is our contribution. We quickly moved, we did not wait two years and we did not wait for the 100th year death anniversary to say

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how quickly we could recognize and keep Sir Ellis's legacy alive.

I am happy to announce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the national community, that we have been having the relevant discussions with the University of the West Indies and the Government, so that we are now concretizing that proposal and putting the framework on the agreement between the Government and the University so that in the very near future we will indeed have a Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of the West Indies in honour of Sir Ellis Clarke.

I am not again interested in getting into the history of what was done before but, Mr. Speaker, I also want to indicate that it is also time that we consider very closely, an appropriate honour as well to the former President, Noor Mohammed Hassanali, who served this country with distinction and we will, Mr. Speaker, in due course, give consideration to the contribution—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, all I can tell them is wait, just wait.

Mr.. Warner: Wait, Dorothy wait.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Just wait, wait, wait. What is it? You have to wait for the evening to say how splendid the day has been? Wait for the evening, and then you will reflect on how splendid the day was.

Mr. Warner: Wait, Dorothy wait.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, on the matter of the former President and Prime Minister, ANR Robinson, I will just ask my friends to wait, wait on that one. Mr. Speaker, clearly Mr. Noor Mohammed Hassanali, former President of the nation, deserves some kind of commemoration and public acknowledgment for his contribution, and there are others as well. We can go on and on but there are some forgotten heroes.

Mr. Speaker, and while we acknowledge those of the last two decades or so, we must never forget proper State recognition for others. I think it was George Weekes as well, Mr. Speaker, a giant in the labour movement who passed on—in what year—in 1995 and had the distinction of working with Butler and others and, Mr. Speaker, apart from the OWTU, I am not sure the Government, the former government, gave any honour and tribute and recognition to George Weekes and he would really join that distinguished group of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who contributed.

Mr. Speaker, while we talk about that, we cannot forget of course our only Nobel Laureate, our only Nobel Laureate, Sir Vidya Nipaul, who this country also

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produced, and we must also give an appropriate recognition of his contribution to the development of our nation.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is the position of the Government that we can and we will acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Williams. We have made counter-suggestions to the Opposition, we have made counterproposals to the Opposition. The Opposition Leader himself brought some new suggestions, not in the form of amendments, but new suggestions which the Government can certainly consider, as we move forward in honour of Dr. Williams.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by indicating to Members present as well that I think that all Members will be aware, that the United Nations declared 2011 the International Year of Peoples of African Descent. This is the declaration of the United Nations and next week, Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday we celebrate a public holiday of great importance to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, namely, the Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day and, Mr. Speaker, the Shouter Baptist Liberation Day.

Mr. Speaker, the Government and, I am sure, Members opposite, before we adjourn today would like to appropriately commemorate this event because we will not have another sitting before next Wednesday. So that, Mr. Speaker, that is a very important landmark for us as well therefore I would stop now to permit such commendations. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

GREETINGS

SPIRITUAL SHOUTER BAPTIST LIBERATION DAY

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in this honourable Chamber, with a tremendous sense of satisfaction and pride, to bring greetings to Trinidad and Tobago on the significant observance of Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day. Few national celebrations and rites are as profound and historic as the hallowed tradition of the Spiritual Baptist community. Mr. Speaker, the birth and history of this sacrament of worshipers of the faith are well known, appreciated and chronicled.

Mr. Speaker, so too was the momentous struggle for recognition in the face of very enormous institutional, social and economic challenges. From students to scholars, all are acquainted with the infamous oppression of these Baptists and their relentless clamour for freedom of worship. This generation would easily

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remember another vital and decisive development in the growth and development, not only of the faith but of all Trinidad and Tobago. So when our nation observes on Wednesday the national holiday in recognition and celebration of the faith, it would mark the 15th year that all of Trinidad and Tobago has paused to acknowledge and commemorate their very distinctive contribution to our country.

I am sure many of you will recall March 30, 1996 the year in which the United National Congress Government, of which I was honoured to be a part as you were, Mr. Speaker. That was the year that we paused to acknowledge and commemorate the faith and announce an annual holiday in the name of the Spiritual Shouter Baptists. That was a remarkable occasion and so this will be the 15th year. [*Desk thumping*]

4.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the holiday was, among other things, a symbol of the national respect owed to a religious faith which has endured long and painful decades of persecution and degradation. The Spiritual Shouter Baptist community was also granted land for the erection of a place of worship and a school for the propagation of their religious belief. [*Desk thumping*] All of this, Mr. Speaker, took place within the UNC administration and after many other uncaring regimes refused to value and acknowledge a long-suffering community and one that is intrinsic to the heartbeat and soul of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that we had given the lands to the Spiritual Shouter Baptists, and the intention was for a school to be erected. Mr. Speaker, from 2001 to the present time nothing has been done to build the school on the lands given by the last UNC administration.

Mr. Warner: Shame!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: So, it is with great pride I announce today that it would take us on this side, the People's Partnership Government, to build that school on that piece of land. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, that is why it fills me with pride on this the eve of my first Spiritual Shouter Baptist holiday as Prime Minister to return to herald and honour this religious community. I do so on behalf of the People's Partnership Government which recognizes and upholds multiculturalism and is working assiduously at fostering a Trinidad and Tobago in which, according to our National Anthem, "Every creed and race find an equal place".

Today I extol the values of the Spiritual Shouter Baptist faith: worship of the Almighty, respect for family, dedication to morality and integrity and

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commitment to our society. I applaud the committee and wish them God's continued blessing and extend greetings to all of Trinidad and Tobago on the occasion of the national holiday, the Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official Opposition, the People's National Movement, I simply want to take the opportunity, since it is our only opportunity before the actual celebration which takes place on Wednesday—I now understand that the Parliament would not meet before that day, and therefore, this is our only opportunity before the event to say, as we normally do, that we recognize the historic struggles of those members of our national community who subscribe to the Spiritual Shouter Baptist faith and to whom the State recognizes that on March 30th every year we acknowledge their struggle, we acknowledge their presence and we join with them in ensuring that they feel as much citizens of Trinidad and Tobago as any other person or persons who are devotees of any other religious body.

Mr. Speaker, it is a time for reflection, not only for the Spiritual Shouter Baptist followers, but for the national community as a whole, to reflect on the fact that, while we are one people, there are a number of religious, ethnic and other cultural facets and we maintain a commitment to keep on respecting and pulling each other up as we go along on our quest to build this nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Every year we expect that we would do better than the year before, and, to the extent that we go forward on Wednesday to join with the community in the celebration of that holiday, it is my hope and anticipation that we would seek to strive for unity in the community and to see the benefits of such unity among the various components of this Shouter Baptist community.

So, without further ado, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all my colleagues on this side and the People's National Movement, I wish them a very happy and thoughtful celebration on March 30th and we look forward to joining them at various locations in the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, may I join with the hon. Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in extending to the members of the Spiritual Shouter Baptist community, in particular, and the national community in general, greetings and congratulations as they celebrate their 15th anniversary of the declaration of National Shouter Baptist Liberation Day that is scheduled to take

Greetings

[HON. K. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

Friday, March 25, 2011

place on Wednesday, March 30th, 2011 in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

May your bells of freedom continue to toll as a signal of the sense of pride and joy of your achievement of a public holiday in the observance of your rich

struggles for justice and equality. I wish to extend warm greetings, solidarity and togetherness with our brothers and sisters in the Shouter Baptist community as we celebrate National Shouter Baptist Liberation Day in our Republic.

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 Friday, April 01, 2011 at 1.30 p.m., and on that day it is the intention of the Government to debate two matters: Motion No. 1 on the Order Paper, dealing with the Joint Select Committee to establish and consider a report of the Anti-Gang Bill, 2011 and the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2011.

The other matter would involve the notification from His Excellency the President on the appointment of a deputy commissioner of police and that was laid today in the House of Representatives.

Mr. Imbert: Where is that notification? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well it has not—we intend, Mr. Speaker, to circulate today and to ask the Opposition to consider that matter for the next sitting of the House of Representatives as well. Thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.32 p.m.