

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Prakash Ramadar, Member of Parliament for St. Augustine. The MP has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period April 20, 2011 to May 1, 2011. Also Mrs. Nela Khan, Member of Parliament for Princes Town and the MP for San Fernando East, Mr. Patrick Manning, have both asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which these Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual audited financial statements of the Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2007. [*The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
[To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee]
2. Annual report of the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission for the year ended September 30, 2009. (*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*)

VISIT TO BRAZIL

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Dr. Surujattan Rambachan):
Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make the following statement

with respect to the visit to Brazil by the hon. Prime Minister and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Industry and Energy and Energy Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will also be accompanied by a high level delegation of business persons from Trinidad and Tobago, who are all paying their own cost to travel and to stay in Brazil. As I understand it, as of this moment when I am speaking here, approximately 30 such persons from the business community will be accompanying the Prime Minister—that is exclusive of the Prime Minister's delegation.

Mr. Speaker, the visit to Brazil by the hon. Prime Minister follows visits last year to the Commonwealth Business Council in London, and this year to Commonwealth Day in London in Washington. May I say, Mr. Speaker, that no sitting Prime Minister in the history of Trinidad and Tobago has taken up the challenge of selling the benefits of investing in Trinidad and Tobago as our Prime Minister, Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*]

The success of her efforts will mean economic growth, sustainable jobs and a better quality of life for all our citizens. Mr. Speaker, the timing of her visits to selected capitals also comes at a time when investors are looking for economies which have the potential for growth and which economies possess the investment infrastructure and are demonstrating a commitment to attract new businesses through enlightened investment incentives and democracy. This visit, like the others, is strategically linked to Trinidad and Tobago's foreign policy, which is geared towards achieving inter alia the following objectives: to raise the profile of Trinidad and Tobago, to attract investments, expand business opportunities and achieve

economic diversification; and thirdly, to expand linkages and to increase market access for our local entrepreneurs, particularly within Central and Latin America and the wider Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago has already started to reap benefits from these missions, for example, building on the Commonwealth Business Council event in London in 2010, the Caribbean investment forum will be held on June 13 and 14 immediately followed by the Trade and Investment Convention 2011. This week long investment forum and Trade and Investment Convention have important implications for the manufacturing sector and the non-energy sector, both of which we all recognize must be developed if the economic transformation which includes less dependence on oil and gas is to be successfully pursued.

Mr. Speaker, as is well known by now, the hon. Prime Minister, who is presently Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth, is pursuing a high-level colloquium of women leaders on the margins of the UNGA in September 2011. This will be preceded by a Regional gathering at the end of June 2011 in Trinidad and Tobago. Already, Mr. Speaker, this colloquium has been endorsed by the Secretary General of the OAS and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth. The head of the UNDP, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, three-time Prime Minister, Helen Clarke, has also done so, as has Lady Catherine Ashton, the UK High Representative to the EU; all of whom have indicated their intention to promote the event and to attend.

The visit of the Prime Minister to Washington to participate in the recently concluded OAS Hemispheric Women Leaders Conference, and the upcoming Colloquium on the margins of the UNGA, will have the most important benefit of raising the investment and tourism profile of Trinidad

and Tobago, in terms of how well Trinidad and Tobago is known in the hemisphere and the Commonwealth in particular and globally in general. The marketing of Trinidad and Tobago has to involve a high profile strategy amongst the major economic players, and in multilateral fora where decisions influencing global policy formulation are made, and which decisions can have impacts upon the choices of companies and investors as to where they locate and invest.

The visit to Brazil is very important, Brazil is known as one of BRIC countries—BRIC countries meaning Brazil, Russia, India and China and this visit to Brazil comes at a time when Trinidad and Tobago must, as of necessity, deepen its ties with countries that have enjoyed great success in the economic development and transformation, despite the global meltdown that almost crippled many hitherto strong economies wreaking havoc across many continents. Brazil is a country that grew along with India, China and Russia.

Mr. Speaker, a recent study by the Global Think-Tank Emerging Markets Private Equity Association notes that Brazil is now so popular that private equity investors are putting it above China as a place for investments in the next 12 months. In fact, Sarah Alexander, President and CEO of EMPEA, added:

“While China and India still top Limited Partners (LP) wish lists, investors are also shifting their gazes to the less penetrated markets of Latin America and Southeast Asia.”

The report finds that Brazil is now pushing China into second place.

1.40 p.m.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago must use the

experience of Brazil to speed up its own food production and aim for self-sufficiency as food is becoming, if not has already become, a major issue around the globe. Neglect of this sector in the past puts Trinidad and Tobago in a precarious position with respect to self-sufficiency in food, given its high dependence on imported food stuff. Cheaper foods, lower priced imports and sustainable sources—the last thing, very important, sustainable sources of food—while we boost our production under the vibrant Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs is now more than necessary.

Brazil has been identified as one such country with whom deeper relations must be forged in the interest of feeding our citizens, especially so in the context of what has happened in Australia and New Zealand over the last year, as well as decisions being taken by India and Pakistan to limit their food exports. And so, the deepening of these relations within Trinidad and Tobago and Brazil will see a high-level meeting taking place between the first female President of Brazil, Her Excellency, Dilma Rousseff, and the first female Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, linking arms and strengthening their resolve for better tomorrows for both of their peoples.

The Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone for the construction of the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy premises on lands donated by the Government of Brazil. The Prime Minister will also, through the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy in Brazil, host a reception in the capital, Brasilia, for government officials and private sector business leaders providing an opportunity for the business delegation to begin their networking.

As has been previously mentioned, Mr. Speaker, BG has invited the

Prime Minister and energy sector businesses to become more familiar with its operations in Brazil as well as to be introduced to the industry and counterpart businesses. As such, energy delegates accompanying the Prime Minister will attend a briefing on BG Brazil operations and also present on their operations to Brazilian counterparts. This will be followed, of course, by business to business meetings. For the information, Mr. Speaker, of the public and this honourable Parliament, speakers will include: Crystal De Lima, who will speak on doing business in Trinidad and Tobago; Mr. Charles Percy who will speak on energy, Mr. Larry Howai on financial services, Mr. Dominic Hadeed on manufacturing, Mr. Roberto Peon on telecommunications and Mr. Nicholas Galt on ICT. The Hon. Stephen Cadiz, the Minister of Trade and Industry, will also deliver an address and so too will the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, a special meeting has also been arranged with Petrobras which will be attended by the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. The Hon. Prime Minister has been invited as a special guest to the sixth regional meeting of the World Economic Forum that is being held concurrently in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from April 27 to 29, 2011. The World Economic Forum is an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas. The Hon. Prime Minister has accepted the invitation to address this prestigious gathering of representatives of key business interests, government officials and thinkers from the Americas.

Mr. Speaker, the Latin American region has emerged as a thriving subregion of the Americas. There are many, many opportunities for growth

in the various industrial sectors as the region continues to be a leading global trader of products in the agricultural sector, in particular. There is an abundance of raw materials and large tracts of rainforests which have contributed to the impressive growth of almost every country within South America. And so, it is with such a background that the organizers have adopted as the theme for the World Economic Forum, “Laying the Foundation for a Latin American Decade”. Mr. Speaker, we have to include in that for a Caribbean decade. [*Desk thumping*]

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is especially fitting for Brazil to be hosting this event as three very important international events will be held there: the FIFA World Cup 2014, the Olympic Games 2016, and Rio plus 20. Opportunities therefore abound for Trinidad and Tobago entrepreneurs to explore ways in which they could provide goods and services for the infrastructure expansion required for these events.

Over 500 top regional and international leaders are carded to participate in the meeting of the World Economic Forum and they will consider ways to achieve the following pivotal objectives; which objectives are in line with our approach to transforming Trinidad and Tobago and to its economic and social development:

- Strengthening democratic governance;
- Enhancing innovation and productivity for equitable growth;
and
- Promoting effective partnerships for sustainable development.

Trinidad and Tobago has to engage in promoting partnerships—like we are doing with the Commonwealth and with the OAS, we have to continue to promote partnerships for sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, these objectives are an integral part of the economic paradigm being advocated by this Government and it is in the furtherance of this that it is critical for us to be present at the Forum. It is for this reason that the Prime Minister will be accompanied by a number of Ministers of Government, as I said including: the Minister of Trade and Industry, Energy and Energy Affairs and Foreign Minister as well as by respected and notable representatives of the local energy and non-energy sectors including, the pioneering Energy Chamber. She will have the opportunity there, also, to market the Caribbean Business Forum to Brazilian investors who will be attracted to the opportunity to use Trinidad and Tobago and its trade agreements with Commonwealth countries to expand their export.

Our Ambassador in Brasilia, His Excellency, Dr. Hamza Rafeeq has been arranging meetings in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro with business groups as this would enable our private sector representatives to advertise and explain Trinidad and Tobago's trade and development interests, expertise and capacities as well as its investment friendly approach to doing business. I will also be accompanying the Hon. Prime Minister and I will be meeting my counterpart, the Hon. Antonio Patriota, as well as relevant officials to address a number of outstanding issues in technical cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, this honourable House must be made aware of the productive training programmes and exchange of technical expertise which the Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs has already received from Brazil. There are plans on this visit to deepen these exchanges as we embark on a mega drive to ensure that we can feed ourselves and that agri-business can make an invaluable contribution to the diversification of the economy. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, most

industrialized countries became industrialized, but developed their base through agriculture.

In addition to her address at the World Economic Forum, the hon. Prime Minister, as I said, is scheduled to meet with Her Excellency Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil. This is a very important meeting because it will serve to foster intensification and deepening of relations not only with Brazil but with South America and Latin America. This will be the third visit paid to Brazil by high officials from Trinidad and Tobago in as many years as we are very conscious of the role of such visits in pressing for South-South Cooperation.

The building of partnerships is key to prosperity and this Government, the Government of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, has amplified its efforts to seek new frontiers which would be of tremendous benefit to our public and private sectors. [*Desk thumping*] We are ever mindful of the need to ensure that there is development within this country, that jobs are provided for our cadre of skilled and unskilled labour, that there is the exchange of technology, that our oil and gas sector would engage in meaningful and beneficial arrangements with enterprises in Brazil, including Petrobras and the wider Latin America and most importantly that we enhance bilateral relations with Brazil.

In closing, therefore, Mr. Speaker, it would indeed be very important for us that we utilize this opportunity to intensify these relationships with Brazil and the wider region. It is through forums such as these that the Government will learn and share best practices from other leaders of the public, private and academic sectors of the region. The participation therefore, of the hon. Prime Minister in the sixth regional meeting of the

World Economic Forum on Latin America will provide the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with an ideal medium through which its thrust towards enhancing its economic and development base could be explored.

Mr. Speaker, I address this honourable House on the eve of another moment in history that celebrates perhaps the greatest sacrifice ever made for the good of all humanity. As we reflect on the meaning and purpose of Easter, let us resolve in our hearts to ensure by our actions that the promise of hope that Christ gave with his life becomes a reality, especially for those who exist on the margins of life. We shall be going to Rio de Janeiro, where one of the most imposing and magnificent icons of Christ stands on the hills of Rio de Janeiro overlooking the city. There is no question that deep within all of us resides compassion and love and if only we could share that kindness, one to the other, our beloved Trinidad and Tobago will be a much better place.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to extend my greetings on this occasion of Easter and I thank you.

1.50 p.m.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: I have been advised that another statement is to be made by the hon. Minister of National Security. However he is not at the moment in this Chamber. I will have to seek leave of this honourable House to have this statement deferred for some time later in the proceedings.

Question put and agreed to.

POLICE SERVICE COMMISSION (REAFFIRMATION OF PRINCIPLES OF FAIRNESS AND MERITOCRACY)

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much Mr.

Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas the Police Service Commission, as established under the Constitution, is appointed under the hand of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition;

And whereas the functions of the Police Service Commission are expressly set out in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago;

And whereas the former Chairman of the Police Service Commission has so conducted himself in such a manner that his statements have had the effect of bringing the Police Service Commission into odium and disarray; demoralized the Police Service and created great public controversy and disquiet;

And whereas there is currently widespread public condemnation of the reckless and divisive statements of the former Chairman of the Police Service Commission;

Be it resolved that this honourable House condemn the reckless and divisive statements of the former Chairman of the Police Service Commission;

And be it further resolved that this honourable House reaffirm its collective commitment to the principles of fairness and meritocracy in public affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that the hon. Prime Minister is here today with us before she embarks on her trip abroad.

Mr. Warner: Mission.

Dr. K. Rowley: Her mission abroad.

Mr. Warner: Trip is for the PNM; mission is for us.

Dr. K. Rowley: Her presence in the Chamber is important to me as mover of the Motion, and I am hoping that there would be a response coming from the Prime Minister, as the head of the Government, to the matters on which I propose to touch, because it was the Leader of Government Business who, in a public comment, said that, “The Chairman of the Police Service Commission has been fired, so let us move past the firing.” That is one way of looking at it, but the reason for bringing this Motion here—in fact, the Motion was filed before the Police Service Commission Chairman was fired, or was removed from office, I should say. This Motion was filed before that, and when the removal took place, the Motion was updated to take into account the fact that this development took place.

But the outcome of that development is what I propose to raise with my parliamentary colleagues today, not in an atmosphere of acrimony, but in an atmosphere, hopefully, of retrospection, and an atmosphere in which honest comment from the Government, put on *Hansard*, would serve the purpose of calming ruffled feathers, soothing anxieties in the national community, and being there for the purpose of those researchers who will come in the future to see how we conducted our business in times of crises.

Where did this all come from? It came from a meeting of the joint select committee before which was the Police Service Commission—ordinary and mundane activity—and the Chairman of the commission made a very factual statement, or I should say, a number of factual statements, which, on their own, would have caused no untoward reaction in the country, because they were statements of facts.

Let me tell you exactly what—and I am quoting here from what the public was told, and I crave your indulgence to use the information that was

in the public domain, quite liberally, because this Motion is meant to treat with the fallout in the public domain and the disquiet in the public domain against the background of what we confronted when this matter came before the joint select committee.

The Chairman said—and it is reported here:

“Out of 10 Assistant Commissioners of Police, you do not have a single one of Indian origin. You have three Deputy Commissioners, none of Indian origin. You have one Commissioner of Police. Senior Superintendents, you have 15, all of African origin, none of Indian origin. Happily, when you look at the figures, you see at the Superintendent level, you have 21 of African origin and 10 of East Indian origin, since within recent times we have been emphasizing the question of meritocracy as opposed to seniority.”

Then, had it stopped there—and they quote later on from one of the commentators—that statement of fact would not have caused any public dismay or untoward reaction, because I think we all largely knew who the Police Executive Division 1 was, and, again, I think most of us know how that configuration ended up that way. But the problem arose when the Chairman of the Police Service Commission took it upon himself to identify this fact of occupancy of Executive of Division 1 as a racial imbalance which falls to him to interpret what it means and how he will fix it.

Interestingly enough, I was very heartened by the fact that when the Chairman made his comments and sought to indicate to us that he was breaking new ground—because it was the first Service Commission that was appearing before the joint select committee and he was dealing with this fundamental matter—Sen. David Abdulah was the first to say to him, “That is not true.” So even that was not true. Then immediately, the Minister of

Health jumped in and said, “That is not true”, because the whole tenor of that conversation that followed had question marks about the veracity of what was being put to the national community.

So where did the problem arise; a problem which caused the Chairman of the Police Service Commission to be removed from office? It arose from the interpretation put to the national community by the Chairman, on his understanding—or should I say his misunderstanding—of the law under which he held office, and an interpretation coming from his high office as to what the state of play was between the population and the police service. So he interpreted the situation of fact as being the result of racial bias in the system, resulting in this over-representation of police officers of Afro origin based on racial discrimination.

Immediately that creates a problem for all the officers-holders referred to, because it is now for the national community to view them as persons who got their job, not on merit, talent, qualification or dedication of service, who came up through the ranks, waited on promotion, and today they are the executive—there are those who had similar equal opportunities who were their colleagues; some stayed the course; some did not.

We know the history of the police service, which we need not go into at this moment, but to have said, coming from the office, the Chair of the Police Service Commission, that these officers who today are in charge of the executive of the police service are there by virtue of racial discrimination, is a reckless statement. That was point one.

Point two was that this Parliament changed the law. There was a time when the entire police service and its activities and its operations fell under the control of the Police Service Commission, but recently the law was changed and the role of the Police Service Commission was severely

circumscribed, and authority to run the police service was given to the Commissioner of Police, and this new Government went a bit further; they gave the budget—there is a budget now, a head in the national budgeting process which falls under the Commissioner of Police. So then, the authority of the Police Service Commission today is limited to managing the appointment of the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioners and treating with disciplinary matters that may be referred to them for all other ranks of police officers, but it must be referred to them from the police service.

So the current law makes no provision for the Police Service Commission to treat with the matter that the Chairman purported to want to treat with. So how was that going to work? And immediately, one young Senator asked him, “How are you going to proceed?” Because he said that he will fix it. So here we were going to have a situation where the fixing was going to be done outside of the ambit of the provision of the law, because any fixing of that so-called imbalance by the Police Service Commission would have meant that he would have been interfering in a way that the law did not provide for, from the Police Service Commission, and the fixing was going to be based against a background of his interpretation of the national population distribution, because he said 50 per cent of the country is Indian and the other half is African and, therefore, that is the basis on which the balance will be obtained.

We are all familiar with the national statistics. Information available to us, of recent vintage, is that there is no 50 per cent Indian population; there is 41 per cent. So even if he was going to be allowed to do it, he was doing it against a background of a fiction, and, of course, when challenged by Sen. Cudjoe as to whether he was implying that he would invoke

affirmative action, he said, “No. It was going to be based on the exams, based on meritocracy, and the exams were due and once the exams were used as the basis for selecting people, the balance would be struck.”

What then does that mean? To the best of our knowledge there have always been exams. To say now that the exams will bring about a balance is to cast aspersions on the earlier exams, saying that however they were conducted, they did not bring about the balance that we now see is not there, and therefore, those persons who came through the system, having done those exams, got some favour, and as we know, the favour would have been based on their racial origin.

2.05 p.m.

That is what the Police Service Commission Chairman was saying. And he is saying now, since he is involved in fixing it, the exams that due now—which I think took place a few days ago, or about to take place, I am not sure—that these exams under his watch will now result in a balance, because you will not have this domination by citizens of Afro origin. What a story, what a statement!

Not only did he have no power to do it, he is wrong with respect to the distribution of the population. And of course, his interpretation leaves the police service now in an invidious position, the whole country being told that those who are managing are there not on any basis of competence, but on the basis of race. And to the extent that there is any rectification to come in the near future involving the worthy promotion of any officer of East Indian origin, he too or she can be looked at askantly by persons saying, “Well, I know what is happening now. You have got that by virtue, of somebody elevating you not on any competence but accelerated promotion based on your race.” And that, Mr. Speaker, is the worst thing that could

happen in Trinidad and Tobago, for the population to believe that any office, police or otherwise, that advancement is based on race, especially when the advocate is talking meritocracy.

The real story there is that we all know that 25 years ago, or thereabout, the period of time it took for these guys to get to the top where they are right now, the dozen or two of them at the top of the police service, that at that time it was not the avenue career of choice for persons in the East Indian community, and I will quote for you Raffique Shah in a moment to show you how that went. After 25 years, if those persons are there by virtue of staying the course, it is wrong, it is unfair for somebody to appear over the horizon, jump and say, “we are going to fix this now on the basis of racial consideration”.

What we want in Trinidad and Tobago, especially talking to the young people—and I like the Prime Minister to talk today, to tell the young people of this country that what has been presented to them as a problem by senior officeholders, and what is being talked about in this debate, they should not feel despondent, because we will go forward in this country on the bases of fairness, based on merit, and equal opportunity, and we would live the statements of the national anthem: “where every creed and race finds an equal place” that if you choose to go in one direction, you and all your friends. The equal opportunity there will allow you to go as far as you can. And if others choose to go elsewhere by choice, that will happen. All we are asking for is equal opportunity, fairness and advancement based on merit. [*Desk thumping*] That is all we are asking for, and I want the Prime Minister as this Motion asks, that this House reaffirm that commitment in the face of what has happened in recent times.

The Chairman of the Police Service Commission did more than that,

he made what I call “a hell of a statement”. He said—well I should not say he said—Not having the legal authority to fix anything, as he implied, going outside of his remit—as one of his colleagues pointed out to the country in the same conversation—he said he will do it with the help of the Parliament, with the help of the Parliament. And it makes me wonder as Michael Harris wondered, and I want to quote Michael Harris, Mr. Speaker, because I said to you I will frame my presentation in the context of what has gone before the national community. Listen to what Michael Harris had to say about this aspect of the chairman’s intervention. Michael Harris wrote:

“It was ill-considered in the first place because, by itself, the fact (and no one denies the fact) there is ethnic imbalance in the hierarchy of the police service it means nothing in the absence of some analysis as to how the situation came about,...

“In the absence of such analysis and evidence it is left to be assumed that what Nizam was advocating is some principle of ethnic numerical parity, a point of view that is indeed, essentially, racist.”

It was inappropriate because he was in no position to speak on behalf of the Parliament of the land. It needs to be asked why he would consider that he could invoke the Parliament as a partner in whatever scheme he might have had to redress this...”

And that brings me to the point. Before Michael Harris wrote that that too was my thought. Because I went to New York, I think it was last November, and while I was there I took the opportunity to visit our Mission in New York and I was very distressed by the number of staff members who came to me to tell me that the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago paid a visit to the Mission as I was paying, and on entry to the Mission the only thing he was interested in from his opening comment in the Mission was the ethnic

composition of the Mission. And he made comments openly to the staff about their ethnic composition, and raised questions about the need to fix it. Not knowing—

Mr. Speaker: When we are going to impute or make a personal reflection or

to raise the conduct of a Member, I have made it very clear as a Member of Parliament, if you want to do so, we bring a substantive Motion, because we are going on a course that you have already started, in which you are imputing improper motives to the Attorney General who is a Member of Parliament, and I am just suggesting to you that that is unparliamentary, it is out of order, and I will ask you to stay clear of such a course.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I really wish that you would have waited until my point was developed, because I am not sure what you are ruling on. I am making a statement of fact against which, the point I am making—[*Desk thumping*] I am imputing nothing. I am moving to the point that the position taken by the Police Service Commission Chairman raises questions as to whether he was on his own as a maverick with this ridiculous position he had, and where I am going is whether, in fact, we should accept it as such an individual position or does it point to a wider policy of the Government. And if you are going to stop me now, Mr. Speaker, I might as well sit down, because that is why this debate is here.

This is debate is here, because I am asking the Government as to tell us, and reaffirm that there is no such policy in place. This is the Parliament, and I have the right to raise and question the Government policy. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: There is freedom of speech which I intend to uphold. Abuse of the rules of the Standing Orders will not be permitted by anyone. So I am

just guiding you again, stay clear of imputing, suggesting, raising personal reflections on the conduct of any Member of this honourable Parliament, be it in the Senate or in the House of Representatives. You can make your contributions, you have your rights, I will protect them, but I want to tell you, hon. Member, Leader of the Opposition, you see this book, I intend to enforce the rules of this House. So therefore, I am just guiding. Do not impute or reflect on the personal character and/or conduct of any Member. You can raise it on a substantive Motion.

2.15 p.m.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, rest assured that I have no intention of challenging your ruling. I am just expecting that as an experienced Member of this House, I would be given the opportunity to develop my points within the Standing Orders of the House. That is all I expected in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that, here was a major intervention by a senior member of the administration of the country. It caused some serious disquiet in the country. I, the speaker, had reason to come in contact with information before, which to me would indicate that what the Chairman of the Police Service Commission said and did ought to be examined against the possible background that there may be within the Government some support for that policy. It is against that background that I am making reference to what was said to the staff in the Mission in New York by the Attorney General. That is the only point I am making, and I am going further. I am saying the Attorney General did not only make that point there—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, this Speaker has no intention of curbing, curtailing or violating the rights of Members' freedom

of speech to speak in this House. I shall uphold that right, but equally, I will not stand idly by and allow any abuse of the Standing Orders to take place. I am simply advising you again, you are imputing improper motives to the Attorney General for about the third time. I have indicated to you, stay clear. You have decided to continue. I can only advise you, guide you, warn you, caution you. After that I will enforce the rules. So I am just letting you know that you are on a wrong course.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Government in the presence of my colleagues in this House, in this Motion, to say whether the positions taken by the Chairman of the Police Service Commission—of which we had a lot to say nationally—whether there is any connection or link to that with some actions of Members of the Cabinet. [*Desk thumping*] I am simply identifying the actions of the Cabinet to which I am making that connection.

There was a meeting which was publicized in the newspaper, raised recently by the First Division police officers, where in fact at a meeting between the First Division police officer and the Attorney General, similar sentiments were raised to them. That is all I am saying. So, Mr. Speaker, the Government denounced through the prime ministerial statements the actions of the Police Service Commission, but, I can show you from my files a headline which shows even though the prime ministerial and other statements from the Member for Chaguanas West and elsewhere strongly denounced the statements of the Police Service Commission, there is a view that that position does not pervade the entire Government.

Let me get back to something. When the Chairman was cautioned about his intervention and he repudiated the possibilities of affirmative action being the corrective way, one was left to understand that there might

be some policy of using a quota arrangement to bring about this balance to which he alluded. A balance, if it is there, is the best thing that we could have. Everything we have in the country is shared equally and we all have it, but if it does not occur in the system of fairness and openness that we have or that we practice for a period at time, it may very well be that it will sort itself out by virtue of ensuring that there is equal opportunity.

We look and we say a document that comes to the Government, and that document was referred to in a previous sitting by the Member for Diego Martin North/East—in fact, before I go there, let me complete the infraction which resulted in the removal of the Chairman of the Police Service Commission. Probably the most upsetting thing that the Chairman said to the people of Trinidad and Tobago was that the crime wave somehow was related to the fact that Indian people are not cooperating with the police service because of the make-up of the police service. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: That is nonsense.

Dr. K. Rowley: That is what he said and, true you are right, it was nonsense. Absolute nonsense! When you call for the police in this country in a moment of distress, you do not call for a particular policeman of a certain ethnic composition. [*Desk thumping*] When the police officer turns up in front of your door, you do not say to him, “I don’t want you to address my distress because you are the wrong ethnic composition.” [*Crosstalk*] While the Standing Order—

Mr. Speaker: Member for La Brea, Member for Fyzabad, please, please! Let us allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to speak and let us give him your fullest attention, please. Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. K. Rowley:—is being waved at me as I make the point that I want to know what the Cabinet position is, the interruptions from the Member for

Fyzabad is exactly the point I am making because he is on public record of not repudiating. [*Desk thumping*] He is on public record of being in the minority of not repudiating the divisive and reckless statement of the Chairman of the Police Service Commission. [*Desk thumping*] All I am trying to do is to find out to what extent his position represents any serious component in the Government. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: I will tell you in the tea room.

Dr. K. Rowley: “You ain’t going in no tea room again. I know that.” [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, it was the Prime Minister herself who said, “...and I trust without prompting that it was reckless, senseless, divisive and unwise.” That was the Prime Minister’s position.

The chairman of the party that has the largest component in the Government, my colleague from Chaguanas West said, that if he had found himself in that position, he would have resigned. He publicly repudiated the position of the Chairman of the Police Service Commission.

One editorial in the *Sunday Guardian* described the intervention of the Chairman of the Police Service Commission as dangerously provocative speculation, true and simply untrue, which is the whole truth that is simply reckless. That was *Guardian*.

The *Express* had this to say and I want to quote a little extensively from that editorial, Mr. Speaker, because I want to come back to the policy that may be operating. Referring to Chairman Mohammed, he said:

“He answered reporters’ questions with breezy assurances that nothing was amiss, that he remained securely in position, and that it was business as usual. Mr. Mohammed’s upbeat attitude reflected his state of denial that anything untoward had happened over the seven days since his sensational outburst before the Parliamentary...

Committee.

He implied that African police officers packed the promotion interview panels, the better to assure protection and advancement of their own ethnic interests through near-exclusive possession of leadership positions of the Police Service. It was a sensational statement for a PSC chairman.”

This is the area I want to focus on:

“Especially so, because as he did not utter the statement in the context of announcing policy or action dedicated to ensuring equality of chances for every creed and race...all the coalition partners,”—of the Government—“rejected both the man and his race-based message.”

Mr. Speaker, he uttered the statement in the context of policy or action dedicated to operation which brings this document into play, which is the report and operational plan to reorganize and restructure the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago. So here it was, we are repudiating this misrepresented situation, placed in isolation, to cause harm to the psyche of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We have the commitment from the Government that that is not going to happen. We have the Government at its highest level. We have the party at its highest level.

We have all the make-up of the coalition, from Tobago-TOP to the COP chairman, all publicly saying, “That is not what we support” and they repudiated it. But, we have in the government system what I may want to call the Julie Brown Report, which I am satisfied is being operationalized, and that is one of the reasons why I brought this Motion, so the Government can tell the country clearly what is the status of this report within the Government.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, it was the Prime Minister herself, who

told the country, in response to this whole question of what is to happen to SAUTT, because SAUTT was deemed to be illegal and we expect the Government to fix it, and the Government said, “We will fix it; we have commissioned a report; we have the report and we are fixing it.” That is the Government’s position as today. No other position has been advanced. “We commissioned a report, we got a report, we are fixing it.” This is the report.

So, one has to assume that it is being fixed against the background of the recommendations of this report. If it is not so, I am asking the Government to tell the country—which is why I was happy the Prime Minister was here because we want this assurance from the top of the Government. A report was produced by Mr. Stephen Williams, Miss Julie Browne Miss Jacqueline Wilson and Prof. Daniel Lebre, and chaired by Mr. Stephen Williams.

Mr. Speaker, I would not be surprised at all if this composition did not do justice to government policy if they knew what the policy is. So the Government could then come and say, “What is in the report we do not accept.” On the other hand, it might very well be that those who wrote the report would have got a good sense of what is government policy, whether they got it directly or indirectly, or that they were advancing to the Government a policy that they believe will satisfy the Government. Because as a Minister of Government, I have known officers of State to want to take a position, second-guessing a Minister to say, “Well, this is what I am telling you because I know this is what I have read that you would like to have.”

Mr. Speaker, the report should be of interest to all of us, especially those of us who repudiate Chairman Nizam’s position, because that is what the report says.

2.30 p.m.

It says that:

“In restructuring SAUTT, in creating this new agency, this is where we will start to create ethnic balance.”

The Chairman of the Police Service Commission said to the Parliament it will not be by affirmative action. This report says it will be by quarter, and let me read for you, Mr. Speaker, what he says, their own words.

The agency’s manpower would come from three major sources: the old, meaning the existing SAUTT; the SIA and civilians.

And they put in bold text, this line:

The committee recommends that concrete steps should be put in place to effect ethnic and gender balance in the composition of these new organizations.

Mr. Speaker, nobody is making a case against ethnic balance, against gender balance. The singular point I want to make by way of a question to the Government: how do you propose to do this? Because if that is in place it behoves the Government and the entire country to know what system is in place to accomplish that objective.

It goes on to say:

This ought to begin during the implementation phase and continue to the point where it becomes firmly entrenched cornerstone policy of the new entities.

Having said, Mr. Speaker, that the Government told us that they have accepted the report knowing that the restructuring is taking place, knowing that this is the recommendation, is the Government going to confirm to us today that this recommendation is actually being worked on and that is what we are following?

The report goes on to say:

In a multi-ethnic society like Trinidad and Tobago that is rife with crime and other national security concerns, strategic prudence dictates that the manpower resources empowered to deal with these issues come from intelligence perspectives, and that they reflect the ethnic composition of the State. This practice is not new.

And hear it, Mr. Speaker! It continues:

Multi-ethnic societies like the U.S, the UK and Canada, just to list a few examples, have adopted this practice of ethnic and gender balance and representation, particularly at the federal level of Government. The U.S. department of State, for example, adheres to a rigid policy of minority recruitment and ethnic balance.

To do this however, particularly in the Trinidad and Tobago context, where the composition of security agencies and law enforcement agencies are predominantly of one ethnic group, a conscious determination followed by concrete steps must be put in place in order to bring about some semblance of ethnic and gender balance.

Tell us how you are going to do that? We want to know what system you are following to do that.

And we in Trinidad and Tobago, we are making reference to minority positions in the Metropolitan area; in Canada where you have genuine minorities, in United States and the UK, and using that template to treat with Trinidad and Tobago's situation, where you basically have—according to the Chairman of the Commission—50/50, this is not a minority issue, so to use minority solutions copied from elsewhere could bring us into a problem that we do not have and we do not want, but one sees in this report the focus on this gender and ethnic balance as a major consideration in the recommendation.

And it goes on to say:

This will take time but it must be done, and it starts with the creation of this new intelligence agency.

So, in other words, it starts now. It has started. The Government must tell us what system is in place, what is being used to get this laudable objective as described by this. It goes on to say:

In sum, this is where we want to go.

And I ask: Who is the “we”? Is it the Government or is it the office that is making the recommendation? Because you must clarify that. If it is Government’s policy, the Government must identify with it. It must not be by subterfuge, it must not be known to the population that this is happening because if that is how the population gets the information—by second and third hand or by underhand—it will create even more disquiet than the intervention of the Police Service Commission. There is nothing wrong if the Government has come up with a policy to have this objective but it must come upfront and on the table and let everybody know what this policy is or what these policies are. Because I do not think anybody will make a case for imbalance, so as you make the case for balance and rectifying it starting now, we need to know what exactly is happening. And then, of course, the writers go on to say:

If Cabinet accepts and approves the committee's recommendation to create a single national intelligence agency and a National Security Training Academy, then to get there would require inter alia an implementation plan that is based on the operational plan contained in this report, a three-person team of implementers authorized and empowered by the Cabinet to prosecute this effort.

Question, question, question! What is the status of this

recommendation in the context of the action being taken by the Government? I am asking the Government to tell us that because action is taking place against a background of a lack of information as to what the Government's position is. We on this side start off with the position that the Government said, "We have commissioned a report, we have got the report, we are acting on the report" and we are assuming that the Government is acting on the report in its entirety. It is for the Government to tell us which part of the report it has taken the operational plan from, or to tell us that they were misleading us, that there is no restructuring taking place. I cannot be both. We already have on record that restructuring is taking place, and therefore, the Government must tell us against what policy these restructuring is taking place, and where we are vis-à-vis these recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, we ask for this because we do not think, unlike what my colleague from Oropouche East has said, that, okay, the Chairman of Police Service Commission has made a faux pas, he has been removed and we should just move on. Move on after the firing, yes, but what are we moving to? That is what this Motion is about. We want to move on. What are we are moving to? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of the Police Service Commission made a lot of heavy weather about being removed improperly from office. But when one looks at what happened before the Parliament, you may recall, Mr. Speaker, for those who want to take his threat of fixing the imbalance without authority, taking that threat lightly, they must remember that what was before the Parliament and being discussed which elicited his statement that caused his down fall, was a response to an action which was attributed to him before, where there exist in the police service, a recommendation, and

Mr. Speaker, I think I should put that on record with your permission. I should put on record what was before the commission when this matter came out, and caused the Chairman of the Commission to respond in the way he did, and I am quoting here from the report to the Commissioner of Police from WPC Gittens, number 5830, December 02, 2010, "Incident Involving Nizam Mohammed".

2.40 p.m.

I want to quote the last line. I would not detain the House; just the last line.

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36 (3).

Mr. Speaker: No, not sustained. Continue.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you. I would really like to have some injury time for the intervention. I would quote the last line, in the interest of time. After outlining all that took place in the street, with the Chairman of the Police Service Commission.

"I am of the opinion that the driver of PCA 84 Nizam Mohammed should be prosecuted for the following offence: Failing to Comply with the directive of a Police Officer in Uniform."

A number of our citizens have had this charge laid against them, they have gone to court and they have had to account to the magistrate for that allegation, and many persons have been convicted and fined. In this instance, that was what was before the commission. We know how that went. But, there is a feeling that some wrong took place, because this commissioner was removed without reason. I do not want to debate that today, except to point that this matter that was unsatisfactorily dealt with by the Commissioner of Police and whoever else he sought assistance from, left us with a view that the potential or the propensity to abuse office did not

only start with the threat in the Parliament. This instant on the street was a harbinger of that.

But more importantly, as we talk about what is in the system and what our people are dealing with in this multiracial, multi-ethnic society, we need to know what our society is made up of, and more importantly, we need to know the kind of things that people say and do from our own experience. And in this instant case, for those who feel that the Chairman of the Police Service Commission was badly dealt with, even though he threatened to do what he said he was going to do, without authority, causing the problems he caused, it is important for us to look at a bit of background information which might have been the basis of the action that he took in the Parliament, and the Government may have to understand that, having—for those in the Government, because there is at least one Member of the Government I know, this afternoon, who is indicating that his support is still there—against this background. I would give you the background so that the Government will know if it attaches itself to those questionable positions and let policy be formulated based on that kind of position, it may be driven by an engine of this nature, and layer the engine.

I am quoting from reference to a letter published in the newspaper between the Chairman of the Police Service Commission—he was not chairman at the time but it is still the same person—and columnist Selwyn Cudjoe. This is what he had to say to Selwyn Cudjoe, talking about the whole question of ethnic allocation, ethnic positioning and ethnic competition.

“Eric Williams and Africans like yourself had this master plan to eliminate the Indian face from this country...”

You may want to ask yourself—this was prior to the appointment to the

Police Service Commission. Now that we know that this was his position, we can understand the position he took as Chairman of the Police Service Commission, even when he had no authority to intervene in the way he wanted.

If he could have entertained this as part of his thought process—and he goes on—we in Trinidad and Tobago who are so proud of our calypso and our pan—my friend from Mayaro who had so much to say, but this individual, another citizen with a different point of view, who may be influencing Government’s policy, who may have influenced Government’s policy and who certainly expected Government to support his policy as espoused to the parliamentary committee, had this to say:

“...the African population...forcing this half baked idea of Calypso and Pan which by the way is not even indigenous...

Forcing...down Indians throats.”

We, the majority of us in this country, accept and feel some pride when the steel pan plays, especially at particular occasions.

Recently, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the passing of Dr. Williams in the Catholic Cathedral. One of the highlights of that evening’s reflection was an appropriate performance, a moving performance, by Exodus Steel Orchestra. Before that, I went to Queen’s Hall to see a performance by Exo Cubs, children of the Exodus players. There was also a performance by the Exo-parents. This steelband had parents level, the regular players level and Exo Cubs level, three levels of players. Mr. Speaker, you should have been there. It was an evening to be proud of. I was proud to have been there. Anytime you get the opportunity go and hear Exo Cubs play and see their parents come after and match them and listen to Exodus or any other steelband in this country. But we have citizens who

have a different point of view; who see this as forcing something down somebody's throat.

Nobody in this country is forcing anything down anybody's throat. At panorama you feel to come or you do not come out. You feel to go and have a fun time, you go and have a fun time. You want to watch it on television—that is the freedom of Trinidad and Tobago. That is our strength. That should not divide us. That should make us strong, and it does make the vast majority of us proud.

But then, he goes on to lay a threat:

“...Indians know how to give back as they get, for whatever is dished out.”

This person managed to end up as the Chairman of the Police Service Commission. Could I be held as being wrong for saying that his position, which was wrongly condemned by the vast majority of right-thinking citizens, was couched in this language, not so much of fixing any imbalance, but as the says:

“giving back as good as they get...”

Yes, you see an imbalance in the executive of the police service at this point in time. It would not always be so. It was not always like that. But, if your mindset is that you are going to give out as good as you get, I am warning the Government that any policy that you have made against this background, any policy which is being formulated against this background, should be distanced from the policies of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. To think that kind statement or those kinds of statements could have come from a former Speaker of this House, tells me that all is not bad.

Mr. Speaker: Is that from the *Guardian*?

Dr. K. Rowley: That came from—

Mr. Speaker: What date?

Dr. K. Rowley: March 31, 2011.

Mr. Speaker: Which newspaper? Get the source for *Hansard*.

Dr. K. Rowley: This came from Trinicenter.com.

Then, when we objected, we were told that the guns were aimed at him, because he was about to bring about this rectification about this imbalance. I as Leader of the Opposition, doing my job, the job that the people of Trinidad and Tobago pay me to do and expect me to do, wrote the President and asked him to remove this person from office. I find common ground with the Prime Minister who said that his actions were divisive, senseless and outrageous, and he tells the Parliament that we have guns aimed at him because he is about to rectify this perceived racial discrimination in the police service.

Mr. Speaker, I will join here with my colleague from Oropouche and say: let us move on, good riddance. Because had he not done that and let us know what he was thinking and doing, he might have stayed there for three years and do untold damage to people in Trinidad and Tobago, especially persons who have given their working career and their lives to serving us in the police service. It is a good thing he said what he said on that day, so we could have acted upon what he said and have him removed. We are now better off for his absence. [*Desk thumping*]

But that brings us, again, to the whole question of whether in fact there is some policy in the Government where some persons, not all, think but did not speak, because, had the Chairman of the Police Service Commission not spoken, we might have been here labouring under the misconception that this was not taking place. But now that it has taken place, we need to examine some things that we know and bring them to the

Government's attention, so that the Government could know that there are concerns in these areas and that we want to hear from the Government on them.

I mentioned to you what I encountered in New York. I mentioned to you what was published about the contact with the police officers here, where, in fact, I did see a senior police officer from the First Division outlining details about an unpleasant meeting that they had with the Attorney General. We want to know whether in fact the garrulous Attorney General who was outstanding by his silence during the period of this Nizam controversy—as a matter of fact I did not see him make one comment. He was careful to go underground when this matter was attracting the attention of the country in the way it did, and I took note of that.

In response to the controversy, there was a comment from the Member for Chaguanas West where, again, he is the Chairman of the party, he is a senior member in the Cabinet and very widely regarded nationwide. So, when he speaks—in fact I dare say not only him, in Trinidad and Tobago we must reach the stage where, when a public official speaks—whether it is Chairman of the Police Service Commission, Ministers of Government or Leader of the Opposition Leader—in this country, we will mature to the point where the utterances of these officials must mean something to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

They must be able to go off and say: “I have heard that from the Member for Chaguanas West, I have heard that from the Prime Minister and that is the position.” When I heard the Member for Chaguanas West respond to this Nizam policy, repudiate it and said it is the wish and the action and the policy of the Government to have that balance, conduct the business of Government with this balance and in the appointment of

boards—in fact, I think he went on to say that is no board is appointed without taking into account this question of balance.

Since there was the Chairman of the Police Service Commission saying that there should be balance based on ethnic numbers/demographic numbers, I wanted to find out whether, in fact, we were all on the same page, because here it was, the Member for Chaguanas West, the Minister of Works and Transport, was saying that the Cabinet does not appoint a board and that this is Prime Ministerial edict, without establishing the balance of the country reflecting the country's ethnicity.

Then, something went wrong with the appointment of the board of the EMBD. Because against that policy outlined by the Member for Chaguanas West, I could show you a picture—again nothing was being hidden. This is a published picture—which predates the whole Nizam debacle, so it was not done in response to. It happened and we moved on. There is a picture of the board of the EMBD, appointed by the Government, against the policy outlined by my friend, the Member for Chaguanas West, and there are 11 members on that board, appointed by this Government and every single person on this board is of East Indian origin. That is EMBD, every single one.

Mr. Imbert: Well balanced.

Dr. K. Rowley: That happened. We saw it. We did not make any issue of it, because this is Trinidad and Tobago. We simply assumed that they were there on merit to contribute. But then, this being the case, do not tell us then that the policy is to have boards reflect the national community.

2.55 p.m.

That is what Mr. Nizam Mohammed was saying when he embarked upon his crusade to bring about this balance, and then you say that that is the

policy of the Government that balance must be there and there is the board, 11 members and all 11 members, right, are of one ethnic origin, so that puts the lie to the Government's stated policy. But I would tell you, Mr. Speaker, I am not making an issue of this except against the background of what we were told is the policy of the Government, directed by the Prime Minister, that no board should be appointed that does not reflect the national composition of the country. That is what we were told.

But I will tell you what given more than that, we see outlined in the policy document here, the Julie Brown document, the advocating of the concrete steps to fix certain things and I asked earlier on that the Government tell us where that policy is and how it is working. We have had complaints from the said EMBD and one complaint is this, and let me read the complaint, Mr. Speaker. Because this is the Parliament, and we need to know and the Government must answer, it must tell us, because we need to be comforted that this is not what is happening.

At EMBD there are two African clerks of works, Afro-Trinidadians who have been employed by EMBD on the Agricultural Access Roads Department for over a year. Their contracts ended early this year and they were placed on month-to-month contracts. So while these peoples' contracts have not been renewed, they had expectations for it to be renewed, the work is going on, the department still exists, they are put on a month to month contract. The company proceeded to hire eight new clerks of works, eight. So there is need for clerks of works, they hired eight more, but the EMBD hired eight more and all eight are of one ethnic origin. This causes people to think that there is some policy. I am raising this only against the background, of is there some policy at work as outlined by the EMBD [*Desk thumping*] in the Julie Brown report? If there is no such policy, let

the Government say so and comfort the national community.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned a while ago the whole question of the board of the EMBD. A similar thing one could see which was published—those of you who pay attention to the newspapers, I do—there was a whole-page advertisement, a centre spread in the newspapers a few weeks ago of the heads of the RHAs except Tobago. They were the ones in Trinidad. The Tobago one was not there. RHA, NWRHA, SWRHA and so on, it contained pictures and the details of all the chairmen and deputy chairmen of the Regional Health Authorities. So in other words it was the management of the entire health system of Trinidad, and that was an item of pride for the Government, and they published it as a whole-page multicolour spread. All chairmen, all deputy chairmen, not a single person of Afro-Trinidadian origin. We saw it, we read it and we did not make an issue of it—

Hon. Moonilal: Why “yuh” did not say anything?

Dr. K. Rowley:—because it is your prerogative to appoint who you want to appoint. We did not seek to make an issue of that, the requirement of any racial balance. So I am raising this against the context of whether, in fact, the whole question of the need for a balance as described in this report, and as described against the background of the behaviour of the Police Service Commission Chairman, it is confined to that area, or whether, in fact, the policy exists that there is some rectification to take place and it is taking place and we do not know. The Government must tell us.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have 15 more minutes.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, you would have seen the news or heard on the airwaves some concern being raised by the CWU at TSTT, where workers are saying that there appears to be or there has already been put in place some arrangement to treat with the workforce on the basis of some

review on the grounds of their racial origin. That was on the airwaves a few days ago. These are the kinds of things that are causing disquiet among the population. They want to know if, in fact, there are people in the Government who are doing these things, if it is Government's policy, if they are authorized to do it. Mr. Speaker, and we want to know that when the Government tells us something we can believe what the Government says. You see, it is not everything the Government tells us we can take at face value.

I raised an example two days ago of the HDC remodeling houses in Victoria Keys to elevate them to a higher standard, for a different clientele. I got a response from the HDC and I saw the Minister made a kind of response as well about PNM business, but we "eh" have time for "dat". But the HDC response coming from the managing director of the HDC was this: they did not deny that they were changing the configuration of the apartments, they did not deny that they were engaging in serious expense to upgrade. What she said was this, that these upgrades were being done to please those persons to whom the units have been allocated. Two questions arise. At whose expense?

Since when is the HDC required to make custom-made units available to "allocatees"? And since the contractor is still on site building the units, when did the HDC get those units to allocate them to anybody? And when did any allocation take place? Because as of now as I raise the issue about the reconfiguration, those units have not been allocated to anybody and, therefore, there can be no question of the changes being made in response to any request, from any person to whom an allocation has been made, because none has been made. So how do you believe what the Government tells you? How could you believe what the Government tells you?

So today I am asking the Government to tell me and to tell the country whether these matters that have now caused disquiet in the country about decisions being made, or threats being made to adjust job positions and opportunities based on ethnic lines, who is Afro-Trinidadian origin, who is Indo-Trinidadian origin, tell us what part this is playing in the Government's management of the State's business. That is all I am asking. I am sure that there are members of the Government who will have more information on this than I have, because they are in the Cabinet. But the most important thing that the Government could do today, Mr. Speaker, is to do what the Motion asks us to do, not to nit—pick on the specifics, because there may be good explanations for all the specifics, but what we want is that commitment by the Government to do what the resolution asks us to do as a House, that is to say that we resolve:

“That this House reaffirms its collective commitment to the principles of fairness and meritocracy in public affairs”.

Mr. Speaker, 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.

3.05 p.m.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Jack Warner): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin where the last speaker ended when he referred to the appointment of boards, particularly the EMBD, and showed where 11 members, I quote:

Every single person is of East Indian origin.

I ask you today: Look at the composition of your whole team and tell me, of your 12 Members, who is of East Indian origin? Your party could not put an

East Indian in Diego Martin North/East? Your party could not put an East Indian in Port of Spain South? You could not put one in Laventille West? Look at the 12 of you and tell me which of the 12 is an East Indian.

I go further to tell you: look at the boards that have been appointed under the People's Partnership and compare them to the boards appointed under the PNM. In the reign of the PNM—we have them as Indians and non-Indians—of the boards appointed, 508 were non-Indians; 138 were Indians. In other words, I am saying to you that in the PNM regime, 79 per cent were appointed as non-Indians and 21 per cent as Indians. Under the People's Partnership, 508 were appointed as non-Indians and 579 as Indians. In other words, in the era of the People's Partnership, 47 per cent are non-Indians and 53 per cent are Indians. What are you trying to prove?

I go further. You talked about HDC houses. You complained that the houses in Victoria Gardens were being refurbished for the elite and so on.

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. J. Warner: What you said?

Dr. Rowley: There are no houses in Victoria Gardens; Victoria Keyes.

Hon. J. Warner: Victoria Keyes and they are being refurbished for the elite. You said that three bedrooms are being built into two bedrooms; two bedrooms into one bedroom, air condition and so on. You talked about the toilets. You talked about everything. Was it not you who built Fedelis in Santa Margarita? That was for whom as Minister of Housing? Who built those fancy homes and so on in St. Augustine at Fedelis? Who built the homes at Federation Park? Who was that for?

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, do you make any distinction between breaking down an existing unit to convert it to something else as against something built for purpose at origin?

Hon. J. Warner: The houses you have built, the complaints, most of them, is that you built barrack rooms where a bed cannot fit; people cannot change their minds in the rooms you built. You built houses with no toilets, no water, no electricity; houses throughout the country well painted, but nobody could live in them. That is what you built for them and you are asking us to maintain that? We say no. If you want to talk about toilets and about kitchens—

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, do not go there.

Hon. J. Warner: It seems to me that your mentality is that poor people must not get anything good and the gas station man and the fellow working by Hilo and Tru Valu must not get a good house at all. They must get a barrack room type of house that you have built. We say no.

When you go to the kitchen and teacup—I know you had a problem with kitchen and teacup—I say to you again: leave the kitchen and teacup alone. That era is past. Find another room and you go to areas in the house where you can live. The last time it was a tea room and you had a teacup, you know what happened to you and our friend. I am saying to you, as you like to say: do not try to play smart with foolishness about HDC houses.

I told you before, every Monday morning you jump up and call a press conference and you have nothing to say. Say nothing. You talk about boards, let me give you some figures. You want boards? I will give you more figures. Between 1956 and 1986, the PNM did not have a single Hindu in its Cabinet—30 years; three decades. How do you account for that? Three decades you had none. Your recently elected executive does not have a single Hindu on it. That is what the PNM represents. We do not represent that.

I go further. I will give you some figures. Look at the Cabinet under the PNM; the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) and the People's Partnership. Take the PNM: in 1956 to 1957, 13 persons were in the Cabinet. Of the 13 persons, two were Indians—15 per cent. In 1957 to 1958, out of 14 in the Cabinet, two were Indians—14 per cent. In 1958 to 1959, 13 in the Cabinet, two were Indians—15 per cent. In 1959 to 1961, out of 10 in the Cabinet, you had, of course, two—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, point of order: Standing Order 36(1), this matter is about the Police Service Commission.

Hon. J. Warner: I can understand. I will not make any comment. I can understand why the post of Vice-Chairman went to somebody else.

For the period—I will give you the figures because you are talking about the boards and the Cabinet—between 1961 and 1966, the PNM as a government had a Cabinet of 18 persons; two were Indians—11 per cent. You go down the line and right through you see it; all where you go you see the same point. In fact, I would make the point—[*Interruption*] I have to bring it up. I do not want to go there, but the fact is that while the Indian population was growing, it was not growing in the Cabinet. Therefore, whatever happened in the Cabinet, the Indians were given 15 per cent of the posts. That is all that happened, so do not look at us and tell us that.

Let me show you what happened under the NAR. In 1986—1988, there were 13 posts in the Cabinet, they got 3—23 per cent. In 1989—1991, there were 21 posts in the Cabinet, they got four. Then they had 14 posts in the Cabinet in 1997. No, in 1997, UNC came into power. When UNC came into power in 1995—1996, 22 persons in the Cabinet, 14 went to East Indians.

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. J. Warner: I am not telling you about the Cabinet and the posts; I am telling you what they had. I am not telling you about the thing and so on.

In 1997—2000, under UNC, 24 in Cabinet, 14 went to the East Indian—58 per cent. So suddenly, under the UNC, the Indians got bright. Under the PNM, for 30 years—[*Interruption*]. Hold on, I am coming to you. Wait “nuh”. As your boss would tell you: hungry dogs eat raw meat. Wait, “ah comin’ to yuh.”

Now the People’s Partnership, a Cabinet of 26 persons, 14 are Indians and 12 Africans; almost 50:50. Therefore, I am saying to you: do not use statistics conveniently.

More than that, I ask myself: what is the purpose of this Motion? From where I stand, and many of us, this Motion is a complete waste of time. Almost everyone who could have made a point on this issue has made his or her point. They have made every point they could, including yours truly, on the statements made by the former Chairman of the Police Service Commission. The statements made have been condemned by the Opposition, the Police Service Association, the labour movement, the media, various other sectors of the society and by the Government as a whole under the Prime Minister, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar. Everybody who could condemn him has condemned him. Of what purpose, therefore, is this Motion?

When that was finished, His Excellency The President exercised his powers in accordance with the Constitution and the appointment of the former Chairman was revoked—that is the ultimate position—and a new chairman has been installed, again in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. Mr. Speaker, of what value is this Motion?

Furthermore, I make the point that if the Opposition has spoken; if

they have gone on public record against the statement; the Government has gone on record against the statement, what is the purpose of bringing this Motion?

As I sat here and listened to the last speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, I asked myself if his intention is that we must sit here and bash the former Chairman of the Police Service Commission. Is that the intention? What, therefore, is the benefit of the Motion? Does he expect us to come here and to gloat over Mr. Mohammed's demise? Is that the intention? One thing you cannot say is that this Government did not respond properly and quickly to the situation. From the very moment those statements were made, even in the PSC sitting, there were objections. It was made very clear that this is not Government's policy.

Furthermore, it was said by several of us that the Government's policy is not to pursue any race-based agenda; not on this side. I am coming just now to the vice-chairmanship of your party.

When all of this was done, the Prime Minister made a statement that answered everybody. The Prime Minister reaffirmed:

“Our mission as the Government is to embrace everyone, to create a meritocracy based on people's ability to do their jobs; race must not and will never be a consideration.”

The Prime Minister went on:

“Whatever our ethnic origins, we are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago first and our Government believes the words of our National Anthem: ‘Here every creed and race find an equal place,’ express a philosophy that determines the way this Government functions today.”

What more do you want? “You want blood?” Why are we here today wasting time?

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the question again: what does the PNM want? Anytime you want something else, look within yourself, look at the composition of your team and see of course, if at all there is any reason to throw stones at anybody. Look around and see. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. McIntosh: Mixed.

Hon. J. Warner: Mixed? Mr. Speaker, what is important, also—in fact, before I even say that, if the PNM wants to get credit for the revocation of Mr. Mohammed’s appointment, then take it. Say you did it. The same way your leader said that he is responsible for Reshmi Ramnarine. He said, “If I am the person who moved Reshmi Ramnarine, then I plead guilty.” Okay, so you all moved Mr. Mohammed, then plead guilty. You want the credit? Take it, but let us move on.

Every Sunday, for example, I am regaled by one of the daily newspapers with an article on Reshmi Ramnarine. As I get it, I wrap it and put it in the garbage because, at the end of the day, what more do you want? And therefore, I would say that the Prime Minister’s immediate position is the one I quote now where she said:

“Statements such as the one by Mr. Mohammed are divisive and serve no useful purpose other than to undermine the trust that is reposed in him as the Chairman of the Police Service Commission.”

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar, did not defend Mr. Mohammed 42 times as Calder Hart. Calder Hart was defended 42 times. She did not do that. Even before the calls were made for Mr. Mohammed’s revocation, the Prime Minister and the Government stated our position. So therefore, if the aim today is to come here with this Motion to score some cheap political points, take that too. Because at the end of the

day, after last Friday's humiliation in the House, you will do anything to save face. [*Crosstalk*] So take it too.

Mrs. McIntosh: You want to be united like us.

Hon. J. Warner: United? The PNM is split in three ways: five with the Member for Diego Martin West; five with the Member for San Fernando East and two in the bathroom. [*Crosstalk*] Three ways! At the end of the day—so what are you telling me about unity? In fact, the Member for Diego Martin West should spend his time counting the traitors and the saboteurs and, of course, double agents who are on that side. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. McIntosh: “You better watch your business.”

Hon. J. Warner: You hear? “But anyhow, that is PNM business.”
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(10)

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I know. I think that the Hon. Member for Chaguanas West cannot refer to Members of the Opposition as traitors. So I would like you to withdraw and let us move on.

Hon. J. Warner: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you so in the tea room. Withdrawn! That is PNM business, and I am not getting involved in it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, while the Member for Diego Martin West was having his caucus last week, the Member for San Fernando East and his faction were campaigning on Coffee Street and they, of course, were campaigning—and I will talk about that campaign just now because that is in the context of what we are saying. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say again, we have no intention on this side of trying to uphold what the former Chairman of the Police Service Commission said. For us to reiterate the comments made by him, we would say they were out of line, they were

insensitive and they had the potential to cause hurt and division in the country and this is evident by the reaction of the public to what he said.

If the former PSC Chairman had acted on his statement, he would have known he does not have that constitutional authority to do what he wanted to do. He does not have that authority, and we said so. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Diego Martin West said Mr. Mohammed said that he “will do it with the help of the Parliament” I want to remind him that the Parliament is all of us. He gives the impression as if the Parliament is only on this side. So when Mr. Mohammed said, wrongly, that he will do it with the help of the Parliament, he also included him. And therefore, do not try to pass it off as if it is us on this side and not them. It is all of us.

Mr. Speaker, while I am here I want to just crave your indulgence, Sir, to make one point that relates to the Attorney General, Mr. Anand Ramlogan. I have no intention of engaging in the matter as the last Member has. But I am advised that the Attorney General, Anand Ramlogan, has never been to New York. [*Desk thumping*] For the records, Mr. Speaker, I say again, the Attorney General, Anand Ramlogan, has never been to New York. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Mohammed’s remarks insulted and offended innocent servants of the people, many of whom would have excelled purely on hard work. Mr. Mohammed’s statement cast aspersions on persons by giving the impression that they operated in a racist way.

From what transpired in the Police Service Commission and thereafter, it is quite clear that the other commissioners were taken by surprise. And they said that the commission had no discussion on the matter. In fact, at the meeting, one of them spoke on behalf of all three persons and said they have no part to play in that. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it

was ill-advised for the former Chairman to bring up the issue at the meeting, and to claim or even imply that his colleagues would support him in what he said, so to speak. So therefore, by his conduct, the former Chairman brought himself and his office into disrepute. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: “Dey mislead him again”.

Hon. J. Warner: But, Mr. Speaker, for the Motion to suggest—and I will read the Motion of the Member for Diego Martin West. The Motion says, among other things:

“And whereas the former Chairman of the Police Service Commission has so conducted himself in such a manner that his statements have had the effect of bringing the Police Service Commission into odium and disarray...”

That is untrue. The Police Service Commission was not brought into odium and disarray; the Chairman was, not the commission. And therefore this is misleading as far as the Motion is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat. It is informative to note that even in a press conference, subsequently, three of the four commissioners distanced themselves from the statement. In fact, nowhere have I read that the public has cried out for the other commissioners to resign. So why, therefore, say it brought the commission into disrepute and odium? It did not. Furthermore, I should add, with the appointment of Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, we were able, very quickly, to bring back public confidence in the commission once again. It was fully restored.

Mr. Speaker, as a Government, we condemn all divisive talk and action. We have said that that type of behaviour will not be tolerated [*Crosstalk*] and it would not be tolerated by anybody who is on a board or even in, of course, Government. But Mr. Speaker, we have to go one step

further and condemn all those who make divisive statements in our society.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot condemn Mr. Mohammed alone. What Mr. Mohammed said, I am not saying is not true; that is not the issue. I am saying, I am giving the reason why he should not have said it. But there are those who have made similar statements in the past, one or two of whom are in the House today—yes, I am going to come to that just now—and who up to now have not recanted and, woefully, have not been fired as yet.

Mr. Speaker, what the other side is trying to do is to put into their supporters' heads that the People's Partnership is pursuing a racist agenda. That is what they are trying to say. This is being done in a desperate bid to build up their crumbling support; in a desperate bid to build up their crumbling political constituency; that is why. They are doing it in very subtle ways and giving very subliminal signals.

I am saying, therefore, that there are those on the other side—and I will prove it—who in the past have practised, and are practising, the politics of race. On this side all of us totally condemn that behaviour. [*Desk thumping*] While on the one hand the Opposition is quick to condemn Mr. Mohammed—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. McIntosh: Careful you bite your tongue.

Hon. J. Warner: I will not bite my tongue, but at the tea break I will tell you what I will do with my tongue. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Ooooh!

Dr. Moonilal: And you will not abstain! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. J. Warner: While the Opposition is quick to condemn Mr. Mohammed, and rightly so—[*Interruption*] listen and learn “nuh” man; I listened to you. Listen and learn. “Yuh go go and have press conference in

the morning to talk nothing.” *[Laughter]*

We condemn Mr. Mohammed, rightly so. I want to make the point that we have to also condemn those who spoke like him and, in some cases, even worse than him. Therefore, I condemn the statements of the Member for San Fernando East, which he made at his meeting of April 11 with some failed politicians. I will come to that just now. I condemn very strongly the statements made by the Member for Diego Martin West in 2003. Whilst today the Member conveniently espoused the virtue of meritocracy, in 2003 he espoused a different policy entirely. What manner of man is he? I go to the Member for San Fernando East at his meeting—*[Interruption]*. I am coming to you just now; “yeah, ah coming” to you.

Mr. Speaker, I go to Mr. Manning, the Member for San Fernando East, and his meeting on April 11. I think the Member for Point Fortin was also there. On April 11 the Member for San Fernando East and a battery of his former ministers held a meeting called San Fernando East Educational Series. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I am a little late, but he said he understood that I was at a particular meeting, and I was not; Standing Order 36(10).

Mr. Speaker: The Member was not there, hon. Member, so I think you should not say—

Hon. J. Warner: Then I thought wrongly.

Dr. Moonilal: “Somebody resembling you was there.”

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: This is not the first time.

Hon. J. Warner: On April 11, that meeting called “San Fernando Educational Series” on Coffee Street had the sanction of the party, because the party’s PRO, Sen. Al-Rawi, he is on record as saying that the party

endorsed the meeting and it is something to be encouraged by the PNM. The party's PRO said so, so it had the party's blessing.

What did the Member for San Fernando East say? In fact, the media was not allowed to enter the meeting at all. You could have gotten that meeting on YouTube on the Internet or the *Trinidad Guardian*. He addressed the meeting on race relations and he made references to events in Cyprus and Fiji.

Following that meeting, I received numerous phone calls from persons, even from my own constituency, who felt offended by the way the Member for San Fernando East selectively and carefully presented what he called "the facts on Fiji". While I do not want to spend too much time on Fiji today, let me say that the whole objective, from where I saw it, was to instil fear in the society. If this kind of talk continues, it will not help this country of which all of us feel proud. What did the Member say about Fiji?
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Do you want to say something?

Dr. Browne: I am speaking to my colleague.

Dr. Moonilal: What is it, Member for La Brea?

Mr. Jeffrey: Standing Order 36(10), imputing improper motives. Standing Order 36(5), Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: "36(10), 36(5); say 36(20) now."

Hon. J. Warner: What did the Member say about Fiji? I ask this whole House—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, point of order. Mr. Speaker, you made a ruling last week Friday with regard to statements, as quoted by the Member for San Fernando East, made by the hon. Prime Minister in 2005. You shut him down completely because you said he was imputing improper motives.

He is going down the same avenue.

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat. Listen, if you rise on a point of order, you quote your point of order. Do not lecture to the Speaker. That is not your role. [*Desk thumping*] I am in charge here. I am listening very carefully.

Dr. Browne: Well take charge; he is doing the same thing.

Mr. Speaker: Do not argue with me. [*Crosstalk*] Member, apologize and withdraw those remarks, please.

Dr. Browne: What remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Oh goosh!

Dr. Browne: What remarks would you like me to apologize for?

Mr. Speaker: What did you just say?

Dr. Moonilal: Apologize and withdraw the remarks.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I moved a point of order and I gave the example previously. If you would like me to withdraw that, I withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: You are not withdrawing what you said while you were seated? All right. I am listening carefully to the Member for Chaguanas West. If he violates the Standing Orders, I will pull him up immediately. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, we cannot condemn Mr. Mohammed in one breath and not condemn others who made similar divisive statements that would affect the unity of this country. Two persons in particular made statements; the Member for Diego Martin West in 2003, which I will come to, and the Member for San Fernando East on April 11 this year. The statements were on YouTube on the Internet and the *Trinidad Guardian* about Cyprus and Fiji. I am saying that the aim was to instil fear in the country. This had the blessing of the PNM, as endorsed by its PRO, Sen.

Al-Rawi.

What did the Member for San Fernando East say about Fiji? I will not go into all the details. I have looked at the video of the speech. I ask all the Members here to go to YouTube on the Internet and look and see what he said. In telling the history of the coups in Fiji, the Member for San Fernando East made it sound as though the Fijians of Indian origin were the cause of the conflict. He said that was the reason for the coup in 1987. He said that they had done something wrong by standing for election in a partnership with indigenous Fijians and winning the vote.

The truth is that the coup was led by the indigenous Fijians, who overthrew the elected Indian—dominated multiracial coalition. In other words, the Member for San Fernando East was distorting the facts. He was trying to spread propaganda saying that the People's Partnership was a UNC-dominated coalition. The inference he gave was that the UNC equalled Indian. That is the subliminal message I am referring to. He also told the meeting that Indo-Trinis owed 80 per cent of the businesses in Trinidad and Tobago; Syrian and Lebanese owned 19 per cent and Africans owned 1 per cent. That is YouTube on the Internet.

I want to say again very strongly that this party on this side will not ever agree with those kinds of statements that would cause divisiveness in the society. I would not go on with the true facts on Fiji, but you can get them all on the Internet. Suffice it to say that Fiji had four coups since then. The last one was in 2006. You now have an ethnic Fijian, a military commander named Bainimarama, and he led a coup in 2006. He promised to have elections in the shortest possible time. Today, after five years, he has held new elections. That is the fear being instilled in this country.

Therefore, the facts being borne out by the Member for San Fernando

East are different. Moreover, the Member said at the meeting that the demographics of the country were such that the rural communities were the constituencies of the UNC. Therefore, the Member was well aware that the inference he was making was intended to cause divisiveness. No good can come from that activity.

For the record, let this House know that the People's Partnership Government is a rainbow Government. Some people will look at the Government Benches and the People's Partnership and assume that it is a coalition of races. This Government is not a coalition of races; this Government is not that. This Government is a partnership of five political movements, each of which is a rainbow in itself. Each of the parties here is a rainbow in itself. Each party is a rainbow of people of different races, different cultures, different genders, different skills, different professions, different philosophies, different social standing and different geographies. That is what makes us a rainbow party, not race.

As a party, the People's Partnership is here to promote inclusion and not exclusion. We harness the diversity in the country to the best value of the country. The People's Partnership has come together in a true spirit of mutual respect, and we have come here to pool our thinking and our resources for the benefit of this country, to pull the country back from the slippery slope which it had almost gone on with the Member for San Fernando East. Therefore, when the Member for San Fernando East and, in some ways, the Member for Diego Martin West go about talking of agendas, as if we have a race agenda, it is wrong. We are here to serve all the people, all the time.

Dr. Rowley: Policy, not agenda; policy.

Hon. J. Warner: I now come to the Member for Diego Martin West,

2003. I repeat, as far as we condemn Mr. Mohammed, we have to condemn all those who spoke likewise. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. I am suggesting here today, in fact, I am saying today that in 2003 the Member for Diego Martin West was no different from Mr. Nizam Mohammed. How?

In the Parliament on October 27, 2003, in the package of budget documents, page 38 of the Social and Economic Framework Policy 2004, the PNM proposed—I will go ultra slowly—to establish targeted recruitment programmes for male Trinidadians, aged 17—25 years, especially Afro-Trinidadian males.

3.45 p.m.

Performance indicators a specialized recruitment programme instituted, the agency COSTATT, target date 2004. Are you aware or that, Sir? Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance at the time, Sen. Conrad Enill, in the budget debate—in another place—he told that House that that was a typographical error. He said no, no, no, that is a typographical error and he said an erratum would be done. The Member for San Fernando East, as Prime Minister, even confirmed that it was an error and would be removed but, the Member for Diego Martin West, who was Minister of Planning and Development at the time, said it was not an error.

Dr. Moonilal: It was his policy.

Hon. J. Warner: He said it was not an error and if it was good for him then, how is it bad for Mohammed now? Because at end of the day, you cannot be so inconsistent. It was good in 2003, 2004 but it is bad now and I am saying therefore, it is the inconsistency and the hypocrisy that offends us.

[Desk thumping]

Dr. Rowley: I am very grateful to my colleague the Member for

Chaguanas West, for giving way. But considering that this is the continuation or misrepresentation, I wonder whether the Member will tell this House whether he is aware of the basis of that position and whether if he knows that that basis was a pilot project done under the UNC under Minister Manohar Ramsaran, specifically along those lines looking at at-risk males and putting forward that as a solution to a particular problem which was found to be in the East-West Corridor. That came out the UNC, a pilot project.

Dr. Moonilal: It was a policy implemented by the PNM.

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, I know I have been generous in giving way, but if you want me to give way, please earn it.

Mr. Speaker, it was a policy which the PNM adopted and the PNM had the policy implemented. Furthermore, in his submission, in his presentation, the Member for Diego Martin West he says—he is talking about SAUTT, and he is talking about the report on the restructuring of SAUTT, and he says that in the report he saw an article there about ethnic and gender balance and he wants to know that Cabinet must dissociate itself from that report when it came. He said he wants to know if the Government identifies with it.

Mr. Speaker, when that report came to the Cabinet the entire Cabinet said we will have no truck with that particular advice and we asked that that advice be excised from the report. [*Interruption*] But sure, and I am on record here in this House as saying so. As a Cabinet we collectively said that particular line should be excised from the report, but in your particular case you said it was no typographical error. You said it was of course—you went so far—Mr. Speaker, the Member Diego Martin West defended this as government policy. He blamed the terminology on the American

consultants. Remember that? He blamed it on the American consultants and he said it was their words as a result of their culture. “Ent, ent?”

Then he said further, it was the intention of the government to target a demographic group that was at risk. So, what made it different from Mr. Mohammed who felt the same way? Mr. Mohammed felt the same way—it say again, wrongly so, wrongly so—and he paid a price for it. You said the same thing and worse, and look where you are? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, he went further and he said that the government was trying to address a specific problem among a specific group that was, I quote: “overachieving in the jails and underachieving in the classrooms. “Remember that? You said so! And he was asking for some degree of affirmative action.

Dr. Moonilal: Put that in a policy.

Hon. J. Warner: And I am saying therefore, you cannot in one breath say one thing in 2004, and then in 2011, when it is convenient for you say something else. You are either fish or foul, either fish or foul, but it appears you are neither, and now you come here to pontificate and to tell—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Before you continue, hon. Minister, I did indicate to the House earlier that the hon. Minister of National Security has a statement to make. He has arrived, and with your indulgence I will now call on the hon. Minister of National Security to make his statement.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Major General Cameron Ross
(Report on Intelligence Agencies)

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I commence having been advised that I was called earlier, I wish to apologize and indicate that it was no affront or disrespect to the Chair or any Member of honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to the article in the *Trinidad Guardian* April 18, 2011 entitled, “How far will the NIA go?” In this article various opinions were expressed with the regard to the formation of a new intelligence agency. In an effort to provide clarity and promote understanding, I would like to make the following brief comments.

The National Security Sector Review of Trinidad and Tobago dated April 2009, conducted by a review team contracted by the previous administration and led by Canadian Major General Cameron Ross, opined and I quote:

“There is considerable overlap in the collection, analysis, and distribution of intelligence among the security agencies. Having SAUTT, defence force intelligence, SIA, Special Branch, SSA and NSCS all involved is difficult to justify in a country as small as Trinidad and Tobago.”

This report, Mr. Speaker, was accepted by the previous administration and the recommendations were being implemented when the People’s Partnership Government was installed 11 months ago. The recommendations of the Ross report were accepted by Cabinet Minute 1923-2009/07/23 dated July 23, 2009 and confirmed on July 30, 2009.

The Ross-led team recommended that the government amalgamate

SSA, SIA and the national security portion of Special Branch into a new national intelligence agency. This recommendation was held to be constructive and useful and the advice of the Ross team was accepted and acted upon by this Government. The result was the appointment of a steering committee to make recommendations for action consistent with the Ross report.

The security sector review conducted by Major General Ross was a comprehensive exercise that laid bare many of the shortcomings in the intelligence community that predated the arrival of this administration. There was a need for definitive action to remedy these gaps. The formation of the National Intelligence Agency, (NIA), is one such action. The NIA is an envisioned entity, it is not yet a reality and it is misleading to speak of it as if it already exists. This new agency will be the product of a rationalization process that will address deficiencies in security and criminal intelligence.

3.55 p.m.

In developing an integrated and intelligence led national security model, the NIA will be enabled to satisfy all the requirements of security intelligence as well as criminal intelligence. A vibrant National Intelligence Agency will ensure effective networking among local stakeholder agencies, our regional neighbours and international partners. Further, a consolidated approach to intelligence gathering will be more efficient and cost effective. In this regard, it should be noted that there has been no interruption in the intelligence sharing relationship existing between Trinidad and Tobago and its regional and international partners in the realm of cross border criminal activity.

Those who choose, Mr. Speaker, to perpetrate that inaccuracy are

recognizably bent on being mischievous and nurturing discomfort with respect to the peace of mind and sense of security of our citizens and, therefore, must desist from doing so. The recommendations made in the Ross Report are overarching and substantial. As Minister of national security I see the benefit that will accrue when these recommendations are put into effect. There are many activities taking place in the National Security environment and they are held together by an overall plan, flavoured to some extent by the recommendations of the Ross Report.

Mr. Speaker, matters of a national security nature need to be treated with discretion. A lack of discretion can create alarm in the national community. When there is need to correct situations that may have gone awry, an appropriate approach is necessary. This brings me to the recent allegations with regard to IMPACS. This Government has taken note and I have been in touch with Dr. Cort, who is the Minister of National Security of Antigua/Barbuda and the Chair of the Council on Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE). He is the one to whom the executive director of IMPACS reports. In his capacity as Chairman and as a direct report for the executive director, I called for his response to these allegations. He advised that there is a scheduled videoconference meeting of the Bureau of National Security Ministers, on April 29, 2011. The Bureau, Mr. Speaker, comprises: the National Security Ministers of Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda and Trinidad and Tobago. It is at this session that the way forward on that matter will be determined.

It is in the best interest of all, Mr. Speaker, as primary stakeholders in our safety and security, both locally and regionally, that we take issues of national security seriously. It does not help us if matters of national security are sensationalized. We need to marshal our resources in creating and

executing effective solutions at all times. It is the focus of the Ministry of National Security; it is the focus of our Government.

Mr. Speaker, the People's Partnership Government remains committed to the diminishing of crime and criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard and in the realm of law enforcement and suppression, we have increased our operations in the area of community policing and reports indicate that there is an increase in police presence on our streets and in our communities. The 21st Century Policing Approach introduced in the Western Division has been working well. At present, the surveillance bays on the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway are being laid and should become completed and introduced in a few weeks.

In the prevention thrust, Mr. Speaker, training of mentors for the National Mentoring Programme commences in the first week of May, to ensure that activities with mentees proceed as scheduled. Mr. Speaker, I would like to add and accept all the commendations for the launch of the National Mentoring Programme.

I will also hasten to add that it is not me. This came about because of the hard-working and conscientious efforts of the public service officials in the Ministry of National Security and other Ministries that are partnering with us to ensure that this programme comes on stream in a timely manner. I want to embrace this opportunity to commend them for their efforts.

Concurrently the Ministry of National Security is in the planning stage of our "fathers bring your sons and come rally" to be held on Saturday, June 18, the day before Father's Day. And again, I make an appeal to all fathers to join us on this occasion. I call on all sons to encourage their fathers to bring them along. We are making an effort, Mr. Speaker, to nurture our young men to prevent them from gravitating to gangs and criminal activity.

The intent of the People's Partnership Government, with the help of every citizen and indeed with God's help, is to return peace, serenity and a crime-free comfort to our beloved Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you.

**POLICE SERVICE COMMISSION
(REAFFIRMATION OF PRINCIPLES OF FAIRNESS AND
MÉRITOCRACY)**

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier on in this sitting, the Member for Diego Martin West had said twice that he went to New York and spoke to the staff there, and they told him about hon. Anand Ramlogan, the Attorney General, what he said and what he did not say. I asked the indulgence and I said, I would like to say, I am advised that the Attorney General never went to New York.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. [Desk thumping]

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, since then I sent to the Attorney General's office to get the Attorney General's travel since he became Attorney General till today. Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General's travel is as follows: August 21—30, 2010, he went to Florida; October 01—05, 2010 he went to England and Wales.

Dr. Moonilal: Then to London, then—"is you who misleading?"

Hon. J. Warner: October 18-25, London, UK. One more time, London, UK. Mr. Speaker, January 25—27 Antigua and Barbuda; February 16, Barbados. At no point in time did the Attorney General ever go to New York. And therefore, when the Leader of the Opposition, Member for Diego Martin West—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: "He only listening to Gopee-Scoon."

Hon. J. Warner: —said he went to New York, Mr. Speaker, and

what he heard and did not hear, he was misleading the House. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Oh!

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, I now ask, through you, Sir, for the Leader of the Opposition, Member for Diego Martin West, to apologize to this House and to the Attorney General and to withdraw the statement. The House has been misled.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, in my presentation I was very careful to say what was told to me by staff at the mission where I went. If he looks at my itinerary, he will see that I was at the mission with my colleague here and other colleagues and I reported to this House what I was told, what was said to me. What we have now, Mr. Speaker, is a question of the veracity of what was said to me. And that is where the matter lies. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Just apologize.

Dr. Moonilal: You brought the Attorney General into odium and disrepute.

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: The fact is that you brought the Attorney General—you should apologize.

Hon. J. Warner: I will still stand by my request, Mr. Speaker, that I made of you that the Attorney General never went to New York and therefore what was told to us here is not correct. Mr. Speaker, if you had not intervened, he would have gone even further—thank God—and it was wrong.

Dr. Moonilal: Whether you intended or not, you mislead the House.

Hon. J. Warner: Here is the Attorney's General travel.

Dr. Rowley: I do not have the Attorney's General travel.

Hon. J. Warner: “Then why you did not ask for it?”

Dr. Moonilal: We are telling you, you were wrong; and you have misled the House. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: I reported faithfully.

4.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you know, there are avenues for us to find redress, so there is no problem. [*Crosstalk*] There are avenues for us to find redress. “Look it here.” [*Cross talk*] There are avenues for us to find redress, my friend. “Doh worry.”

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I said earlier on that the PNM, between 1956 and 1986 did not have a single Hindu in their Cabinet. I said so. In 1986, the Member for Nariva, a fellow called Hardeo Hardath, who had spent 15 years in this House as a Member of the PNM, when he left politics he bitterly condemned the PNM for its policy of racial discrimination by saying, and I quote Hardeo Hardath:

“My leaders cared not for me, my race, and, indeed, my constituency.”

Hardeo Hardath, after 15 years! I go further to make the point. Of the eight Indo-Trinis who have been awarded this country’s highest award since 1969, only eight of them were Indo-Trinis, and yet you had six of the highest awards going to foreigners and non-residents. So you prefer to give six to outsiders and you give only eight.

Furthermore, even when they do wrong, when they give scholarships—for example, I was able to get under the Freedom of Information Act, a list of the persons who were awarded scholarships. If you look at the analysis of the names of those persons who were given scholarships for four years—four years of scholarships; spent \$53 million in scholarships; give 600 people scholarships—less than 10 per cent were

Indians.

Hon. Members: Ohhhh!

Hon. J. Warner: “Look it here.” Furthermore, the top five of the scholarships came from five constituencies: San Fernando, Port of Spain North, Diego Martin West, Arima and Laventille East. Nothing in Siparia; nothing in Oropouche; nothing in Chaguanas; Cuchawan Trace; nothing in Couva North! “Wha yuh telling mih bout?” Mr. Speaker, you know what is worse? Even then they do the wrong things; even then it still had, of course, a racial overtone.

As you are aware, the Government can give scholarships to persons who are resident in Trinidad and Tobago. I have found a document showing the former Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, writing a memo to Joan Yuille-Williams saying: “Keep this quiet.” Here you give to Joan Yuille-Williams—Mr. Manning’s signature—“Keep this quiet”, Patrick Manning.

Dr. Moonilal: “Keep this quiet?”

Hon. J. Warner: “Keep this quiet.” Keep what quiet? Keep what quiet? This was in response to a request for scholarship funding from a Grenadian national, and the person got \$29,000, although only citizens of this country must be given scholarships. Why did he not give one to a man from Guyana? Why did he not give a Guyanese too? Why did he not—of course, looking for a federation, instead of going up north to Grenada and St. Lucia, why did he not go down south where Guyana has land and you have food and so on, and we could have a synergy and a nexus between Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago? Why not? But no, even when they do the wrong thing, they discriminate, but keep it quiet! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point that the intention of the mover

of this Motion is to give the impression that the People's Partnership policy is a racist one. I want to repeat, nothing could be further from the truth. What they want to do is to have—and I have not come to Prof. Cudjoe as yet. I am coming to him just now. What they want to do is to have one standard for themselves and one for us—one for them and one for us. But they tend to forget that people's memories here are long; we remember.

In their political hunger they do not care how wide they create the divisions in this country; they do not care how wide they create the discord and disunity. This People's Partnership has come together here—today makes one year that we signed the Fyzabad Declaration—one year today! [*Desk thumping*] And when there were those who said that we would not last; we would disintegrate, look and see for yourselves! Look at what is happening here! Look at what is happening there! Who is fooling whom?

Mrs. McIntosh: Hold on tight.

Hon. J. Warner: Hold on tight?

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh shoulda hold on tight tuh yuh card when yuh fling it.”

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that as far as I am concerned, what the Member for Diego Martin West said was no error. There is a guy who writes and he believes that he is the Jesus, the Saviour, for the Africans. His name is Prof. Selwyn Cudjoe. I want to spend a few minutes on Prof. Cudjoe, a PNM activist, a man who had been placed on the Central Bank board, a guy who claims that there is discrimination and conspiracy wherever he sees this Government, a man who wages a campaign without any empirical data, a man whose claims are false and baseless. I want to tell this House that the Member for Diego Martin West, his statement came on the heels of a policy by Prof. Selwyn Cudjoe which said that we on this side discriminate; we are racist.

Just to digress, I had asked also, too, for some information on our diplomatic representation, our postings overseas, and I want to read into the debate and tell this country our postings overseas: In Brazil, you have an Indian; in Washington, an Indian; New York, an African; Nigeria, an African; Jamaica, an African; India, an Indian; in Brussels, an African; in Costa Rica, an African, to be appointed, of course; in Canada, a Caucasian; Uganda, an African; Venezuela, an Indian; South Africa, an Indian; London, an African. In the consulates overseas in Miami, an Indian; New York and Toronto, we have not put anybody yet. Look at the balance! Look at the balance! [*Desk thumping*] Of the 14 embassies, in five we have Indians; in eight we have Africans and one Caucasian—14 of them, eight Africans. I refuse to stand here and be insulted by the Leader of the Opposition and Member for Diego Martin West to tell me I am in a party that is racist; to tell me that I am in a party here—

Dr. Rowley: Please, Mr. Speaker, I did not do that, man!

Mr. Speaker: To be very fair to the Leader of the Opposition, he did not say that, so I would like you to withdraw that, please.

Hon. J. Warner: I withdraw. I inferred that from what you said. I apologize and I withdraw. That is all. All I am saying is, I inferred that from what you said. I apologize. No problem, and I move on—no problem at all.

Mr. Speaker, I go now to the Centre for Ethnic Studies Report and the EOC. Mr. Speaker, you recall in the year 1992 the Government established a committee that included, of course, Dr. Selwyn Ryan and Prof. John La Guerre. In 1993 the committee produced a report titled: “Employment Practices in the Public and Private Sectors in Trinidad and Tobago.” The document is in the Parliament library and that document was discussed

inside and outside this Parliament. That document, among other things, looked at the ethnic diversity of the public and private sectors; it gave statistics and a history. That document recommended an approach to dealing with whatever imbalances might occur as a result of hiring practices and that committee recommended an Equal Opportunity Commission, called EOC, to be set up after the necessary public consultations.

That committee—I want to repeat—was appointed by the PNM. That committee included Dr. Selwyn Ryan and Prof. John La Guerre. The committee produced its report and I say again, the committee recommended an approach to dealing with whatever imbalances might occur as a result of hiring practices and recommended an Equal Opportunity Commission to be set up after the necessary public consultations.

What did the PNM do? The PNM starved the centre of resources and the members had to make do as best as they could. Furthermore, the PNM condemned the findings of the report. In fact, they said, it was okay to have public debate and discussion on the findings, but the report was condemned. What did you do, Member for Diego Martin West, when they condemned the report on hiring in the public service? If you had spoken out then, as you did today, possibly the whole issue with Nizam Mohammed would have never taken place. What did you do then? Not a word! Not a word! You behaved like Sugar Aloes! Not a word! What did you do then?

The PNM did not establish the EOC. They refused to do it. It was the UNC that brought that commission into being. [*Desk thumping*] It was the UNC that passed the legislation. Furthermore, when it was passed, the commission was only set up after a court matter. Imagine you had to go to the Privy Council to get the Equal Opportunity Commission. If you had done your work—and I am coming to Citadel just now; and I am coming, of

course, to all the cases you had there just now. I am saying to you, if you had done your work then, we would not have had this Motion here today. “Doh come here in Holy Week and play Pontius Pilate and wash your hands of it. Do not do that! This is a week for resurrection, but not for political resurrection.

I am saying, since then the People’s Partnership has given the commission the tools to do its work, and that is what we are about. We are not about affirmative action. We are about, of course, equality. You heard the Member for Tabaquite speaking last week. We are about meritocracy. In fact, our policy throughout has always been meritocracy, and when we evaluate persons, we take out their ethnicity, their race, and we look at other considerations: their qualification; their performance; their suitability for the job and so on.

I come now to two other issues. I am looking now at the PNM’s track record on equality. What is the PNM track record on equality? I will take just two matters to show you the PNM’s track record. I go to the radio licence for Citadel. Citadel got a radio licence overnight, but the Maha Sabha did not, and the Maha Sabha had to go to the Privy Council to get a radio licence. What happened in the Privy Council? In the Privy Council they said that the Court of Appeal had been fooled twice.

4.20 p.m.

They said in the Privy Council that the PNM Government had misinformed the court about the facts of the application. So overnight Citadel, Louis Lee Sing, gets his license, but Maha Sabha does not get theirs. And then we pay the cost, of course, to the Maha Sabha for our discrimination.

There are other issues of discrimination: Devant Maharaj, Ganga Persad Kissoon, Feeroza Ramjohn. In every case the PNM was found to be guilty of unfair treatment, guilty of discrimination against senior public servants, and in all of these cases it involved Indians, all of these cases. That is your track record. To come here, therefore, to talk about Mr. Mohammed—I am saying Mr. Mohammed was wrong. We said so, we said so, at all levels. What more can we say? We acted on it, we put somebody in place, but you come here with a Motion to do what? To revive what? What is your objective? There is no way that Motion could help your failing political fortunes. It cannot help.

Dr. Moonilal: There will be no resurrection [*Desk thumping*] There will crucifixion.

Hon. J. Warner: And you know, I still believe, I am still the eternal optimist, I still believe that the PNM discrimination is not race-based, I still feel it is politically based. I could be wrong . I hope I am right. I believe that the PNM is not really race-based but politically based. I believe that their discrimination is politically motivated.

You must bear in mind that it was their government—and particularly the last Speaker, when he was the Minister of Housing—who built houses in certain areas, to give certain people a kind of “vote bank” so to speak a “vote bank”. They built settlements, and they talk voting patterns and demographics. Look where they built them, overnight, “Abracadabra”—no recreation grounds, no schools, nothing. Houses, not even approvals, not even approvals. Today houses are shifting left and right—not even an

earthquake, but just to get a “vote bank”. And I am saying that people who were given houses, I do not feel it was because of race. I want to be charitable to you. I believe it was, because of the fact that you gave houses to PNM supporters. I want to be charitable. I do not feel—

Miss. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the Member for Chaguanas West, and I have to say that he is imputing improper motives please, 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, yes, I know what you are attempting to say, but the hon. Member for Port of Spain South has a point. You can be imputing motives in terms of your contribution. So let us proceed, please?
[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. J. Warner: If that offends the Member you know that is the last thing I would want to do, offend you, or your party, particularly you. And if that offends you, I am sorry. That is not the intention, [*Interruption*] I said that is not the intention, and if I offended you I am sorry.

But the fact is, however, [*Interruption*] our Prime Minister, when she was Leader of the Opposition, she brought a Motion in this House on CEPEP, and in that Motion on CEPEP—the then Leader of the Opposition, who is now our Prime Minister supported the findings of the Auditor General’s Report, and she showed that in CEPEP there was again discrimination. Here is what she found.

In the report in May 2007, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, showed this House that in CEPEP 24 contractors were identified to be closely linked to the PNM. She found in

this House these contractors enjoyed over \$117,000,000 in contracts between 2002 and 2006. She found that UNC strongholds got a minimum number of contractors, Siparia and Caroni East got zero contractors; Siparia and Caroni East in 2002 got zero contractors. Naparima, Princes Town, Tabaquite, and Chaguanas got one each. Targeted marginal seats got between five and 11 contractors. PNM strongholds got five contractors each.

Look at what is happening today. Today we are paving roads left, right and centre for everybody. We began to pave roads even in La Brea, and you know what, I got a “Thank you” card from the Member for La Brea which I framed. [*Desk thumping*] I took that “Thank you” card from the Member for La Brea and framed it. Ask anybody here if any Member on this side could have ever given a “Thank you” card to the last Minister of Works and Transport.

Dr. Moonilal: Nah! Nah!

Hon. J. Warner: Can anybody here could have given a “Thank you” card to the Member for Diego Martin North/East? No, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: Give him a sympathy card.

Hon. J. Warner: I spoke to the Member for Deigo Martin West and he gave me 10 roads to pave. I told him then, and I will say it now, we shall pave all 10 and for each of the 10, I will call him and we shall open the roads and so on, because we are Government for all the people, all the people [*Desk thumping*]

And therefore, it is wrong. I am saying, to come here and pontificate,

and to take Mr. Mohammed's error and to blow it out of proportion as if we are all guilty, Mr. Mohammed made an error and he paid a price for it. What more can we do? What more can we do?

Mr. Speaker, I go to the Caroni workers. Who were forced to take VSEP on terms not yet delivered since August 01, 2003. Since August 01, 2003 your Government promised to take care of the Caroni workers. Over 10,000 workers and their families were put on the breadline, because of that, and so many businesses had to shut down and the fact is that even today, we are just trying to rectify the situation with the Caroni workers. You promised to take care of the workers, to give them land and so on you did not give them. [*Interruption*] "Where the land?" Where is the land for them?

Dr. Moonilal: Where is the land, the PNM promised land?

Hon. J. Warner: Even then this government, the PNM government, in their mad rush for power also engaged, I am advised, in "union busting", as they say, this "union busting" NBN, BWIA, and Caroni. They tried to even do the same thing with the PSA by the Revenue Authority Bill of Trinidad and Tobago. Everywhere they turn is discrimination, discrimination, discrimination. And therefore, I am saying again do not come here and pontificate as if this is something new. Mr. Mohammed's policy is not ours, Mr. Mohammed's words are not ours, Mr. Mohammed's position—his stance—that is not ours. And therefore, do not come here with a wide brush to paint all of us as Mohammeds. We do not subscribe to what he said and I repeat, we acted on it.

Mr. Speaker: You have three more minutes, hon. Member.

Hon. J. Warner: All right, okay have three minutes more. Mr. Speaker, let me end by saying quickly that sometimes I am accused by my colleagues on the other side of course of not being a member of my natural constituency. Jack Warner “how you could be a UNC boy”? “How you could be a UNC Jack Warner”? They said to me. “Your natural constituency is the PNM”, they said to me. They said that to me, “Jack Warner, how could you be a UNC? Worse again you are the UNC Chairman.” “How could you go with dem fellas? You should be here with us your natural constituency.”

Dr. Moonilal: Who say that?

Hon. J. Warner: And if you did not say it, that is not my friend.

Dr. Rowley: I thought I was your friend.

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, I say my friends on the other side.

And you know something, how do they treat their natural constituencies? They build slums for them, they built those shanty towns; They put on DEWD, on LID, on CEPEP and URP and so on. They forced them to go and vote in 2007/ 2010, and if they did not vote, they get no jobs and so on. That is what you want for me, my natural constituency? Keep that. Keep that, my friend! I do not want that. [*Desk thumping*]

4.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: One more minute, Sir.

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, as I end, I want to say to you that this is Holy Week. This week reminds us of the reality of good and evil. On this side, we have been good.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is 4.30 p.m. At the last sitting when you were not here, hon. Leader of the Opposition, I did give an undertaking that at this sitting we would allow the Member for Caroni East and the Minister of Education to respond to your Motion. So when we move for the adjournment, I will seek leave to allow the hon. Member to speak.

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 a date to be fixed and to serve notice on Members of the House and our friends opposite that they kindly note these items on the Order Paper: Bill No. 1, a Bill to amend the Evidence Act; Bill No. 2, A Bill to amend the Bail Act and the Kidnapping Act; Bill No. 3 that deals with the Customs Act amendment; and Bill No 4, a Bill to amend the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01. I ask that my friends note these four Bills.

Thank you.

Remedial Schoolteachers (Non-Renewal of Contracts)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before moving the adjournment again, may I call on the hon. Member for Caroni East and the Minister of Education to respond to the Motion by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In true recognition of parliamentary democracy and good governance, our People's Partnership Government welcomes questions and Motions from the Opposition in this honourable House, and with the greatest respect from the Government, we awaited the return of the Member for Diego Martin West to respond to his Motion.

Mr. Speaker, while this is so, it is sad and unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition and the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, when presenting his Motion last week, must have been either deliberately or unwittingly misled in the contents of his Motion. You would recall last week, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West claimed he was misrepresented, when asked about one of the problems in his party. Now, I ask: did he misrepresent the facts in this Motion, or omit salient points which would nullify his presentation on the Motion? The answer will be clear at the end of my response.

Mr. Speaker, the People's Partnership Government in its election promise stated that human capital development is one of the major objectives amongst the seven interconnected pillars for sustainable development. It is the first time in history—I stand corrected—of governance, in Trinidad and Tobago, that any Government has provided approximately 20 per cent of its revenue—this year \$8 billion—towards a knowledge-driven economy, a strong basic education system and significant participation in secondary education, making a decisive difference, a strong commitment to making people-centred human development a central thrust. More than 6 per cent of our GDP and 20 per cent of our revenue are committed by the People's Partnership Government to human development.

The Motion by the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about remedial teachers for the literacy programme, and I want to quote from our manifesto on pages 30 and 31:

“Focus on Literacy Development

- We will provide increased government funding to NGOs working on literacy programmes.
- We will expand the meaning of literacy to include a second

language in the curriculum at primary, secondary and tertiary level drawing local linguists into the system.

- We will encourage reading as a pastime and enhance the image of reading in the eyes of young people by creating an infrastructure of support and of incentives.”

This is what the People’s Partnership Government is doing at the moment more funding than many developed and First World countries—20 per cent of our revenue, 6 per cent of our GDP, but yet still the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West sought to question our commitment to the education of our children in terms of the remedial teachers for secondary schools.

In the year 2000, with the implementation of universal secondary education by the then Minister of Education, now the distinguished hon. Prime Minister, wherein all students were assigned places in secondary schools, the Remedial Programme in secondary schools was introduced by the Minister of Education then, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. The programme targeted 2,000 students who scored less than 30 per cent in the Secondary Entrance Assessment Examination (SEA) and who were deemed deficient in literacy and numeracy skills. It is in this context, the then UNC Cabinet approved the employment, on contract, of 55 remedial instructors to provide remedial instruction in mathematics and reading/english—38 for English and 17 for Mathematics.

Mr. Speaker, I have not seen, nor has it been brought to my attention at the Ministry, any evidence of what transpired between 2001 to 2005, and what the PNM administration did about remedial teaching between 2001 to 2005. I have been advised that the following is part of the history of the last administration’s employment of remedial teachers:

March 21, 2005—1. Period of employment, one year;
March 22, 2005—12. Period of employment, two years;
January 15, 2006—27. Period of employment, one year;
July 14, 2006—1. Period of employment, one year. That was through a Cabinet Minute 2006;
November 01, 2006—18. Period of employment, two years;
March 2008—7. Period of employment, one year;
April 2008—4. Period of employment, one year;
May 2009—1. Period of employment, one year. I think that was the Minute of 2009;
October 09, 2009—58. Period of employment, one year;
December 14, 2009—15. Period of employment, one year;
December 18, 2009—69. Period of employment, one year;
February 24, 2010—28. Period of employment, one year.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of the non-renewal of contracts for remedial instructors took place in 2009—not 2010—when the then Minister of Education in 2009—in Government at that time. I think it was Miss Esther Le Gendre—who sought feedback on the impact of the remedial programme. The records of the Ministry of Education revealed that prior to May 2010, when we assumed office, the contracts of 41 remedial instructors ended without renewal. So, it is not this Ministry or this Minister, and my colleague, Minister De Coteau, who ended any contract for remedial teachers. That occurred in 2009. The contact of 41 remedial instructors ended without renewal. In addition, 17 persons who were on contract had reached the retirement age of 65 and, therefore, became ineligible for continued employment in view of the Ministry's policy. So, it is not this Government that has stopped the renewal of contracts for remedial teachers.

It was stopped in 2009.

On September 21, 2010, last year, these two Ministers requested an analysis of the success or failure of the system for remedial teachers. The research and analysis done and received on the performance and impact of remedial instructors was concluded in March 2011, a few weeks ago. It showed that amongst other findings in government secondary schools, 60 per cent of students who were not initially identified as needing remediation from SEA results were operating at a literacy level equivalent to students in standards 3 and 4 of the primary school system.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), a study which this administration continues to partner with—your administration took it up in 2006 and we have paid the money to continue with this in 2010—revealed that Trinidad and Tobago performed below the international mean. The latter was 500 and our score was 436, placing us 34th out of a total of 40 countries.

Mr. Speaker, the UNC was not in Government between 2001 and 2010, so students who were in standards 3, 4 and 5 during this time went into the schools as infants during their period of administration. So the failure of the literacy programme rested in their hands, and when we did the research from 2005 to 2010 in the SEA—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, Member for Diego Martin West. You know that. I am sure you know that. When the Member for Diego Martin West says that 15-year-olds in schools could hardly read and write, that is a fact. That is a fact. We do not deny that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: That is what the PNM produced.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You did not do much to be able to do

anything to counter that during your time. Appreciating and understanding this unacceptable situation—

Mr. Speaker: You have 5 more minutes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—we embarked upon a rationalization of remediation initiatives in the Ministry. The following is of significance for the nation's information:

- at the primary level, a remediation programme was instituted by this Government and this Ministry, under the umbrella of the Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT). Two hundred and ninety-seven teachers were trained—that programme targeted infants up to standard 2—in 61 underperforming primary schools to train 5,000 students;
- the underpinning philosophy of intervention in the early years is that the literacy problem can be solved from as early as infancy to standard 2, and the issue of inability to read, write and comprehend would disappear by the time the students sit the SEA;
- another 300 primary teachers are presently being trained to teach from infants to standard 2 for another 8,000 students; and
- another 398 teachers are scheduled for training in teaching of reading in a further 100 schools for another 8,000 students.

Mr. Sharma: Excellent work.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:

- in December 2010, three months after assuming office, we employed 457 scholars [*Desk thumping*] with Bachelors in Education from the University of Trinidad and Tobago, and who are skilled in remediation techniques. Eighty-two more are

scheduled to enter the teaching service in reading in September;

- another 96 teachers are graduating with a Masters in reading and will be introduced into the primary and secondary schools in September. Forty-eight will enter into the primary and 48 into the secondary;

We already have 22 specialist reading teachers in the secondary schools and they will be moving in clusters. We are now finding from our research, as well, that there are excess teachers in some of our secondary schools, and a rationalization and redeployment exercise is being conducted with a resultant decreased need for contract teachers. In fact, in some subject areas, for a Teacher III level, the waiting list is close to 300.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to what the Member for Diego Martin West said about special needs, he said we cannot absorb the secondary [*Inaudible*] who are in fact under tremendous personal stress, are not only by the fact that they are not able to assimilate socially, intellectually or otherwise in the schools. He is speaking about problems of dyslexia and other kinds of handicap.

4.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we are also addressing the problem of literacy by urgent action on the special needs children which are major contributory factors to their decreased performance. We are looking at the visual auditory aspects, the learning disabilities such as dyslexia, autism, attention deficit syndrome. We are looking at emotional, behavioural and psychological abnormalities, Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, neuromusculoskeletal abnormalities. We are embarking upon a medical neurodiagnostic and behavioural testing to determine the incidences and prevalence of these disorders. We are now moving in a prescriptive approach towards the management of students with

these disabilities at the ages three to five and the infant stage.

Mr. Speaker, I give this nation our Government's commitment that we will continue in our education in human and human development building, by building the foundation for an intelligent nation and a creative economy, with inclusivity, diversity, wellness and competitiveness. As the then Minister of Education in 2000 and now the distinguished hon. Prime Minister did in 2000, where every child will find a place in the secondary school, we now boast under her leadership that we will try to obtain universal early childhood education. Mr. Speaker, no child will be left behind, and the disabilities of literacy and numeracy will be a thing of the past in the not too distant future. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Easter Greetings

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as we all know, Easter is upon us, the period of the crucifixion and the resurrection. I think it is appropriate at this time that I call on the hon. Prime Minister to bring greetings on this very holy and auspicious occasion.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring greetings to Members of this Chamber certainly and to the national community on the occasion of Easter, and as you may know, this is one of the oldest and most sacred of Christian observances. We will join this weekend with the rest of the world in commemorating the holy and solemn events marking the crucifixion, as you said, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Speaker, the message of Easter remains as vital and as relevant today as it was, when the death and rebirth of the Lord Jesus took place over 2,000 years ago. It is quite possibly the ultimate story of selflessness, love

and sacrifice that the world has ever seen. The crucifixion on the cross remains fresh and pertinent because with the symbolic significance by the surrender of his life, the Lord Jesus took the sins of the world upon himself, and, before he died, he was then a victim of a very savage physical onslaught. But, before he died, in an act of love and mercy, he said, and I quote:

“Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

And so his joyous resurrection, three days later, gave each and every one the opportunity to have eternal life.

And, of course, here as elsewhere, Easter is preceded by the 40-day lenten period, a time of reflection, of prayer, of fasting. The message of Easter remains ever timely because it reminds us of Jesus’ self-sacrificing nobility and his unmatched love and affection for mankind. It is one of the most inspirational and focused stories of God’s abiding devotion to us all.

So, on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I urge everyone to honour and appreciate the timeless and significant spiritual message of Easter. I ask that we seek to emulate God’s unbounded love for humanity as evidence in the moral of the brutal crucifixion, and thereafter, the festive resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

I ask those of us in the national community to eternalize and embrace the supreme message of Easter, that of love and devotion, and of a willingness to surrender all for mankind. I recommend that each of us use this weekend to aspire for a spiritual rebirth inspired by the Lord Jesus laying down his life for all.

Against that backdrop, I wish a blessed, holy, happy and fulfilling Easter to all the Members of this Chamber and all those in our national community. Happy Easter all and I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk*

thumping]

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to associate ourselves on this side of the Chamber with the sentiments outlined by the Prime Minister as a description of this period of Holy Week, leading into the weekend of great significance to members of the national community who are members of the Christian faith. But, as is normal, here in Trinidad and Tobago, the celebrations, reflections, the festivities of one religion is not confined to that group of citizens. We normally find that we share it across the board. This weekend, Mr. Speaker, is Easter in Trinidad and Tobago, and I dare say for Christians and non-Christians alike.

Mr. Speaker, the symbolism of Easter and the story of Jesus Christ's life hold so much for us in terms of what we can learn about ourselves, especially those of us in leadership positions as we are in this Chamber where that statement, where it is described, "greater love hath no man than he who laid down his life for his friends". Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister described, Jesus Christ laid down his life for all of us, but there is more to it, in that there is some volunteer action in there, required by us to choose which way we will go, and what we will do with ourselves. It identifies to us that nothing comes easy and that there is great sacrifice, hurdles to be crossed, and Mr. Speaker, it could even be viewed as crucifixion. But, at the end of the day, there is a resurrection to come if we subscribe to and believe in the teachings.

This weekend, Mr. Speaker, devout Christians will go to their holy places, and even in the homes, drawing from this life of Christ, and attempting, in our own small way, to have the teachings be the basis on which we conduct our own lives.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of those of us on this side, we would like to wish all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago a happy, holy and safe Easter weekend, especially to those persons who will use our roads and our beaches, to be particularly careful and look out and ensure, that at the end of Easter, we come forth with the light of the resurrection in yet another year. Happy Easter to all of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Opposition.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like to join with the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Government and Opposition Benches respectively, in wishing the Christian community and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, Happy Easter!

To Christians, Easter is one of the most special days of the year. It marks the end of the period of fasting in lent and celebrates the triumph of Christ over death. It is time for thankful worship, bonding of families and community celebrations.

The Christian religion has tremendous influence in the history of our country, and many of the virtues that it teaches are shared by other religions in our nation. We must look around, not very far away, at those countries that are divided, even within their own religions, by warfare, murder and mayhem. We are fortunate in this little country, notwithstanding the difficulties we encounter as a developing nation, that we all belong to a religious grouping that preaches moderation, faith, openness, honesty, trust and the very best of humanity. We should be proud to be part of this beautiful country.

4.55 p.m.

As we approach the Easter holiday season, hon. Members, I ask you to pray for God's continued blessings on our land and that he continues to help us triumph over the negative influences in our society. Pray for forgiveness. Pray

for country. Pray for our families. Pray for our friends and for the rest of the persons in our country. As well, let us pray for those who have little.

I would also like to extend to all the hardworking members of staff of the Parliament, our police officers who are providing 24-hour protection and their respective families, warmest Easter greetings.

I hope that the rays of the sun, which will rise every morning will continue to penetrate, in a very positive way, all corners of darkness. May your Easter be filled with bright feelings and may your heart be filled with the joy of the holiday. Hon. Members, have a wonderful Easter.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
(Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar)

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, in moving the adjournment, with your leave, may I may also, as we extended commemorative and festive remarks, take this opportunity, on behalf of Government Members and I imagine all Members of the House and staff, to extend to the Member of Parliament for Siparia and the Prime Minister, a very happy birthday.

The Prime Minister will celebrate a very good Friday on Friday and celebrate her birthday. We would like to take this opportunity to wish the Prime Minister a very happy birthday and many more years of prosperity, good health and wise leadership. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.57 p.m.