

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, February 10, 2012*

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 following Members who are currently out of the country and have asked to be excused from sittings of the House: hon. Winston Dookeran, Member of Parliament for Tunapuna, during the period February 10—14, 2012; hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan, Member of Parliament for San Fernando West, during the period February 10—18 2012; hon. Stephen Cadiz, Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East, during the period February 09—13, 2012; and Mrs. Patricia McIntosh, Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, from today's sitting. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual audited financial statements of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 2010. [*The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee
2. Ministerial Response to the second report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament on Ministries (Group 2), and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises on the National Information and Communications Technology Company Limited (NICTCL) branded as (iGovTT). [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]
3. Defence (Rates of Pay and Allowances) (Amdt.) Regulations, 2012. [*The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy)*]
4. Annual administrative report of the Ministry of Local Government for the period October 01, 2006 to September 30, 2007. [*The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Chandresh Sharma)*]
5. Annual administrative report of the Ministry of Local Government for the period October 01, 2007 to September 30, 2008. [*Hon. C. Sharma*]
6. Annual administrative report of the Ministry of Local Government for the period October 01, 2008 to September 30, 2009. [*Hon. C. Sharma*]

POLICE SERVICE (AMDT.) REGULATIONS, 2011

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas it is provided by section 78 of the Police Service Act, Chap. 15:01 (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) that the President may make Regulations, inter alia, to give effect to the purpose of the Act and generally for the good order and management of the Police Service;

And whereas it is also provided by section 78 of the Act that every Order made under that section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives;

And whereas the President has on the 20th day of October, 2011 made the Police Service (Amendment) Regulations, 2011;

And whereas it is expedient that the Police Service (Amendment) Regulations now be affirmed:

Be it resolved that the Police Service (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 be approved.

Mr. Speaker and Members of this honourable House, I am extremely pleased today to finally address some outstanding financial issues by way of amendment to the Police Service Regulations, 2007. This is a simple Motion, and I expect that our dear friends on the opposite side will support us tremendously with this.

The decision to become a police officer is a conscious decision, in most instances, to contribute meaningfully to the upliftment and security of one’s country. It is a noble profession, and we are aware, there are times when there are families that move into the police service; you are expected to move into the police service. Youngsters want to be a police officer. You ask them: “what would you want to be?” Answer: “I want to be a police officer.” Because probably their father or uncle was a police officer and they were schooled in that kind of discipline that lends itself to the police service.

Mr. Speaker, policing has always been more than just a job: it is a way of life. When you get into the service, your whole mode of operations changes. As a consequence, it has attracted to its ranks those who have a deep commitment to the notion of public service and public safety. It is this self-same instinct, this dedication to duty and patriotism, that often leads to police officers putting themselves in harm’s way to protect others. I am sure you would agree that this is one of the greatest strengths of the service, and reflects the nobility that is so

indelible within the profession. We have all heard of instances, numbers of cases, where police officers who are referred to as off-duty officers lend themselves to the service of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, even though they are supposed to be off-duty. But, we must recognize that the police service and the duty that comes with it is a 24/7 commitment.

Mr. Speaker, Government's objective to build the competences and capabilities of our men and women in uniform begins with attracting the best possible cadre of individuals into the protective services, and to train them by using the best facilities available to us, so that they can offer a more efficient service to the public, and this begins with discipline. This is why when police officers are being trained, they are residents and are not allowed to go out for a period of time, to be indoctrinated in such a manner, so that when they do leave the barracks or when they do leave the training facility, they are a different person altogether based on that discipline and deportment that are inculcated in the early weeks of their training.

Mr. Speaker, the restoration of law and order in our land is number one on our agenda, and we will pursue all necessary lawful measures to realize that objective. From the onset, we have recognized, fully, that our crime-fighting challenges require a varied approach towards a solution. As such, we are taking a comprehensive approach that addresses the economic, social, technological and managerial dimensions of the service in an effort to reinstate safety and security in Trinidad and Tobago. This was started some years ago, decades ago, when the name of the unit was changed from the police force to the police service because at the time they recognized that there was a requirement, not only for force, but for service. And, out of that was born their motto "To Protect and Serve" which was later qualified to "To Protect and Serve with Pride."

Mr. Speaker, the restoration of law and order in our land is number one on our agenda. From the onset, we have recognized that we need to do that to ensure peace and security in Trinidad and Tobago. But Government's vision cannot be realized unless we have the full support of every member of the protective services. Our bright young men and women in uniform have shown over the years that they are dedicated to their duty, and diligent in the performance of their daily task in accordance with their responsibilities, and this is something that we refer to as initiative.

Those trained in the police service and other protective services develop a sense of security. For instance, a police officer would walk into a bank and will

start thinking “if something happens, what do I do?” This is inculcated through the training that they would have received particularly in their basic years. It means, therefore, that during the period of their life—this is something that you will never lose—they develop that sense of security, and as such, even after leaving the service, they are always in a situation to assist in areas like that.

Mr. Speaker, there is no gainsaying that our men and women in uniform are at the heart of our crime-fighting and security efforts in this country. This point was so eloquently made by our Prime Minister, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, in her address at the Commissioning Ceremony for the helicopters now attached to the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard in April 2011. Our Prime Minister stated the following and I quote:

“We can work with our resources of the material kind, equipment. We could have all the equipment but if we do not have the”—dedicated—“men and women in the protective services to use the equipment...we will not succeed.”

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of National Security, I do not underestimate the challenge facing our police officers and other law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime. I know and I fully understand and appreciate all those challenges. But, like our Prime Minister, I remain forever confident that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has begun the process of change that will ensure the delivery of improved services to the citizens of this country—services that they so richly deserve.

1.45 p.m.

I am also confident, Mr. Speaker, of the dedication and professionalism that exist within the ranks of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I was fortunate to have worked with them decades ago and having assumed this office, I have been fortunate to be out there with them on their road blocks, and see the type of dedication to duty that can only come from patriots.

I am also very confident that with the current transformational focus, we will begin to build a modern, flexible and responsive police service delivering value for money. In doing so, we recognize the value of praise to the human spirit and the building of morale among men and women of the service. That notwithstanding, we do appreciate the importance of providing adequate remuneration packages for our officers.

The People’s Partnership Government is, therefore, committed to ensuring that we do everything in our power to provide officers with as attractive packages

as possible. I hasten to add that regardless of what packages could be offered to police officers they would not be enough. You cannot compensate anyone for putting his or her life on the line for their country, and that is the noble aspect of this undertaking. In an effort to ensure this, we bring this Motion to approve the Police Service (Amdt.) Regulations, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, it is provided in section 78 of the Police Service Act, Chap. 15:01, that the President may make regulations *inter alia* to give effect to the purpose of the Act, and generally for the good order and management of the police service. In particular, section 78 allows the President to make regulations for prescribing the procedures for pensions, gratuities and injury allowance to be granted in respect of the services of police officers.

Mr. Speaker, it is provided by section 78 of the Act, that regulations made under that section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives. The President, on October 20, 2011 endorsed the Police Service (Amdt.) Regulations, 2011. Today's Motion, therefore, is a necessary step in giving effect to the provisions of those regulations.

Mr. Speaker, please permit me at this juncture to give a brief overview of the regulations to be approved. The Police Service (Amdt.) Regulations, 2011, consist of five regulations. The first two provide a citation and interpretation both of which are self-explanatory. The other three which contain the substantive amendments to the Police Service Regulations, 2007 are as follows:

- 1 The first amendment, regulation 3, seeks to amend regulation 62 of the Police Service Regulations, 2007, by introducing a special duty allowance to officers with effect from October 01, 2010;
- 2 The second amendment, regulation 4, seeks to amend regulation 183, of the Police Service Regulations, 2007, by including as pensionable service, the period an officer would have acted in a higher post immediately prior to his compulsory retirement.

I am sure we would have all, in this august Chamber, heard of stories where officers would have served in positions sometimes in excess of two years, three years, and upon their resignation from the service, they are considered in their substantive rank for pension purposes. This we find to be demoralising and, of course, it does no good to the remunerative package of the officer who is now supposed to be leaving on a pension package.

- 3 The third and final amendment, regulation 5, seeks to amend regulation 185 of the Police Service Regulations, 2007, by increasing the minimum monthly pension payable to police officers in special cases.

Mr. Speaker, I will first deal with the special duty allowance as provided for in regulation 3. For too many years the previous administration did not pause to recognize that their crime-fighting efforts were not producing the desired effects. The People's Partnership Government has, however, adopted a different approach. Crime reduction is a priority and we have proven that we are fearless in treating with this critical issue with tenacity, applied strategy and skill whilst at all times observing the rule of law; we know what has to be done, we take action and the results are evident.

We promote collective responsibility in our Government, we involve the Opposition in many of our plans for the nation, we invite their input and we thank them for it. The voices of the associations are heard and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are consulted and supported. All of us must be involved and take responsibility for our actions, as well as omissions, if we want our nation to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, it has nothing to do with UNC or PNM or COP, this is our country, it is not PNM country, not UNC country, not COP country, it is our country, Trini country. [*Desk thumping*] From where I stand, respect and commendation must be given to the members of the protective services, as well as members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, who serve this country and who are committed to providing a safe nation for us as citizens. These are the young men and women who, while we sleep or around this time while we party and fete, they take care of our country for us. Every opportunity I get to commend them, I want to do so. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, there are several officers whose brave acts are seldom mentioned, but when I read the report of their efforts, I am heartened and know that the goals we have set can be achieved with the help of such officers. As I said earlier, the People's Partnership Government has recognized and will continue to do so, the daily efforts of our police officers in the fight against crime. It is because of our commitment to assisting our police officers in whatever way we can, that in 2010, Cabinet took a decision to provide a special tax-free duty allowance in the sum of \$1, 000 to all police officers effective October 01, 2010.

Mr. Sharma: Excellent.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Say it again, October when?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: October 01, 2010. This is because we recognize the worth of the contribution of our law enforcement officers.

Please allow me now to turn to regulation 4, which seeks to treat with the computation of the period used as pensionable service, for the purpose of computing an officer's pension, gratuity and allowance. No provision exists under the current regulations to include as pensionable service, the period where officers have acted in a higher office for a continuous period of at least three years immediately prior to his or her compulsory retirement, or prior to the date on which he or she proceeds on annual leave, immediately preceding the date of his or her compulsory retirement.

Mr. Speaker, I have had on a number of occasions, because of experiences with the police service, when I see a police officer wearing two stripes, I am always tempted to refer to that person as acting sergeant. Similarly, with a sergeant wearing three stripes, I am tempted to refer to that person as acting inspector, because that is the reality. That is now in the process of being changed, because we are going to fix it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, under the existing legislative framework for police officers, pensions are calculated based on the period of service in the officer's substantive appointment. You may serve for years in a higher rank and work well, because if you had not worked very well they would have removed you; all your appraisals are saying that you have worked well, and upon retirement you are demoted to your substantive rank for purposes of pension. The intent of this provision, therefore, is to avoid denying the officer who would have been acting in the higher position for such a considerable period, a benefit to which the substantive holder of the position would have been entitled.

It is common in the service for persons acting in higher positions to perform exceptionally well, in some cases better than the substantive holders, but at the end of the day the system does not provide for consideration of that period for pension purposes—totally unfair and demoralizing to the incumbent. It is in recognition of this fact that the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service Act and also the Pensions Act were amended in 2008, to address this issue. Today, the police service joins its colleagues in the prison service by benefiting from this arrangement which members of the civil service and teaching service also enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, I now move to the final regulation, regulation 5, which deals with increasing the minimum monthly pension in three circumstances as set out in the Police Service Regulations, 2007: One, payment of a monthly pension to a police officer who is physically or mentally disabled and retires. Effective October 01, 2006, existing stipulations are as follows: The minimum monthly pension payment should not fall below \$1,150.

2.00 p.m.

Effective October 01, 2007, the minimum monthly pension payment should not fall below \$1,650. Effective October 01, 2008, the minimum monthly pension payment should not fall below \$1,950. Effective September 01, 2009, primarily because of the recognition for service demonstrated by our officers, the minimum monthly pension payment should not fall below \$3,000. [*Desk thumping*]

By way of example, under the proposed arrangement, if an officer retires in 2006 and his monthly pension is calculated at \$1,100, then, according to this amendment, the officer will get a pension of \$1,150. In the case of another officer who retires in the same year, probably because of a higher rank—that is 2006—and his pension is calculated at \$2,000, he will receive the \$2,000 and not the minimum pension of \$1,150.

We must take cognizance of the fact that some of our police officers would have retired years ago. We must take cognizance of the escalating cost of living and our officers, who would have served diligently, who would have served conscientiously, who might have given service at a time when the remuneration package was not as healthy as it is today and have to live, in this day and age, with those menial pensions. Now all police officers will get, at the minimum, \$3,000 pension.

This Government is about action and keeping our promises and that is why we are here today to give effect to the policies of Government in an effort to improve the lives of our hard-working police officers and their families, while they are on active duty and after they have retired from the service.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I wish to embrace this opportunity to thank our members of the protective services and the defence force, serving and retired. This Government will continue to work relentlessly, not only to ensure the return of peace and security to our land, but also to ensure that those who now protect and serve and those who protected and served in the past; those who now guard and defend and those who have guarded and defended in the past—as well as those of yesteryear who, for some reason, during the course of their duties, were injured—we are making efforts to ensure that recognition and gratitude are afforded to them for the selfless service that they have given to this great nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Miss Donna Cox (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to stand here this afternoon to speak on the Police Service (Amdt.) Regulations. We, on this side, will support any measure to increase the remuneration for police officers because we recognize the need for police officers to be adequately compensated, based on the unique nature of the policing function.

I move into the regulations. Regulation 62A states that an officer shall be paid a special duty allowance at a rate approved by the Minister of Finance. It also states that this special duty allowance is effective October 2010. I want to know if this special duty allowance is the same duty allowance which was passed in the House on Wednesday by the Minister of Finance. I saw “duty allowance” and here I am seeing “special duty allowance”.

I also know that the Minister of Finance stated that this allowance was effective November and this regulation says “effective October 2010”. I would like some clarification of this from the Minister, please—whether it is a special duty allowance or a duty allowance. I would also like to get a definition, if this is something different, of special duty allowance, as it relates to this regulation.

Mr. Speaker, as we are addressing allowances for police officers, permit me to chart the course with regard to compensation for police officers. Since 2006, coming out of the crime talks, the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Basdeo Panday, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar and Mr. Winston Dookeran represented the UNC Opposition. The PNM Government was represented by the then Prime Minister Patrick Manning, Mr. John Jeremie, our Attorney General, Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis and the Minister of National Security, Mr. Martin Joseph.

Certain strategic issues were discussed because we recognized that the main challenge facing the police service was one of management. Indeed, one participant at those talks went so far as to suggest the scrapping of the police service. To make such an extreme suggestion was of course illogical and impractical, reflecting no doubt that person’s limited expectations concerning the prospects of police service reform.

The PNM administration did recognize that there was a need for a management and leadership shift. There were problems which were not unique to Trinidad and Tobago in policing, more or less, and coming out of those bipartisan talks—I will go back to the talks—which involved the then Government and the Opposition, the team agreed that, and I quote: “The role of Police Service Commission had to change.” And I must say that that, in fact, took place.

Another agreement was with regard to hiring and firing. The Police Service Commission's role in this regard was confined to the hiring and firing of the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Another agreement was that the Prime Minister should give up his constitutional veto over the selection of a Commissioner of Police and a Deputy Commissioner of Police; and this was in fact done.

The then PNM administration recognized the need for the police service to control its own budget, thus increasing the authority of the Commissioner of Police in managing the service. This formed part of the reorganization and transformation of the police service.

It goes without saying that the Commissioner of Police was not relieved of his obligation to be accountable for the proper administration of funds, and the proper procedures would be expected when the police service enters into contracts. As the accounting officer, the Commissioner of Police must know that he, of course, will be held responsible.

The PNM administration accepted that proper compensation of police officers for their contribution to the police service was indeed a critical factor towards their motivation. Towards this end, the then Minister of National Security brought in an expert on police compensation to assist in this process. That is why the then Minister of National Security, in order to facilitate the development of an appropriation compensation package, appointed a Police Compensation Review Committee. This committee had a mandate and I quote the mandate of that committee:

- To measure worth for compensation purposes;
- To review the existing allowances to develop an efficient modality for application;
- To examine the current proposals of the Police Service Social and Welfare Association in relation to the Ministry's perspective on the compensation of police officers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you to note the composition of that committee:

Representing the Police Service Social and Welfare Association were the then President, Corporal Emerald Bruce; the then Assistant Commissioner of Police, Sir Stephen Williams, now Deputy Commissioner of Police; Inspector Steve Nandoo; and Woman Police Constable Jacqueline Solomon.

Representing the Ministry of National Security were: Mr. Keith Renaud, Director OLEP; Mr. Curtis Belford, Deputy Director, OLEP; and Ms. Rohini Jaikissoon.

The report was signed off by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of National Security; the then Commissioner of Police; and the Police Service Social and Welfare Association. I believe it was around April 2010. In other words, the report and its conclusion were unanimously accepted by the Ministry of National Security and the government of the day. That document was subsequently sent to the Chief Personnel Officer.

In aiming at an appropriate benchmark for compensating officers, the following factors were considered by the committee. I quote:

- The existing level of wages offered to professional personnel within the public sector;
- The unique nature of policing and the extensive demand placed on police officers on a daily basis;
- The tremendous personal, organizational and constitutional responsibilities that are associated with policing activities;
- The exceptional level of personal risks and dangers which are inherent in the discharge of routine policing functions; and
- The dire need to attract, motivate and retain the calibre of officers who are essential to policing as a profession.

So the relationship between allowances and performance must be meaningful and the Government must provide officers with allowances which are not merely compensatory, but also have the propensity to motivate and encourage higher levels of performance in the discharge of their duties.

The Police Compensation Review Committee identified six categories of allowances. This new classification was intended to link each compensatory benefit to the rationale for its existence. These allowances were to compensate officers for activities in the following areas:

- special responsibilities;
- special technical skills;
- educational incentives;

- duty—that is, being rostered to work in excess of the stipulated hours;
- personal provisions;
- performance incentive.

In arriving at allowances which serve as incentives, a number of factors must be taken into consideration. Firstly, the rationalization of the allowance must be aligned with officers' motivation and the achievement of better results through greater commitment to their responsibilities. Secondly, emphasis must be placed on compensation based on the vagaries of the job.

Permit me to give an example of the performance incentive allowance. One of the allowances which were proposed by the committee was envisioned to compensate police officers for their contribution to achieving the strategic performance targets and goals of the police service. The purpose of this allowance is to motivate officers to engage meaningfully in the current thrust of transforming the police service, by encouraging enhanced levels of performance.

In considering the complex world of police officers in modern society, together with the hazards of the job, it is a reasonable expectation that they should be adequately compensated and provided with the necessary resources to do their job.

This also serves to retain officers who may otherwise leave because of inadequate compensation. As I speak of necessary resources which also must be provided to the police officers, it has been brought to my attention by concerned police officers that Mr. Gibbs spent a considerable sum of money to purchase newly designed police uniforms before it was approved by the Cabinet.

2.15 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: What?

Miss D. Cox: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know where the uniforms are, because they are newly designed uniforms. I understand they are lying somewhere in the police service, and the police officers are concerned about it—we are speaking here about large expenditure; we are speaking about resources for the police service—and I would like the Minister to tell us what are the plans for these newly designed uniforms that are sitting there and which were not approved by the Cabinet. I understand that it will do the Minister well to check the quartermaster stores on Wrightson Road in Port of Spain.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to clause 4, section 183A(1)(a) and (b) where an officer who has acted in a high office for a continuous period of at least three

years immediately prior to the date of his compulsory retirement, or the date on which he proceeds on pre-retirement leave shall be able to have his pension, gratuity or other allowances calculated as if he was substantively appointed to that higher office. Mr. Speaker, we on this side support this measure because it is important. After acting for a considerable number of years, many persons just retire and then get their pension benefits at the lower level. Actually in 2008, the PNM administration brought this same legislation for teachers.

I am aware that a lot of acting takes place in the police service, and it is important to note that in the second division, a police officer can retire between the ages of 50 and 55; and 55 being the compulsory retirement age. In the first division, one can retire between 55 and 60; 60 being the compulsory age of retirement. After consulting with a number of police officers about this proposed amendment, they felt that instead of having to act continuously for three years, they should just have to act for one year continuously.

Another set mentioned that when a person reaches a certain age after working for many years without a vacation, which is the norm in the police service—I mean a lot of us are aware of that. When police officers do go off on leave it would be for two years and three years and so on—at some point in time, after being there for a number of years and having to act for another year in the higher post so that they can get their benefits—they felt that one year would have been a better suggestion for them. Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister to look at this matter.

Another officer asked me to remind you all that when a police officer is promoted, his one-year probationary period is waived because of the fact that the individual had acted in that period for one year. So, police officers would also like that to be taken into consideration where their probationary period is waived whenever they act for one year. Mr. Speaker, we on this side support any measure which will enhance pension benefits to police officers, and I am just requesting, on behalf of police officers, that the Minister of National Security look at this matter.

With regard to section 5, clause 1 which amends regulation 185, it pertains to officers in special cases. There should be a clause which deals with police officers who have since retired. Will they be entitled to receive arrears of this special duty allowance? Somehow the amendment should include a provision making it clear that officers who have retired during the period are also entitled to receive this allowance.

We are not unmindful of the fact that these measures carry a significant cost to the taxpayers, at this time of worldwide economic uncertainty which also impacted on us. This is why we must demand that the Government exercise greater prudence in the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars and they must use it wisely.

Mr. Speaker, already the Leader of the Opposition, the PNM's Political Leader has spoken about the dysfunctionality of this Government, and almost everything they do reinforces this. This Bill that is before us, which we support, this is the reason we have a problem when the Commissioner of Police signs a contract in September for close to \$1 million without the knowledge of the Minister of National Security, Brig. John Sandy, but did Captain Griffith know about this?

The Deputy Commissioner of Police was pleasure-flying with one of the directors of that said company in June and July—the company which received the said contract—and this blatant appearance of favouritism must cause us to wonder whether Trinidad and Tobago is, indeed, getting value for its money. Mr. Speaker, when I read emails between the managing director and the director of a company—the same company which gets the contract—and they are talking about sealing the deal while in flight with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, I must be uncomfortable.

When we talk about joint police and defence force collaboration, and then the Air Guard was totally left out of this surveillance contract and initiative, I must say that something has to be wrong there.

Mr. Speaker, when newly designed uniforms are bought with taxpayers' money and just left to sit in a warehouse somewhere, that is cause for concern as we talk about expenditure of taxpayers' funds.

When the lame excuse of those in authority, concerning the accountability where the Commissioner of Police is concerned, saying that he can spend his own funds—that indeed is cause for concern, because where is the accountability? Is it a coincidence that that contract is just under a million dollars?

Mr. Speaker, when the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Jack Ewatski was in Jamaica during the state of emergency, paid for by taxpayers' funds, Crime Stoppers—I understand the Ministry of National Security gives about \$3 million, I think, per year to Crime Stoppers—and yet Crime Stoppers would pay for Mr. Ewatski and his wife to go to a training conference in Jamaica, during the state of emergency. That is, indeed, cause for concern.

Mr. Speaker, when the Government issues responses with regards to the police service, which suggests that they think that all of Trinidad and Tobago, all of us, are fools—it is, indeed, cause for concern.

When a contract was signed for the use of a toy plane sight unseen, since it had not arrived in the country, but yet a contract was signed—it is, indeed, cause for concern.

Mr. Speaker, when Members of the Government attacked me personally because I have raised serious issues of national security that involved questionable procurement proceedings from which the Opposition would like to distant itself—it is, indeed, cause for concern.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I expect to be under attack because that is the modus operandi of this Government [*Desk thumping*] when you say anything—when you have any concerns and you say it, apparently we are supposed to be silent as an Opposition. When you say anything or you talk about concerns—I do not attack anybody personally. I have not done that, but when this is happening, it really is a cause for concern, because where is democracy in this country? That is the reason we have an Opposition. I want to let them know today that the Lord is my light and my salvation—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley:—whom shall I fear.

Miss D. Cox:—whom shall I fear? [*Desk thumping*] The Lord is my strength and my salvation; of whom shall I be afraid? [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I will not stoop so low to go to their level because I have to attack no one, and you always hear that when you live in glass houses, do not throw stones, and that is a word to the wise. Mr. Speaker, as the proud Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant, I will not be muzzled by the representatives of this dysfunctional Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to these regulations are important in terms of measured benefits for officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I have one other concern, because I have not seen any information here concerning special reserve officers. I would like to know what is in place for special reserve officers. Would they be getting this allowance? Would they be getting this pension benefit after acting for three years?

I ask these questions because, while I was preparing my contribution for today, I remembered a good friend of mine who was a special reserve officer, Sonia, who died. It is actually almost a year now. I remember her three children. I

am wondering what kind of benefits they would have received, because she was a special reserve police officer. Actually, we played netball together. She was a member of the national netball team.

I would like the Minister of National Security to look not only at pensions, but also at other benefits such as allowances and so on, which are due to police officers and, I think, in terms of giving the police officers and special reserve officers—many of whom work side by side with police officers—I think that they should be given their just due. Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Minister of National Security will embrace our suggestions on this side knowing that we are seeking the best interests of not only the police officers, but also the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

Recently, I met a retired police officer who mentioned that he has not been getting his \$3,000. I want the Minister of National Security to know that they are looking forward to that increase of \$3,000 pension, which I hope they will be getting soon.

The role of a modern police officer in society is ever changing and the people of Trinidad and Tobago expect quality service from our police officers. We are concerned about the low detection rate. We feel that the detection rate of the police should be higher. The police officers need to be a little more people-friendly. I mean, all of us may have a story about what we have encountered with police officers, and that is one area I feel that special emphasis needs to be placed, because of the fact that many times when you get information it is because of the relationship you have with the community and the relationship you have with the people around you. So, I think that is something that needs to be looked at; they need to be more people-friendly.

Mr. Speaker—investigative skills—that is something that police officers need; that is definitely needed. What I realize is, if something happens, a police officer would come—“long time” they would come and question persons all around, the fellows liming on the block, the neighbours—and take the statement from you, and then they would jump back in their vehicle and leave, and there may be somebody right around there who might have seen something. So, we feel that police officers need to get back to the place where they investigated whenever something happens. I think that is necessary.

I spoke about uniforms earlier on, but I realize that police officers do not wear uniforms anymore on the streets unless they are on duty. I have friends who are police officers, and if they have to leave Police Headquarters to go downtown to

buy something, they would change their clothes and that is the fact, and you wonder why. We are supposed to have pride—if we are involved in whatever profession, we must have a sense of pride. As children, you would admire a police officer on his way to work because he would leave home in uniform and so on.

Even when police officers—most of them, I cannot say all, but I know most of them—are going home and they are driving, they would change their clothes. So, therefore, how do we keep that police presence? Whether they are on or off duty, they do not wear their uniforms at all, and I guess you must have that pride in the police service. I am talking about people I know personally who are my very good friends.

I have many friends who are police officers, and I observed that, and I asked one of them about it—why do you do that? She said to me “Yuh mad, not me, I not keeping on that uniform.” I am saying that has been happening for some years now, it is not now. This has been happening for a while. So we need to instill that kind of pride again, where people can see police officers in uniform and so on. I wonder if it is fear why they would not wear the uniform and they do not want to be seen in it. I really do not know. That is something that we need to look at.

I just happened to find out that by chance. It is because I was supposed to meet an officer in Port of Spain and I realized she changed her clothes. I said, “But you are right in headquarters, why did you change your clothes, because you had me waiting on you.” Then she said she was changing—she had to go back to work, and it was just two blocks away—and that is when I started to look at it and realize that is what they do. This is something the Minister should look at, and the Government must, therefore, give them the necessary resources with which to meet the increasing demands of the society to efficiently address our crime problem in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.30 p.m.

In closing, I want to quote one distinguished observer who eloquently summed up the expectation that a demanding public has of the police officers. He declared and I quote:

“The citizen expects police officers to have the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of David, the strength of Samson, the patience of Job, the leadership of Moses, the kindness of the Good Samaritan, the strategical training of Alexander, the faith of Daniel, the diplomacy of Lincoln, the tolerance of the carpenter of Nazareth, and finally, an intimate knowledge of every branch of

the natural, biological, and social sciences. If he had all these, he might be a good policeman!”

Mr. Speaker, we not only expect these attributes from a police officer, we earnestly hope and pray that we could find them in the Ministers of this dysfunctional Government. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Member for Laventille East for supporting my Motion. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Morvant!

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: My apologies, Laventille East/Morvant. I cannot leave out the Morvant, I lived at Morvant at one time.

Miss Cox: Morvant would feel left out.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Yes, I would not want that. With respect to the duty allowance that the Member referred to, police officers are in receipt of that special duty allowance and have been since October 2010. I wish to reiterate that this Government would love to pay the police officers all that they ask for, and I maintain, even if we were to do that, they would still be underpaid because you cannot pay someone for putting their life on the line.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Mr. Speaker, we have not been able to pay the police officers as handsomely as we would like because of the drainage of our national coffers that existed before we got into office. So while we are eager to pay more, that enormous drainage and haemorrhage that existed before we got into office has caused us or given us the inability to do so.

The Member for Laventille East/Morvant spoke about uniforms, and she qualified it by saying that there was not Cabinet approval for the acquisition of these uniforms. If this is the case, I respectfully recommend that the Member direct her enquiries to the accounting officer for the police service, and not here. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: But Minister!

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So where else?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: The Member knows that uniforms are there. I

accept the other point made with respect to the probationary period; it is an excellent idea and I would support that. The Member then spoke about prudent spending, value for money, accountability—oh what short memories we have. [*Desk thumping*] We are speaking about prudent spending, value for money, accountability; we have heard this in Parliament on so many occasions.

We recall the Leader of the Opposition, when in government at the time, was told by a nongovernmental official that he had no authority over him—the Member of government, his boss, his line Minister had no authority over him and his spending. This came out in the Parliament and is known by the entire country. It is the hypocrisy that exists here that I am unable to accept because we have short memories. Oh what short memories we have. We are hearing, “We do not throw stones”, but they are pelting them. What short memories.

Mr. Speaker, our special reserve officers—[*Interruption*—as you know that is what your colleague said, I noted it here. With respect to the special reserve officers, I share the concerns and I myself have made recommendations. Rome was not built in a day.

Dr. Khan: For eight years they did nothing.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Their day will come.

Hon. Member: Eight years, five—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Mr. Speaker, what the Member spoke about with respect to the softer side of policing, this is where the community policing thrust is coming from. Prior to this Government coming into office, there were specified community service officers, so that when you go to a police station—the same point she was making—and make a report you may have made that report to the community police that represented it. When you go back the following day, if he is not there, and you are making this report now to another police officer who is not so trained—and because he is not so trained, we have the problems and the challenges to which the Member referred. So we are changing that. We are saying that every police officer must be a community police officer; that is what we are attempting to do.

I totally agree with respect to the wearing of uniforms; I wore uniforms for 36 years. I always felt proud to wear my uniform. If we have a member of the service who is not proud to wear that uniform then we must be cognizant of that and make amends, but as she quite rightly said again, it did not happen yesterday, it happened for years. I agree with her in that respect, that we must ensure that our

officers protect and serve with pride—that pride starting with the wearing of the uniform. From a personal perspective, I loved the uniform I wore, and I felt pride in that uniform. I agree with the Member that all our officers ought to have that kind of pride. It means, therefore, something has fallen down and we need to correct it.

Mr. Speaker, I usually say there are two organizations in this country that I always have time for: the cadets, that is where I came from; and the veterans, there is where I have gone. When I say “veterans” I mean police retirees, prison retirees, protective services and defence force. People have heard me say that—the cadets is where I came from and the veterans is where I have gone. I feel that there is no time that we ought not to take care of our veterans; take care of our people who have served and put their lives on the line for their country because they are patriots.

Mr. Speaker, about two months ago I met a former female police officer, a pensioner, who related all her woes and I understood, and there was nothing I could tell her that could comfort her. Today I am happy to say that she would be comforted, among some of her other peers. In the service, in uniform, we talk about service, we talk about sacrifice, we talk about honour, and not necessarily because of rank. When you serve your country, it is the noblest profession that you could ever get into. Service of your country is the ability or the wanting to give your life for your country, and this is what our officers in uniform do. Sacrifice: every police officer, soldier, prison officer, fire officer would tell you that there were times when they would be sitting—for instance, with soldiers—in a trench somewhere, you are in the rain, you are being wet, you are in mud, slush, and you wonder, “What am I doing here?” You are doing this for your country because you are a patriot, and this is what we are talking about—that service, that sacrifice and honour, and we must ensure that that honour is bestowed on those who served and those who sacrificed. This is what we are attempting to do with this Motion.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Service to your country is service to God.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Mr. Speaker, retirement comes now at a younger age so to speak, in that, people are living longer. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Life expectancy is longer.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Life expectancy is longer. So, as a youngster you see someone who is 50—55, and you say, “This fella old”. At 50—55 now, they are youngsters, and there is so much they can offer Trinidad and Tobago in

terms of service. So we have our mentorship programme, and we are asking our retirees to get involved in the respective communities. What we are doing is using the Mediation Board to assist us with our community security programmes, to get together in communities and do that type of mediation. So when there is a dispute between neighbours, rather than it ends up in violence and death, that mediation committee in the respective community would deal with that. They are respected people in the community.

We are looking at people, like our former police officers, our pensioners, to get involved in communities like that. So in the final analysis, with our community patriotism initiative, we would have a mediation committee from one community meeting with a mediation committee from another community. When we do that, it means we can bring the communities together. This is something that I have been trying to do, getting our communities to understand that we need to come together.

Yes, we compete in sports and culture, not guns and violence, and we are asking our retirees to get involved and assist us with the knowledge and experience that they would have gathered over the years, while they served and sacrificed, and now that they are receiving their honour. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Did you tell them about the CSP?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Yes, it is the CSP I am talking about. So, Mr. Speaker, having regard to the fact that we are being supported on the other side, I am seeking the—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Interest?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:—certainly the interest, but I am seeking to have this Motion passed here this afternoon in this honourable House, so we can proceed to ensure that all our retirees, not only enjoy a better twilight of their lives, but their families as well enjoy that twilight with them.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise this honourable House and the national community of the National Security Officers' Foundation that we are in the process of putting on the table. I simply want to read the aims and objectives of the foundation which we are putting in place to deal with all veterans in uniform. The aims and objectives of the NSOF are:

- honour and remember national security officers who have died in the line of duty;

- recognize national security officers who continue to serve with distinction, and other persons who have made a significant contribution to national security;
- demonstrate to relatives, friends and colleagues of fallen officers that their valiant contributions are not forgotten;
- strengthen existing ties between and among different national security entities;
- assist survivors in coping with the loss of their loved ones;
- annually recognize the dedication to duty and ultimate sacrifice made by national security officers;
- provide a lasting electronic tribute through the maintenance of a website hosting a database for inductees of the National Security Officers' Memorial and recipients of national security awards; and
- to enhance and strengthen the relationship between national security agencies and the public.

Mr. Speaker, this is how highly we think of our retirees. This is how we want to ensure that having regard to the fact that they have served and sacrificed well and now we are honouring them well. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That, the Police Service (Amdt.) Regulations, 2011 be approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 2.48 p.m.