

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT
*IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON JUNE 18, 2010*

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VOLUME 11

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 02, 2012

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PAPER LAID

Recommendation 200 concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work, adopted by the Ninety-Ninth Session of the International Labour Conference, June 2010. [*The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, by mutual agreement with the Opposition, we ask that the Questions/Answers be deferred.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**Prime Minister's Official Visit to India
(Details of Costs Incurred)**

33. Could the Prime Minister identify:
- a) All Ministries, agencies and other sectors of Government, including the state enterprise sector, that incurred costs in relation to the Prime Minister's official visit to India from January 2-15, 2012?
 - b) The total cost by each Ministry, agency and state enterprise that expended funds towards the official visit to India? [*Miss D. Cox*]

**Prime Minister's Official Visit to India
(Number of Persons Who Travelled)**

34. Could the Prime Minister state:
- a) The total number of persons, government officials, as well as non-government officials who went on the official visit to India?
 - b) The names of all persons who went on the visit and their designations?

- c) If public funds were expended on any such person, the total amount associated with the participation of each such person? [*Miss D. Cox*]

Prime Minister's Award of Senior Counsel (Silk)

(Details of)

35. Could the Prime Minister state:

- a) With respect to the award of Senior Counsel (Silk) status to the Prime Minister, what was the date of the submission of the application by the Honourable Prime Minister to the Attorney General for consideration of the award of Senior Counsel?
- b) Did the Attorney General consult with the Chief Justice with respect to this application as required by the published conditions laid down in the Trinidad and Tobago Gazette?
- c) Did the Attorney General have any further consultations with any other bodies/individuals with respect to the award of Silk to the Prime Minister?
- d) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Prime Minister as approving Officer, give the names of the individuals and/or bodies which were consulted in the process? [*Dr. K. Rowley*]

Award of Senior Counsel (Silk)

(Details of)

36. Could the Prime Minister state:

- a) When was the final list of the Attorney General's recommendations of the applicants for the award of Silk submitted to the Prime Minister?
- b) Were there any name(s) of any practitioner submitted as recommended by the Attorney General to the Prime Minister for which approval was not granted?
- c) If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, could the Prime Minister name all such practitioners and give the specific reasons for the non-approval of the award in each case? [*Dr. K. Rowley*]

Brigadier Peter Joseph

(Details of Dismissal)

37. Could the Minister of National Security state:

- a) With respect to the dismissal of Brigadier Peter Joseph as the Head of Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT), has the

Government of Trinidad and Tobago entered into any sort of settlement as it relates to this matter?

- b) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state:
- i) What were the initial circumstances which resulted in the dismissal of Brigadier Peter Joseph as the Head of SAUTT?
 - ii) Subsequent to his dismissal, what was the basis of claims made by Brigadier Peter Joseph against the State?
 - iii) The details of the financial and other considerations in the settlement of this matter? [*Dr. K. Rowley*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

1.40 p.m.

**PRIME MINISTER KAMLA PERSAD-BISSESSAR SC
(LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN)**

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

Whereas an unending series of events have demonstrated:

- a. The Prime Minister's gross incompetence;
- b. Failure to stimulate the economy and create sustainable employment;
- c. A consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago;
- d. An absence of effective management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister, resulting in persistent confusion and encouragement of wrongdoing in the conduct of the national affairs of Trinidad and Tobago;

Be it resolved that this honourable House express its concern and lack of confidence in Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion comes to the House in the twenty-second month of the life of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I almost said the new Government, but that would have been wrong because Trinidad and Tobago no longer has a new Government. The Government has been elected for a maximum of 60 months, and after a third to 40 per cent of the time has gone, and, given what we have been regaled with on a daily, weekly, monthly and sometimes

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hourly basis, it is reasonable for an officeholder in my position as Leader of the Opposition, acting on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to come to this House and to raise with this Government, in its presence and before the people of Trinidad and Tobago, our concerns about how public business has progressed, where it is and what the future holds for us under the style and effect of the current Prime Minister.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, I expected a reaction from the Government. What I did not expect was panic. [*Desk thumping*] I want to tell you that I am not really speaking to those in this House because I expect them to defend themselves. That is what defence is. I am speaking—[*Interruption*]

Miss McDonald: Please stop! “Doh start that!”

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, I do not want any shouting across the floor. Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, cool it! Continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, today I stand to do my elected duty and I am inspired by the will and the voice of the people. I wish I could claim that as my—[*Laughter*—]I wish I could claim that as my statement but that is the position taken by the Member for Siparia when she moved a vote of no confidence in an officer of this House. If I may refer to the reaction of the Government, I find the best expression of the Government’s reaction better than anything that I could have put, so my job is made very easy.

I want to quote from the commentary of the *Newsday* of February 19, 2012, and this is what Suzanne Mills had to say:

“When this UNC Government tells you to look to the left, look to the right.” [*Desk thumping*] “It is a mistress at the game of distraction and the game has simple rules: they all talk at the same time so by the end of the day the substantive issue is lost in the chatter. Or, they shoot the messenger to kill the story, if perfumed flattery will not deceive him.”

Suzanne Mills at the *Newsday*. Mr. Speaker, I could not have put it better, and over the last few days the country would have seen the proof of that statement.

It was a UNC Attorney General, one Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, who, on Friday, September 12, 2008 said:

“The Prime Minister allows people to lie to mislead the population. He is the head of the Government; he is responsible; he can remove Ministers; the buck stops with him.”

In this case, Mr. Speaker, all I will do is insert “her” for “him”, but the sentiments remain. Mr. Maharaj went on to say:

“...an intelligent, ethical, law-abiding Parliament cannot sit idly by and allow some of these issues I have mentioned not to be acted upon. That is the reason for having motions of no confidence in the Standing Orders and why we are moving this motion of no confidence against the Prime Minister.”

That was Ramesh Maharaj speaking to his colleagues and I think that is still valid and one must take that in the context of their recent behaviour, because one would have thought—I must say I was a little surprised at the prime-ministerial reaction of demonization and lack and loss of dignity in the response to a vote of no confidence to be debated in the Parliament. I was taken aback by that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, confidence was expressed in this Government, significantly if not overwhelmingly, on May 24, 2010. Arising out of that confidence, the Government walked away with a parliamentary majority of 29 seats to 12, and we on the other side, whose conduct and stewardship were called into account on that day, did not find favour with the majority of the voters and accepted our fate and took up our seat in the Opposition, but never wavering in our commitment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We serve from the Government side where we are when we are, and we serve from the Opposition side when we are where we are.

It is against that background that I want to draw to the population’s attention that two of the major pillars of the day—of confidence offering to the current grouping in office—which caused the population to choose those on the other side in the Government, were the issue of crime in the country, violent crime, particularly murders, and the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, options in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, those on the other side, in the practice of democracy in the election, in the campaign, said to the country, “Insofar as we have acknowledged problems of crime and the economy and other concerns, we can do better. We will fix it. We can fix it”, and they made a number of blandishments in offering themselves for the job. Today, Mr. Speaker, 20 months later or thereabouts, 22 months or thereabouts, you are hearing from those who got the job that the population’s expectation is too high. “What you want me to do?” “This is the best that can be done”, and their apologists are saying, “This is what coalition politics is about. This is as good as it gets.”

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The PNM rejects all those self-serving arguments and says that the problems we are having now are from lack of performance, lack of confidence, corruption and self-serving—[*Desk thumping*] We must also understand, Mr. Speaker, that we had a problem with the arrival of this Government. They came totally unprepared—unwashed babies. An opportunity arose for them to come together and they won an election with no plan. It was like a wedding with no plan for the living. The wedding day is over. The marriage is now a nightmare. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of crime, immediately upon coming into office, the Prime Minister demonstrated her incompetence by choosing to demonstrate to the country that she does not understand the root cause of our chronic ongoing crime problem—violent crime, gun crime, street crime, gang warfare, gang activity—by telling us that she is not interested in pursuing or continuing the obtaining of OPVs to work in the ocean because what we need to do, and this is now her policy, is to fight crime on the streets. That was a prime-ministerial edict, and from that lack of understanding early in her tenure, Mr. Speaker, we saw the Prime Minister leading the charge to cancel the commitments that Trinidad and Tobago had for OPVs to treat with our external and our border considerations.

We warned the Government then that that would lead us to two problems: one, exposed borders, and two, lawsuits and arbitration where we are facing serious losses. Well, the borders are still exposed. The criminal conduct is unabated. The lawsuits are being practised. The arbitration is going on. We await the outcome of that. What we do know is that if lady luck smiles on us, we are hearing that there are billions to be collected, but if the luxury of the courthouse or the arbitration does not go away, there are millions and hundreds of millions to be lost in that exercise. We await that outcome.

Mr. Speaker, another expression of the incompetence of the Prime Minister is something which today still boggles the mind of the average person in Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister, upon assuming that job of Prime Minister, immediately and automatically became head of the National Security Council. The National Security Council is that body of the State's offices responsible for doing the most important thing, which is to secure the State, protect our life and our limb.

The first thing we heard is that she is not keeping National Security Council meetings frequently—busy celebrating. Then the next thing we saw is the Prime Minister leading the charge against one of the State's agencies claiming that she

was being spied upon—we all are being spied upon, people in general are being spied upon—and that there were files on people all over this country by a rogue agency called the SIA.

We thought we could believe the Prime Minister. I was in the Parliament with her for a few years before and I gave her the benefit of the doubt that what she was saying was, in fact, the story—the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. What do we have? Where are we today on that story? The only things the Prime Minister accomplished from that were these: one, the appointment of a person who she claims is unknown to her, a certain young lady who was a telephone operator or a clerk somewhere in the SIA, called Resmi Ramnarine, who mysteriously, with the Prime Minister’s support, backing and prime-ministerial understanding, was elevated from the post of telephone operator to director of the SSA.

The record will show—whether you like it or not, Resmi Ramnarine’s CV will show that whatever else she has done in life, she can quite correctly claim to have been the head of the SSA of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a fact; “cyar run from that”, but to get that done, Mr. Speaker, if that was not incompetence, the frightening interpretation is this. The Prime Minister, by this action, completely upset confidence in the Government and in Trinidad and Tobago. Our external partners wanted to find out and still want to find out what went on there. The Prime Minister has never taken responsibility—[*Desk thumping*]—never taken responsibility for that.

The security services have not recovered from that. All she has done is to use her PR advice to ask us to move on. Well we have not moved on. The only person who has moved on is director Resmi Ramnarine. [*Desk thumping*] Do you know how she has moved on, Mr. Speaker? She has moved on by changing her name.

Hon. Members: What!

Dr. K. Rowley: I want to put on record, and I hope when the Prime Minister enters the debate that she will be telling us this time whether she knows this person because she claimed not to have known Resmi Ramnarine and not to have known what she did by making her the head of the SIA.

This deed poll says:

“By this deed I, the undersigned SHASHI REHKA of Apt. 9 Building 11, Savannah Villas...in the island of Trinidad...now or lately called RESMI USHA RAMNARINE a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago by birth, Do Hereby for myself...”—

Dr. Moonilal: The Government shall fall now. [*Laughter*]

Dr. K. Rowley:—“wholly renounce relinquish and abandon the use of my forenames...”

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. K. Rowley:—“forenames RESMI USHA and surname RAMNARINE and in lieu thereof assume...the name SHASHI...REHKA...”

I want to ask the Prime Minister when she gets up, and all the Ministers, what is it about Resmi Ramnarine that they were so mindful of her? Why did she have to change her name and where is she now ensconced in the Government with a contract job? Who gave her that job and how did she get it under the new name? [*Desk thumping*]

I did say before, Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister claimed not to have known Resmi Ramnarine, that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has not convinced us that she is not being blackmailed. I maintain that position. She could say “poof” if she wants. It is a serious matter which the Prime Minister has never addressed and this action of Resmi Ramnarine of changing her name and ending up in the Government system under the patronage of some Minister who must identify himself or herself is of interest to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I want to ask the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, what does Resmi Ramnarine have over you that thou art so mindful of her? That is what I want to ask you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, as I talk about the situation—

Dr. Moonilal: That is the bombshell?

Dr. K. Rowley:—what the Prime Minister—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: This is a very serious debate and I would like all Members to view it in that light. Take notes, please, and avoid the crosstalk. I will not be permitting or tolerating any unnecessary disruption to the proceedings of this honourable House. I am going to uphold the dignity of this House and decorum and standards. So I ask all Members on both sides, take notes. Allow the Leader of the Opposition to speak in silence. Thank you. Continue, honourable Leader. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, given that 75 minutes is a short time in prosecuting this Motion, I crave your indulgence to get injury time with these interruptions.

Mr. Speaker: Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another unfinished matter is the question of the files to which the Prime Minister referred when she raised with the country the conduct of the SIA. We did get the comment from the Member for St. Joseph, who I think subsequently, en passant, dismissed his own comment that the files were destroyed by unknown, unnamed Israelis, but in this Motion maybe he might be able to elucidate and help us clarify that. I think my colleague can do that if he has information.

However, what is important, Mr. Speaker, is that when the SIA was gutted by this Government, there was work going on in the SIA and there were, in fact, files that they were keeping on citizens who were conducting themselves like criminals or who were of interest to the SAUTT. What we do know, Mr. Speaker, it appears from the facts available to us in the public domain that all the work of SAUTT, which was current up to the point of this Government arriving in office, suddenly stopped and came to naught.

How then can you explain, Mr. Speaker, that there were files on some criminals or people who were perceived to be engaged in criminal activity being pursued by the security services, and then a year later you detain and lock up 800 people for gang warfare, gang involvement, criminal conduct, but you could not produce evidence from one of those files to have one of those persons charged and, in fact, face the court on a charge related to criminal conduct? I think this country should take note that this is the fact.

You had a system where people were being monitored, not just the politicians, according to the Prime Minister herself and her friends and so on. There was a body of criminal activity that was attracting SAUTT's attention. What the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security and the Commissioner of Police would have us believe is that not one of those persons was so under their control—in terms of surveillance and collection of evidence in the last two years, that any one of them, in the 8,000 people that they swept around the country and picked up—could have been brought before the country.

One has to put that in the context of the Government stripping down the national security assets, collapsing this, demoralizing that, firing this, and, at the same time, the missing files have never been accounted for. I do not know where they are. The Prime Minister actually at one time sought to place them in the hands of the Commissioner of Police but the only time the Commissioner of Police distinguished himself in this country was when he came out immediately

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and said, “Not me; not in my hands. I do not know anything about those files.” That is a fact; and the national security system has never recovered and continues to this day.

Mr. Speaker, when I say the Prime Minister encourages wrongdoing—we had a public exposure in this country of the Commissioner of Police procuring an item or an asset. I am not debating whether it is good or bad to be used. We took issue with the procurement procedure used by the Commissioner of Police to buy a \$900,000 item—to lease \$900,000 worth of services for his police service, and while we were taking issue with the accountability nature of that, out comes the Government spokesperson who basically said he had the right to do that. Even if the process and the procedure were irregular and possibly corrupt, the Attorney General was out front defending him. It is now the subject of an official enquiry by the Police Complaints Authority.

You know, while the Commissioner of Police, for whom the Prime Minister ultimately has responsibility, can find \$900,000 to buy a Mickey Mouse plane to fly around Arouca, he cannot find money to pay the contractors who supply unmarked rented cars to the police service? Those unmarked rented cars are used in surveillance and training and gathering information on criminal conduct across the country. For months they have not been paid.

Recently, many of the contractors who provide these cars were called in and were told summarily, “Take back all your cars. We have no money to pay you.” As I speak to you now, Mr. Speaker, I hope the Government will tell us what has been the effect of the Commissioner of Police removing from his resource base the fleet of unmarked cars which had been a major item in the fight against crime. By our understanding, Mr. Speaker, these small contractors provide these cars for a fee, and in keeping with the Government’s lifeline so far, all they have been doing is playing musical chairs with opportunity. They have created no expansion in opportunity in this country, whether in jobs, in contracting or whatever. Whatever was there before, they want to take it from those who had it and give it to those who they determine should have it.

So these contractors who are supplying cars suddenly find themselves called in and sent away because there is no money to do that, but in the meantime, arrangements are being made to put new contractors in place to rent cars to the police service. What the effect of that will be on crime, I need not spend more time on it, Mr. Speaker. It simply represents a microcosmic expression of how the Government has been treating with the business of the country, and while that is happening in the police service you join that to the Prime Minister’s own personal

action in that area and you will see why we have said we have no confidence in the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to fix this matter. [*Desk thumping*]

It was the Prime Minister herself who dodged a question I put to her here. I asked her whether she had, in fact, requested the SIA files and whether they were brought to her house on a particular day by a particular person and given to a particular person. Her answer was, “I always receive files.” That was the answer. It does not change the fact, that, having received those files, Mr. Speaker, it resulted in the dismissal of the head of the SIA and 20 trained staff members from the SIA, all of whom are now in the company of their lawyers, waiting to collect their compensation cheques for wrongful dismissal.

It was the Prime Minister herself who treated with the head of the special anti-crime unit by publicly humiliating him, accusing him of wrongdoing, could not substantiate her case and had him dismissed. He has collected his cheque of taxpayers’ money of over a million dollars and they are busy trying to keep it quiet, on the grounds that, “We have an agreement”, nobody shall speak—one million plus dollars of taxpayers’ money to pay for prime-ministerial recklessness, and that is [*Desk thumping*] why we say where there is incompetence it quickly grows to recklessness. That was recklessness, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: You will have your chance to speak, please, Member for St. Joseph.

Dr. K. Rowley: What is even more worrisome, Mr. Speaker, is that when I took issue with the Prime Minister’s shocking support for the appointment of Resmi Ramnarine, the Prime Minister accused me of racism, that she was a woman—“as if I didn’ know”. She said she “was a Indian, as if I didn’ know”. She said I was against young people; and when the pressure got too great, Resmi only lasted one week, but Resmi only got that job because of the recommendation to the Prime Minister, which we have not yet got an answer as to who requested the recommendation—and I hope today she will tell the House that, who requested the recommendation for Resmi Ramnarine that the Prime Minister received that so supremely embarrassed the Minister of National Security, because he told the country he did not know anything about it. He took the Prime Minister at her word and she embarrassed him.

The bottom line was, a recommendation went to the Prime Minister from a certain Julie Brown. That matter is still in abeyance because the recommendation contained naked lies—lie about her qualification, lie about the post that she held

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in the SIA, lie about the experience that she had in the SIA, and all of that came with a recommendation from Julie Brown who was much senior to Resmi, recommending Resmi as head, and today we see the Prime Minister accepting that after she told the country that her Government would carefully, openly, transparently select somebody to head the SIA, as she did with Colonel Griffith—I understand his contract has ended, with no replacement—and what we are seeing in the newspapers, I want the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to give the country an assurance in this debate that Julie Brown will not be considered to head the SSA. [*Desk thumping*]

We know that the Prime Minister can do all kinds of things because they believe that they have supreme political power, but a Prime Minister who could have appointed Resmi Ramnarine as head of the SSA, it would be so easy to appoint Julie Brown. Julie Brown, by her conduct in the Resmi Ramnarine appointment affair, is unfit to hold the post that she holds now and we will take umbrage at her being even considered to head the security services.

So we are asking the Prime Minister for an assurance as head of the National Security Council, which is in the public domain now, bring comfort to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that Julie Brown will not be considered to head the security services. We do not have a system in this country where people are screened by the Parliament, so this Motion gives us the opportunity to hear from the Prime Minister how she will treat with this ongoing sore which has been oozing since September of 2010.

The Prime Minister, in treating with national security, has not only been— [*Interruption*—she has trivialized national security. One day, out of the blue, we are advised that four units from national security were taken to the Office of the Prime Minister under her control—the K9 unit, the helicopter unit, the radar unit and the anti-terrorism unit. This shocked everybody, including the Minister of National Security, and before the shock wore off, to show how the Prime Minister is cavalier, incompetent, reckless and destructive of our national security system, the next thing we know, it is not happening again because the internal cabalism has resulted in the announcement being null and void, and the units have not been moved from national security.

She must tell us, for the days when the country was told that that was a prime-ministerial position, what drove that and why it did not happen. Why? She must tell us what is Rear Admiral Kelshall being paid for now, because, since the four

units have not gone to the Kelshall unit, what exactly does he do for his day's work and what is he being paid for? I look forward to the Prime Minister clarifying these issues when she enters the debate.

Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time I would move on to the other pillar, and that is the issue of the economy, which was one of the major planks of the last election when the Government got its mandate of confidence on May 24, 2010. What is the position today? Perhaps the single most important indictment against the Government, from an economic perspective, is the way in which they have almost callously brought the national economy to a halt. They introduced stagnation into the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That stagnation was as a result of a sapping of confidence based on the statements and behaviour or lack of action of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Not satisfied with their colossal falsehood about the condition of the economy when they came into power, they proceeded to behave as if they really had no idea of how to keep the economy ticking over. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker. The seriousness of this arises not only from the fact that the platform they inherited was a very good one, but it is also true that the situation with revenues from the energy sector, since they have come to power, has been very favourable, better than expected.

So here we are, starting with a reasonably good foundation, not perfect by any means, and having better than anticipated budgeted outturns in the energy sector, the main contributor to our well-being, and in that environment we have stagnation and decline. I hold the Government of Trinidad and Tobago directly responsible for the outturn of the economy as it is today. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, in other words, they had the opportunity and the means to do much, much better. They chose not to do so or they just dilly-dallied and the outturn was negative when it could have been positive if they had built on the favourable foundation.

Today they take refuge, Mr. Speaker, in their spin doctors telling them to say that the economy was in shambles. That is their new talk. They met an economy in shambles. Mr. Speaker, what they met was an economy that was doing better than most. Let us consider the platform the Government inherited from the PNM. At a time when nearly every other country in the world, and certainly every other country in the region, was reeling from the international financial crisis of 2008—2009, the economy being managed by the PNM was showing a reasonably good performance on almost every front. Note, Mr. Speaker: not perfect, not without challenges, but reasonably well on every front.

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Our debt-to-GDP ratio was less than 40 per cent, when for many other countries it was almost 100 per cent and some countries it was 120 per cent. In other words, if push came to shove, Trinidad and Tobago could have paid off all its debt in one year. Most countries are comfortable and happy with an economy if that economy is standing on foreign exchange availability of three months' supply. We were standing, when they came into office, on four times as much—12 months we had—[*Desk thumping*] yet today they will tell you the economy was in shambles. Some shambles.

Three months is the yardstick used by the IMF and the World Bank and all economists. Whether you like the PNM, you “doh like” the policy or the programmes, you cannot dispute the facts. When they came into office, the foundation they met was not in shambles, [*Desk thumping*] it was four times the normal amount as required for economic take-off; but, Mr. Speaker, they cannot tell the truth.

Even more importantly, the PNM had brought the unemployment rate down to 5 per cent by having certain operations in the economy. This Government has ensured that those operations came to a halt. One of the things for which I want to take issue with the Government, Mr. Speaker, is that the Government does not understand from where confidence flows, and if there is no confidence, people will suffer and if people think they are going to suffer, or they are suffering, they will not participate in the economy as they would normally and that would reflect itself eventually as lower performance of the economy.

The Government will tell you when they get up—I have no doubt what they are going to say when they get up, you know. As Suzanne Mills pointed out, they will tell you left when instead it is right. They will tell you up when, in fact, it is down, and as she advised you, if they say look left you look right because when they tell you how—when the Government spokespersons tell you how wonderful things are—I want to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the *Business Express* which is written by people who are experts on the economy or who have first-hand information and no axe to grind, no political axe to grind, no job to protect, no Prime Minister to kiss up to. These are people who call it as they see it.

Do you know what the *Business Express* is saying, September 07, last year? “A State of Paralysis”. They took credit for a week for a state of emergency as their crime plan to fight crime. We told them it was not out of spite or incompetence or wickedness why the PNM did not use a state of emergency to fight crime. They and their supporters and their friends said yes. “You didn’ have the political cojones to do it.” The Prime Minister has political cojones and she

used those cojones for 90 days to “cojone” the country and the end result is here: “A State of Paralysis”. It was for this reason that we had said all along that the way to fight street crime, violent crime and murders is not a state of emergency. You may not agree on the other matters but the one thing that was not the right way was a state of emergency.

People were led to believe that that would bring about some dramatic and ongoing end to crime and some improvement overall. They believed it and, as they believed it, after the emergency ran its course for 90 days, you abused some persons, you detained some persons who probably deserved to be detained under the law if you could have brought the evidence, and when it was all said and done the same *Express* is telling you, “20 Murders in 14 Days”. This, Mr. Speaker, tells you that all those who advanced the state of emergency as the response to violent crime, in January, could not hold that point of view, and from there on in must now understand that a state of emergency is not the appropriate response to street crime. [*Desk thumping*]

I fast-forward to December 2011, which was just a few weeks ago, and this is the Governor of the Central Bank, a man in whom we can have tremendous confidence. Notwithstanding the Minister of Finance’s bright picture, the Governor of the Central Bank—the headline here—those who heard the Governor’s statement, because the Governor was very guarded, he gave credit where credit was due, he identified where pitfalls were and he looked at the pros and the cons and he spelled them out and the analysts gave us the headline, “Gloomy 2012”. This is not the PNM, it is not the COP and it is not NJAC. Those are experts who know about the economy. So the population is free to decide who they want to believe.

Mr. Speaker, there is a caution here to the Prime Minister and this one is dated January 19, most recent—“Settle down, Madam PM”. Cease and settle, Madam Prime Minister. This is an appeal in the *Daily Express*, the last line after she has made—after she is apprised of the circumstances of her stewardship. The last paragraph says:

“Given the financial and economic environment, we urge the Prime Minister to use her considerable political skills to get the Cabinet to buckle down and focus on the work at hand. The country is running out of patience.” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader, could you just give us the date of that publication?

Dr. K. Rowley: January 19, hot off the press, six weeks old.

Mr. Speaker, one must take those concerns that I have raised and the caution to the Prime Minister by the pundits outside against the background that, whether we like it or not, our economic profile now, our fiscal profile, is that we have been increasing expenditure quite significantly against a background of frozen revenues and we have been engaging in significant borrowing. So our debt profile is rising and that is a problem for the medium term and the long term and if, Mr. Speaker, if I take you—[*Interruption*—[*Laughter*—if I take you—

They could laugh, you know. Mr. Speaker, they could laugh, right, they could laugh, because they are all doing very well. Last Carnival, they must tell us which of the Ministers bought \$2,000 Carnival tickets to go and fete. They could laugh, you know. Right? Ministry—the Ministry is doing so well.

Hon. Members: Ah! Ah!

Dr. K. Rowley: The Minister—ah! Mr. Speaker, “Ah”? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, Members, Members, Members, everybody will get their chance. Please? Hon. Leader, you may continue.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, the backbone of our economy is the energy sector. [*Crosstalk*] I am not talking to them. [*Crosstalk*] I do not want to be disturbed by them. I put myself in your hands, Mr. Speaker. I am talking to you and the people of Trinidad and Tobago and I made a list here of the issues that are facing the people of Trinidad and Tobago outside of the PR spin and misstatements—and whatever they want to call it—of the Government. These are the facts and if they are not the facts then this Motion allows the Government to come in here and contradict what I am telling you.

Let us look at the gas industry. We now live on a gas industry, not an oil industry. We live on a gas industry. Let me tell you what my points were as I put them down. Since the latter part of 2010, and continuing throughout 2011 and into 2012, the Point Lisas Estate has suffered significant revenue loss due to natural gas delivery. Fact. At the same time, Atlantic LNG experienced a decline in LNG production for the second straight year, 2010 and 2011, due to gas supply issues. Fact.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs is on record as saying that this is a coordination problem, due as well to maintenance activities on the offshore platform. He further stated that when gas from the Toucan field becomes available, this problem will evaporate. Well the gas has become available and the

problem has not evaporated. There are still intermittent cutbacks to the Point Lisas Estate. I do not know that the average person in this country knows that because the Government will never tell you that. The Government will tell you all is well and you will believe that all is well until one day we get up and discover that we have problems beyond our control at Point Lisas.

At the moment there are no cutbacks, principally because there is reduced demand on the estate and because certain upstream works have been delayed. Mr. Speaker, because of this delicate balance between supply and demand, any time any supplier goes into any shutdown mode for any reason, it immediately results in curtailment of supplies to the estate. That is not what we have become accustomed to, Mr. Speaker, not at all.

In 2011, several hundred million US dollars were lost in sales from the petrochemical industry, the national gas sales revenue and taxes to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Fact. How is that being dealt with by the Government? They need to tell us. I did not hear it. Mr. Speaker, the outlook for the upstream is not particularly encouraging at this time but we wait to see what happens there.

Now, this brings us to a point. If that is the state of play now, and the Government's only initiative put forward to us to bring about some expansion and some growth in the energy sector, where does that leave us with the SABIC plant that is supposed to be coming back as announced by the Government? With serious challenges in the gas supply, where will the 265 million cubic feet of gas come from for that plant?

Mr. Speaker, even if you put aside the supply issue for this SABIC plant, what is the story we are hearing about the Government offering a project, gas at 36 per cent below what NGC is buying it for? This Motion provides the Government with an opportunity to tell us the story about that, and I expect no difficulty because they have always said that the population must know about the gas pricing arrangement. In this situation, there are international issues being raised about this SABIC plant.

We heard a few weeks ago that the ambassador to the United States had cause to communicate with the foreign Ministry about the process and treatment of American companies with respect to this project. Even before we had answers, because the Government did answer, the Government said that all is well and that there was nothing wrong and dismissed the American concern. What is worrisome, Mr. Speaker, is that even after the Government of Trinidad and

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Tobago spoke in response to the American intervention in this matter, the Japanese ambassador is now speaking to the Government about the same project.

So here we have the American Government and the Japanese Government taking issue with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago about how it has gone about procuring a facility for olefins in Trinidad and Tobago, \$5.2 billion worth of it. When, Mr. Speaker, you have this kind of development in the Japanese market, and the American market, it permeates the entire investing industry. What the Japanese are saying is even more than the Americans are saying.

They are saying that Japanese companies were led to believe that they could only have bid on one of the projects. How could this have happened, Mr. Speaker? “Since when Trinidad and Tobago cannot talk to foreign direct investors? Since when?” Since when we find ourselves people who—we pride ourselves on the excellent work at Point Lisas and the building of Point Lisas. The very first time this Government has to treat with one plant to come to Trinidad and Tobago, we have Japan and the United States going public in important magazines, in important boardrooms where the investors are, where they are being told, “Trinidad and Tobago is a place to watch because you do not get benefit for your bidding there and you have to watch them”, and the Japanese are saying—let me tell you exactly what the Japanese ambassador wants from the foreign Minister, and I hear that he is a front line speaker and he will enter, and I am putting it specifically to him now. Use this debate to answer the Japanese ambassador in Trinidad and Tobago.

He wants to know, as published in his letter to you, which you have, the facts surrounding the present state of consideration for the selection of the successful bidder. Tell the country that, and in so doing, he will hear. Tell the country how Japanese companies came to think that they could only bid on one project. Tell the Americans and the Japanese how they offered a higher gas price, did not get the project and the Saudi Arabians are supposed to have got it with reportedly a record breaking gas price below the purchase price.

I just mentioned—what has been told is that the Saudis have been selected as the preferred bidder to get gas for their project at 32 per cent below the price that NGC—36 per cent below the price that NGC would pay for it. That means that is a subsidy from the people of Trinidad and Tobago to the people of Saudi Arabia. That is a classic case from the Bible saying, “Unto him who has a lot, more shall be added and from him who has a little, even that little that he has shall be taken away.” This is an opportunity for the Government to respond to this because this is very important.

I am sure the Minister of Finance would understand and be worried about this because, Mr. Speaker, given where we are in our current situation with increasing debt, chronic deficit financing, requirement to expand our economy, we are desperately in need of foreign direct investment and if this is how we are portrayed in the investment climate in the energy industry, where we are scrambling to get a piece of the investment pie, where we are no—*[Interruption]*—

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in silence, please.

Mr. Speaker: Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, I think your voice is coming across the floor and the hon. Member for Diego Martin West would like to be heard. Give him some silence, please.

Mr. Roberts: Sorry, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Continue, hon. Leader.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, this is precisely what we should try to avoid. I heard my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, saying he does not know why this Motion was brought because nothing important has happened recently to warrant the bringing of a Motion. Well let me tell you something, Mr. Speaker. If this country does not understand what it means for our name to be so polluted in the environment from which foreign direct investment comes, and we are now blackballed for investment in a difficult environment for investment in energy, where companies with money to spend have options to go to East Africa and West Africa and Brazil and Guyana and elsewhere, and Trinidad and Tobago is at the end of the line looking for foreign direct investment, you could laugh and encourage this corrupt UNC Government to nasty our name, but when we get no investment and we cannot pay our debts, then “we will know where barley grow” in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

Let us not put ourselves in a position to pay the debts that we are running up now and in the medium term or even in the short term for that matter, we will suddenly discover that all the programmes that we are now praising ourselves over—all the “giveaway girl” that we are, all the “giveaway boy” that we are—the very first thing that will happen in this country is that this Government cannot afford to fund those and similar programmes and, when we get there, they will be long gone.

The same way the Japanese ambassador is saying, in a manner of speaking, that—after you spoke to the Americans and said all is well—“I still want to know

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what happened”, he is demonstrating in the Prime Minister and her Government in Trinidad and Tobago total lack of confidence because if he had any confidence, when they spoke to the Americans [*Desk thumping*] on this project, the Japanese ambassador would not have written on the matter. [*Desk thumping*]

It was after—and those who know about protocol and foreign affairs protocols will understand this—it was after the Government sought to clarify the matter to the American intervention, that the Japanese wrote asking about this. Take note, Trinidad and Tobago. People of Trinidad and Tobago, take note. After the Government of Trinidad and Tobago spoke on this matter, they did not satisfy one of the largest economies in the world which has made significant investments in this country, whose companies were misled by the Government and they are now asking for an explanation. I hope that explanation would be forthcoming. I have filed the relevant question, Mr. Speaker—I think it was last week—on this matter, and if the Government does not answer in this debate, the question is lying there waiting.

Mr. Speaker, I come back to the Prime Minister’s management of her Cabinet and her own action. One of the things that got this Government into office was the last Government’s management of certain aspects of state enterprise operation. Mr. Speaker, I have a real problem with how the Prime Minister could have so openly embraced resistance to UDeCott and Calder Hart and then find herself where she has found herself today.

This country must understand that what is happening is that the state enterprise sector is the largest money-spending part of the economy. The Government controls a serious money-spending part of the economy, not the private sector. It is the Government that drives the economy in this country. I want to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to a report which was commissioned in April 2011. [*Interruption*] It was prepared by the hon. Jack Warner, Minister of Works, “Report on the Award of the Contract for Employee Benefits Brokerage and Consulting Services for Caribbean Airlines Limited”.

I do not have the time, Mr. Speaker, to go through the details of this report but I have enough time just to mention a few nuggets of its contents and the recommendations, and I want you to pay particular attention, Mr. Speaker, to the dates. A contract for \$27 million, right, was awarded at CAL, Caribbean Airlines. I am quoting from the report here.

“As a result of this article”—an article appeared in the papers about this contract and there were some question marks about it. “As a result of this

article, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, registered her concerns about transparency requested a report on the circumstances...”

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask the hon. gentleman what is the source of this report, please? Who is the author of it?

Dr. K. Rowley: Source?

Dr. Moonilal: The author.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is the source of the document?

Dr. K. Rowley: I will tell you after. Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*—Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: I think that the Member is asking if you could probably just repeat for them the name of the document, the author of the document and the date and so on.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, the name of the report is the Award—“Report on the Award of the Contract for Employee Benefits Brokerage and Consulting Services for Caribbean Airlines Limited” prepared by hon. Jack Warner, Minister of Works. Right? It makes reference to the Prime Minister requesting a report following an article that appeared in the newspapers, and it says:

“By letter dated May 16, 2011, Ms. Cheryl Blackman, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Works...” had this report—a report prepared.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go to a couple of comments in the report because the report makes some serious allegations and when you read the report you will see what the allegations are. I do not have time to go into the allegations. I will simply say—let me quote for you one line in keeping with the allegation, from page 8. It says:

This raises questions regarding the fairness of the process and the ability of CAL to be ethical and unbiased.

CAL is a state company. This report, when it goes through the various items of concern, says:

This raises questions regarding the fairness of the process and the ability of CAL to be ethical—

Now, we should be concerned, Mr. Speaker, about a state company, in response to an investigation, being viewed as not being able to be fair and ethical.

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I think that should be a matter of concern for all people of Trinidad and Tobago. Then another paragraphs says, this is on page 10:

“It also seems extremely difficult for the Tenders Committee on one hand to disqualify one company on the basis of a history and promote another that has an illegal offer on its Tender document.”

Let me go straight, Mr. Speaker, to the recommendations. After the matter was investigated—and the bulk of this document here is the investigation, the details, but these are the recommendations and there are six recommendations and I only want to quote one. It says, a recommendation being made, and this is coming under the hand of a Minister:

“An investigation by the Integrity Commission to determine whether the Chairman of CAL, Mr. George Nicholas compromised his office by not fully disclosing his conflict of interest as is required under the Integrity in Public Life Act.”

What that recommendation refers to, Mr. Speaker—this recommendation to have the chairman of state-owned Caribbean Airlines referred to the Integrity Commission is based on a situation where the Minister, in responding to this situation, sought to determine whether the chairman of CAL had declared his interest and not taken part in the award of a contract to a company in which he had substantial interest. The response to the Minister to be found in here was that he did declare his interest and that he took no part in the proceedings. However, having responded in that way to the ministerial request, the minutes will show that whereas he did declare his interest, he took a significant part in the discussion and the contract was awarded to his interest firm.

Miss Cox: My God! Shame! Shame! [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: That, Mr. Speaker, was April into May last year and you may recall the “kankatang”—it is difficult for you to recall because there has been so much UNC “kankatang” you cannot tell it, but I will tell you when it was. It was between—it started in April, the “kankatang” was in May and the reshuffle took place in June because the response of the Prime Minister to this development, as I have just outlined, was to disregard the recommendation of the Minister of Finance, which was published in the newspapers.

The Minister of Finance had made a recommendation that the board of CAL should be dismissed. It is all there in the newspaper. I do not have the time to go through it. It is all there, but suffice it to say the Minister of Finance had made a

recommendation on the grounds that the board did not have what it takes to run CAL and that you also had in the public domain what I just told the country. The Prime Minister went behind the Minister of Finance, who is the chairman of the F and GP and canvassed the opinion of lickspittles and lick-spigots in the Cabinet and decided that she would not be guided by the recommendation of the Minister of Finance and she did exactly what happened in the Calder Hart situation. Calder Hart 2. This is Calder Hart 2. *[Laughter]*

The Prime Minister—*[Laughter]*—the Prime Minister chose—*[Laughter]*—I am not talking to them. The Prime Minister chose to take the side of the chairman and the next thing we got up one morning and we realized there has been a reshuffle of the Cabinet and the transport Ministry was removed from the Minister of Works and Transport and in comes a new Minister and the chairman remains there in CAL. And the same way—let me tell you why I am bothered about this.

The same way I had concern that had the previous Prime Minister dealt with the Calder Hart issue when a Minister of his Cabinet came to him when we were building the customs building—which was UDeCott's first big project—had a Prime Minister acted the way a Prime Minister should have acted, instead of taking—*[Interruption]*—taking the side—*[Interruption]*—instead of taking—*[Interruption]*—Mr. Speaker, please.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, just appealing again, but I will eventually stop appealing and I will invoke the Standing Orders and ask Members to demit the Chamber. Allow the Leader of the Opposition to speak in silence. Take notes. Hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: You have until 2.48.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I could not believe that I would have been in this Parliament and seen this happen twice. The Prime Minister takes the side of the head of the state enterprise, removes the Minister and gives the chairman a free rein. Why do I say free rein? Mr. Speaker, I want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to know what they are facing right now with respect to CAL.

I was chairman of the Cabinet subcommittee, along with my colleague Christine Sahadeo in the Ministry of Finance, who had to go to Miami to meet with the lessors of aircraft that Bee Wee was using, to try to negotiate a last-ditch arrangement to prevent BWIA planes from being seized abroad—if they landed in

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Miami or New York—because the level of bankruptcy was such that this state enterprise had worked itself into, that it had come to that situation where the Cabinet had to act in this way. I was the chairman of that subcommittee.

As a result of that, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago brought in experts and completely re-examined our involvement in a national airline. William Lucie-Smith, Arthur Lok-Jack and I think a third person was involved. They hired airline experts and arising out of that, one of the distinct findings of that was that the route to London, contrary to what Bee Wee was telling the Government and the Cabinet and the country, was a chronic money loser. As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, when the Government recast a national airline, it was against the background of our experiences with BWIA, and CAL was supposed to be this lean, mean airline and we had given up the idea of flying to London for the simple reason that it was demonstrated by independent study to be chronically a money loser, and that was even before Virgin was coming this way, before the charters from Europe were coming this way.

Now we are seeing, Mr. Speaker, I want the members of this Cabinet to tell me, as they provide support for the Prime Minister, if they knew that there was a recommendation for the board to be fired, if they knew and supported this act that the Prime Minister chose not to listen to the chairman of the committee, the head of the COP, who promised us new politics, and they must tell us in this debate what study or input that CAL did and where was the Cabinet in the matter where CAL is now expanding like mad, is promising us long-haul aircraft to take us to Europe.

I have been in Cabinets, Mr. Speaker—where you get the urgent calls on a Monday morning, F and GP, that the Note is there, that BWIA needs \$10 million now, or \$20 million now, and it is always in US. My friend, the Member for Tunapuna, knows what I am talking about, \$10 million now, otherwise the sky would fall in. Do you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? You have to forego expenditure in other planned areas to meet this crisis situation in the airline. This Caribbean Airlines, under this chairman, under this prime-ministerial action that I have just described, is taking the people of Trinidad and Tobago right back there; right back there.

In other words, we would not have benefited from our experiences and it poses a threat to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and their well-being because it is being done in a time of tight revenues, increasing debt and expenditures committed elsewhere for which the Government may not be able to smoothly fund those things. This is happening alongside a situation where the Government

is building a \$7 billion highway out of cash flow because the Government did not put in place an arrangement to get a proper loan from a proper lending agency which is available, but to get that you had to change your tendering process or use a process, as was on the cards when they came in, of the contractor funding it in a build-own-transfer. No. No way.

They are building a \$7 billion highway out of revenues, out of cash flow. That, Mr. Speaker, would lead to one of two things. Notwithstanding what they say at all, it would lead to delays and cost overruns, guaranteed. But secondly, if they do not do that to make sure there are no delays and no cost overruns, it would lead to a prioritization of expenditure where that will take precedence over other more human and other kinds of developments in Trinidad and Tobago. "Time longer than twine." I say no more on that.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago was in the forefront of calling for the resignation of a certain Minister of the PNM who had put moneys assigned to her—the Member for Arouca South—she was at the time the Minister of Planning and Development, I think, and moneys were assigned to her for an approved action and she put that money on her credit card and spent it as she saw fit. It was the subject of excoriation in this Parliament and there were calls for her resignation.

Today I want to ask the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister as a matter of fact, if she intends to change the rules the same way she changed the driving rules to allow those who drive government cars and wreck them to continue driving them, and those who buy Porsches to drive them have them assigned to them, if the rules have been changed to allow that—that is now allowable.

The credit card that is made available to Ministers for use in foreign travel so they no longer have to get a cheque from the Comptroller of Accounts. They have this credit card with certain limits and when you go abroad you simply use your credit card and when you come back you pay it off. I want to ask the Minister of Finance if she is still—sorry, the Prime Minister—I want to ask the Prime Minister if she still intends to support what is on the cards now as the regulation. No local cash advances are to be made with the card, however; cash withdrawals are allowed while on official overseas travel. Those are the conditions for the credit cards made available to Ministers.

So I want to take her on a tour of Trinidad and Tobago on a government credit card. And this is only one month, eh. MovieTowne restaurant, credit card.

Dr. Moonilal: How much? How much? Two movie tickets.

Dr. K. Rowley: No, no, no; this is dinner.

Dr. Moonilal: How much?

Dr. K. Rowley: Eight hundred dollars.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Or! Bombshell there man, bombshell.

Dr. Moonilal: Come again.

Dr. K. Rowley: Next, next, the—[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order, please.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker. Independence Square, cash withdrawal, \$3,500; Main Street, Tobago, cash withdrawal; San Fernando, cash withdrawal; and a series of others in fine print, Mr. Speaker. I “doh” have time to go through the fine print. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*] A series—[*Laughter*]—a series—[*Laughter*]—you know—and they find that funny, Mr. Speaker. They find it funny.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has exactly three more minutes—in fact, two minutes and five seconds. Allow the hon. Member to continue, please.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I am trying to point out here is that in the spirit of jollification, where Ministers of this Government under the Prime Minister’s tenure with her knowledge—because the Prime Minister knew that there were abuses taking place of this nature in the use of the Hyatt. All they did was change the arrangement and now it has grown where the credit card assigned to a particular Minister is used to make cash withdrawals around the country as and when she sees fit when she operates a credit card within the country, when the card is specifically for use outside of the country on government business.

I want them to rise to the same standard, Mr. Speaker, and call for the resignation of the Minister in the same way they had called for the resignation of a person [*Desk thumping*] who was in the—[*Desk thumping*]—as I talk about incompetence, Mr. Speaker, I talk about the fact that as we speak, the Government’s—the Government’s—

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, could I ask him to identify the Minister, please?

Dr. K. Rowley: The credit cards are assigned to the Member for Tobago Development.

Hon. Members: Ooooooh!

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, as head of the Cabinet, has responsibility for the people under her and I want to close by quoting the Prime Minister herself. She says:

“Remember when there is a lack of honour in government, the morals of the whole people are poisoned.”

Had I the time, Mr. Speaker, I could have spent the next three hours going through the rigmaroles in T&TEC, going through what is happening at EMBD, going through what is happening at GISL, going through what is happening at UTT but I am not the only speaker. What I am saying to the people of Trinidad and Tobago is that there is a Government in office that claims office as of right, encourages wrongdoing and corruption, created no new opportunity, have put people on contract to apply for their jobs.

As I speak to you, Mr. Speaker, now, there are thousands of people in this country who have lost their jobs because they were on contract and the Government’s policy is that they must apply for their old jobs and even those who have not lost it yet, they are under pressure because they do not know what is going to happen to them when their contract ends and these people, Mr. Speaker, are the economy, because when you are in that situation by the thousands you are not spending money the way you normally would spend because you do not know what tomorrow brings, and that is a major contributor to the economic stagnation in Trinidad and Tobago. This is a decision taken by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the effects have been negative and devastating.

Mr. Speaker, I point out to you incompetence, corruption and hypocrisy of the worst kind and I hold the Prime Minister personally responsible. [*Desk thumping*] I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion requires a seconder.

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

Question proposed.

2.55 p.m.

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute in this debate on a Motion sponsored by the Leader of the Opposition, which expresses a lack of confidence in the Member for Siparia and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and

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Tobago. The Government considers this debate to be a very serious debate. I took note that the Leader of the Opposition began his presentation by suggesting that the Government, over the past week or so, in taking his Motion seriously, was panicking. I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition that what he calls panic was really the Government taking his Motion seriously. [*Desk thumping*] You may not take your Motion seriously, but we do—[*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Yeah, yeah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—because this matter before us is of great constitutional import.

The Member expressed comments and raised questions on several sectoral issues: economy, energy, crime and so on, but the Member did not put the Motion of no confidence in the context of the constitutional implications of what was done. Mr. Speaker, today this House should have met to discuss the Children's Bill, which aims to protect the lives of children from criminal elements. That was the business intended. But when a Motion such as this is filed, it takes priority over every single thing on the parliamentary agenda.

You see, the Opposition would have an opportunity once per month to file a private Motion. In filing a private Motion they could raise almost anything they wish to, any issue, whether it is an issue of maladministration, allegations of corruption, the CAL report, national security. All these matters they could raise, as they have done before. They have Motions on the Order Paper that deal with sectoral issues, but a Motion of no confidence touches a constitutional provision. Incidentally, they have a Motion on the Order Paper, Motion No. 2, dealing with national security, where every Member of the Opposition could come to the House and raise those very issues which we heard before, but they have a chance to do it again, and the Minister of National Security would respond.

Mr. Speaker, section 77(1) of the Constitution provides:

“Where the House of Representatives passes a resolution, supported by the votes of a majority of all the members of the House, declaring that it has no confidence in the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister does not within seven days of the passing of such a resolution either resign or advise the President to dissolve the Parliament, the President shall revoke the appointment of the Prime Minister.”

Mr. Speaker, a Motion of no confidence could lead to the removal of a Government, as it did in Barbados under former Prime Minister Sandiford—who

was on the wrong end of a Motion of no confidence—as it did many years ago in Grenada as well. But you see this is not something to be taken lightly.

During the week, the Government engaged in a conversation with its supporters and the national community to defend its track record, to defend the record of the Member for Siparia. That is taking the Motion seriously. It is also accounting to the people. At the end of the day, those of us who are here in the Government are here by virtue of the people. We are here by virtue of the will of the people, as expressed in May 2010. So it is our duty to return to the people and account for our actions. This Motion presented the opportunity, so we took it seriously.

It is well known that generally a Motion like this is dead on arrival because the Government commands the majority. The Motion is dead on arrival, but even with a corpse, you can gain some knowledge and make some scientific enquiry. So it is possible that we can share knowledge. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, it could lead to the fall of a Government, as it did in 2010, which I will return to later. I will return to it.

Mr. Speaker, we express confidence in the people, so we went to the people, and the response was overwhelming: 5,000 in Couva, 7,000 in Penal. *[Desk thumping]* I understand that in Diego Martin last evening there was an enormous turnout. In the constituency we were looking for the Member for Diego Martin West; they said that they did not see him for a long time. *[Crosstalk]* That is taking the debate seriously, because of the constitutional provision, and the implications of it.

In the history of this Parliament we have had no confidence Motions. I will give just a brief history. In 1988, the former Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East filed a Motion of No Confidence in then Prime Minister ANR Robinson. In 1995, the former Opposition leader at that time, Basdeo Panday, filed a Motion of No Confidence in then Prime Minister Patrick Manning, and in 2008 the Member for Tabaquite—who I know now guided the presentation of the Member for Diego Martin West, *[Laughter]* who has inspired the presentation—that Member for Tabaquite, raised a Motion of No Confidence in then Prime Minister Patrick Manning. But when a Motion of no confidence is raised, it could lead to the fall of the Government.

Mr. Speaker, in our Westminster system, our Standing Orders and our laws do not provide, and it is generally not the practice, to have a Motion of no confidence in the Government. It is a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister, the

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head of the Government, to trigger a constitutional provision. That is the objective. But it is in effect a Motion of no confidence in the Government.

In 1995, during debate on a Motion of No Confidence, it was actually a Member who spoke about the importance of that Motion. The Member for Diego Martin West then and now, and I think at that time he was holding ministerial office as Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, on June 15, 1995, said when they were responding to the Motion of No Confidence that it is an attempt to test the parliamentary confidence in the political leader and Prime Minister as well as the Government as a whole. Mr. Speaker, a Motion of no confidence is not in the Prime Minister, per se, but in the Government of the day. It is something to be taken seriously.”

Hon. Members: Who said that?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The Member for Diego Martin West.

He said, and I quote:

“They have filed a Motion of no confidence in the Government and did not even know it.”

That was when they filed a Motion of No Confidence in the then Prime Minister, and he outlined—I do not want to get into it; there are a lot of quotations. He brought the importance of that, but today we did not hear the importance of it. He quoted from Barry Winetrobe and Janet Seaton, the House of Commons library and former Prime Minister John Major. He quoted *The Parliamentarian* of October 02, 1995, the importance. And he said:

“In keeping with the principle of collective responsibility of Cabinet a Motion of no confidence has to be proposed against the Government rather than the Prime Minister. This is a Motion of no confidence in the Government.”

That is why we took it seriously, but we may have been wrong.

After hearing the Member today, I asked: what is new? We do not expect the Leader of the Opposition in our system to have confidence in the Prime Minister, otherwise he “woulda be here”, [*Laughter*] So you also have no confidence in the Prime Minister, but you come to the House because you have some material, something new. In 1995 there was the matter of the Hong Kong trip, the firing by fax of the Consul General. In 2008 there were matters with Sunway, UDeCott and so on that came to the fore. In 2010, there were the church and UDeCott matters.

But today, the Leader of the Opposition, instead of filing a private Motion or instead of asking questions—this Government has an unparalleled history of replying to every single question on time. [*Desk thumping*]

We deferred questions with the consent of the Opposition. In fact we deferred the questions because of the seriousness of this debate. You would not file a question which we would answer on the issues of CAL and energy prices, but you brought a Motion of no confidence and then told us the new bombshell: Resmi Ramnarine changed her name. “So if she change she name again we will get a next Motion of no confidence in de Prime Minister.” [*Desk thumping and laughter*] When I heard about the deed poll, I thought the Prime Minister had signed it. That is the frivolous nature of this Motion.

I want to say categorically, on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, that we find this Motion frivolous, vexatious, baseless, lacking in substance, ill-conceived, spurious, null and void and of no effect. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, we came here today serious to debate this matter. The record of the Prime Minister is up for inspection, that is why you bring a Motion of no confidence; but the record of Members of Government is also up for inspection. Nothing new was said.

So then the Member was backtracking all week. He said, “I have no bombshell. I have nothing. I was just raising questions.” [*Crosstalk*] But you know it is funny, in the debate in 2008, when the sides were reversed and another Member spoke—who was that Member? At that time they called it Diego Martin East, but let me put it this way, the Minister of Works and Transport, Mr. Colm Imbert. On September 12, 2008, in contributing to a Motion of no confidence, he said—I have to really give you this, Mr. Speaker, with your leave:

“Mr. Speaker, there is nothing new. We could wind up this debate now. We could go home. Nothing has been said by the Member that is new. Nothing is surprising. There is no bombshell. All the matters raised have been in the public domain.”

That was the Member for Diego Martin North/East speaking. He said that the Member quoted statistics: “all of that is in the public domain.”

The Member raised the issue of CAL, in the public domain; OPVs, we debated that in a previous session. State of emergency, we debated that. So we were waiting to see what was new, what triggered this.

Mr. Speaker, when you bring a Motion of no confidence in a Prime Minister, surely you mean the Prime Minister has committed some grave error and the

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reputation of the nation is at stake. There is some urgent, earth shattering matter in terms of economic development, where the whole economy is at stake. It is not to repeat and summarize what you have been saying for the last year. This is not the purpose here. It is not to ask questions in that way. That is why the Standing Order provide for asking questions and do not contemplate that you would file a Motion of no confidence.

You see, the Member for Diego Martin West has brought the Member for Siparia and the Prime Minister of the country as the subject of this Motion. The Motion reads—I do not want to waste too much time reading it:

“Whereas an unending series of events have demonstrated the Prime Minister’s gross incompetence”—and I want to read the “whereas”—
“Whereas an unending series of events have demonstrated failure to stimulate the economy and create...employment...”

Unless I am mistaken, the grammar here is wrong. But if he could not get his facts right, he should have got his grammar right, at least. But it raises these issues:

“A consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest...”—of the country.

What? Where? “Did we go and open de jailhouse and everybody leave?”

“An absence of effective management of officers...”

Which officer? Which example? What was the ineffective management of an officer? Who was the officer? It talks about “persistent confusion”. My friend from opposite, if you are confused, that does not mean everybody is confused.
[Desk thumping and laughter]

The Motion continues:

“...encouragement of wrongdoing...”

What wrongdoing? Is this Prime Minister the subject of any High Court judgment, where a court of law has found her guilty of breaching the rules of natural justice, of denying the rights of citizens?

Hon. Members: No.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Is this Prime Minister the subject of any enquiry involving corruption? Is this Government under scrutiny, at this moment, on any enquiry involving millions and millions of dollars of corruption?

Hon. Member: No.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Sunway, \$367 million in contracts, a company formed three weeks ago. Do we have anything that parallels that today? No. There is absolutely nothing. But you bring a Motion of no confidence, prevent us from debating the Children Bill and come here to rehash and repeat all that you have been saying for the last year. So, Mr. Speaker, you know their strategy already: every year a Motion of no confidence, so that would allow them to summarize everything. [*Laughter*]

But they have raised the issue of the Prime Minister, and I want to say for the record that this Motion is grandstanding; it is rhetorical. It is political slandering of the highest order, because this is a personal Motion directed to the Prime Minister and includes her Government. But every single Member of this Government has been deeply touched over the past 20 months by the leadership style of the Member for Siparia, [*Desk thumping*] who has been firm and decisive, but has governed this country with compassion. She continues to challenge all of us to do better. The Member for Siparia brings a unique perspective on how fundamental human values must guide our responsibility to our people.

Just a few hours ago, I think it was four hours ago, the Member of Parliament for Siparia and Prime Minister turned the sod to construct the first children's hospital in the Caribbean, as part of her vision to provide for the children's health and truism. And we will come to vision in a few minutes.

The Member for Siparia has presided over a five-party Government. On May 24, the people of Trinidad and Tobago voted for five parties, not one. Today they accuse us of not behaving like one party, but there are five parties. That is the will of the people. There is a new political culture that the Prime Minister has ushered in Trinidad and Tobago, which allows us to listen, to build consensus, to allow people to speak. That is the nature of our political culture today. All organizations are encouraged to speak.

During the election campaign the Member for Siparia became a potent unifying symbol for persons throughout the country. The Prime Minister spearheaded her Children's Life Fund drive, created a Ministry of the People, path-breaking. We can speak on and on, and we intend to. All Members are prepared to speak about their achievements and their challenges, inspired by the vision of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is rooted in a particular philosophy, the product herself of a rural upbringing, the product of humble origin, in a culture and society where education liberated her. Today she brings that vision to national leadership to

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ensure that education would liberate the people of Trinidad and Tobago, as it did her. Today there are children in rural areas throughout this land who can aspire. Today there are young girls who can aspire one day to be the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

3.10 p.m.

You are perspiring, you are not inspiring. [*Laughter*] We intend to rebut this Motion forcefully because we recognize the impact of the Member for Sipaira and Prime Minister, who has brought a message of inclusiveness and has become truly the first post-racial leader of Trinidad and Tobago, who brings all the races together; [*Desk thumping*] and the Member brought a Motion of no confidence, we will get to that; they brought that.

I wanted to deal with a couple matters raised by my friend. They make statements, “The Prime Minister demonstrated a loss of dignity recently; a demonization”. Mr. Speaker, you know, I want to tell you something, it is clear. A Motion of no confidence has another dimension to it. The Leader of the Opposition says that he has no confidence in the Prime Minister. Now, I do not know if he has confidence in the rest of us, but he has no confidence in the Prime Minister, presumably he has no confidence in the Government, but imagined if you can, you are having a nightmare, and in this bad dream, the Motion succeeds. What happens? Those opposite may well form the Government.

Hon. Members: Ohhh!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I told you it is a bad dream.

Mr. Roberts: It is a bad dream boy.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is a nightmare.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well yes. So, those opposite, they will form the Government. [*Interruption*] We must also examine them because they are about to form the Government in this nightmare, we must examine them, their track record; what they bring. In 20 months in Government, this Government, and this Prime Minister has brought several policy documents to the table. We won the election on a manifesto—People’s Partnership Manifesto. We are implementing this. We developed and circulated the *Medium-Term Policy Framework 2011-2014*. This is policy. They talk about policy and plan, this is policy. There are two budget statements—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Show them again.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—that we presented; the policy, the plans—

Mr. Roberts: They did not read it.

Hon. Members: They did not read that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—of the Government; so you have budget statements, medium-term policy, it is piling up—manifesto. [*Interruption*] This is our policy. This is our plan.

Mr. Roberts: Give him.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Where is your policy? [*Desk thumping*] Does he have on a notepad one page with policy? Any policy, any plan?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Anything to fight crime? Anything to stimulate the economy?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He does not even have a plan to get a plan. In 20 months we do not have one policy document from the Opposition.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Not even a document or a statement.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Not even a statement, but I want to go further. When this Government placed them on a committee of Parliament to contribute to policy and law—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: They run.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—You know they jumped out, because doing policy and presenting plans, that is not part of their default mode; it is criticizing, attacking. Anything that the Government does is wrong—if we spend \$1 million that is wrong, if we spend \$10 it is wrong. That is their approach. But where is the plan, where is the programme? They have been in office.

What was also interesting about the Member's presentation is that he came and spoke a lot about crime and national security. Interestingly, crime and national security are not identified as a key issue in the Motion; economy was. You would think given the recent history of this country, that crime should be the number one issue upon which you test the confidence of a Prime Minister, but crime is not in the recitals. But he came today and told us again about the OPV and the SOE, everything that we have discussed before. Then it went to the absurd, to suggest that the Prime Minister is responsible for the commissioner buying a light plane—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Leasing.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Leasing a light plane—I am coming to Lee Sing now incidentally. [*Laughter*] Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Diego Martin West draws into question the track record of the Prime Minister, saying to this country that if you get the requisite votes in this House, I am willing and waiting to become Prime Minister.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That and God's back he will never see.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I took a note of the *Newsday*, Thursday, March 01, 2012—I think that was yesterday: “Rowley ready to be Prime Minister”. Page 18. [*Laughter*] And he is telling this to three children, the same children that he does not want the Children Bill to protect. He says, and I quote from page 18:

“Say it loudly, or softly, I am ready for office of Prime Minister.

I am the most senior and experienced parliamentarian in Trinidad and Tobago today, after former Prime Minister Patrick Manning...My experience alone qualifies me to apply for the job.”

There is no vacancy, that is the first issue. [*Desk thumping*] But you see, Mr. Speaker, the Member is applying for the job, that is what he is trying to do with a Motion of no confidence, but what is his track record in leadership?

I was shocked a few days ago, on the 100th birth anniversary of Eric Eustace Williams—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The father of the nation.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—the father of the nation, who founded the People's National Movement, led later by George Michael Chambers, built in some way by Patrick Mervyn Augustus Manning, and now, the Mayor of Port of Spain, an unelected Alderman, has the effrontery to write about the political leader of the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, February 23, 2012 addressed to the Chairman of the PNM—and this is from Mr. Lee Sing—he puts his political neck on the line—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Well it is a short one.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, it is a short line. [*Laughter*] He says here—but you know why I remembered this, I must tell you. I remembered because the Member for Diego Martin West compelled me to remember, because he used certain words in his presentation—“demonization”. He said earlier that the Prime

Minister was “demonizing” something. Then he used the term “blackballed”, and I said to myself, where did I hear that before? I heard those words. But then I looked into my material, I saw it. The Mayor is saying here that the party is undemocratic, and if you are perceived to be part of a cabal, concerning primarily casting out Manning demons, all of us are in trouble.

He said:

Let me say there was a time I, like others, held out hope for a new, modern, professional approach in handling the party’s affairs, but the events of the last couple months suggest to me that the leadership of our party has elected to pursue an outdated, archaic and less than democratic approach to the governance of the party.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: It was a lack of confidence.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, this is a motion of no confidence filed by the first citizen of Port of Spain, the Mayor, against the leader who appointed him. [*Desk thumping*] Now, if this Motion is to succeed, the Member for Diego Martin West can land up as the Prime Minister of this country. The Mayor says:

As I look at our party limp along within the Parliament it has much to do with Dr. Rowley’s credibility as he is unable to take the risk in developing the track record of the party.

He goes on, he says, to the effect of—I do not want to read everything—

—persons who are speaking out in the party would be blackballed—

that is the term—

and would be placed on a hit list.

He went on to say—and this is relevant to our debate here:

Could you advise me what were the persuading arguments presented to inform a decision to move a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister?
[*Interruption*]

But he asked the question before us. [*Laughter*] And I want to tell the Mayor of this fair city that we got no persuading arguments; we got none. [*Interruption*]

He goes on:

Did the leadership, political leader, believe that this was the best time for such a Motion, given the upcoming UNC party elections? Did the political leader

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give consideration that this move at this time would strengthen the Prime Minister's hand as all Members of Parliament are likely to line up squarely behind the Prime Minister [*Desk thumping*] thus allowing her to have an easy passage in her party's election. Four, it is likely that the political leader—
meaning Diego Martin West—

may take a beating as the Landate matter will surely be rekindled.
[*Interruption*]

And number five, given the weak PNM team within the Parliament [*Interruption*] we will not only be outgunned but we will be outmatched.
[*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

I want to ask anybody who is listening, do you think this man could have done that to Patrick Mervyn Augustus Manning? He would have been out of office within an hour.

Mr. Warner: What about Eric Williams?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: If it was Eric Williams, this “not even reaching” the executive, forget that. Mr. Speaker, this is the gentleman who leads the party. I have in my possession—People's National Movement General Council. A meeting took place in January 2012.

Mr. Roberts: They want to know how you get that? [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I have some of the Minutes of this meeting and I will get to the more serious point. They are questioning the leader who is going on constituency walkabouts, and they are asking, what is he proposing to do a walkabout in Oropouche East and Oropouche West for? [*Laughter*] What do we have to gain? They question whether or not the right impact would be created.

Now, I would have liked to meet the gentleman at Oropouche East and take him for a “doubles” or so. But more important, this Motion speaks to another matter, that the Prime Minister has an absence of effective management of officers under her control. There is a submission to the general council in the debate that dealt with the “tie” issue, because you remember, they resolved this matter by saying people could do anything they want.

Mr. Roberts: “But they want to know how you get that.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It is quite interesting that the author of this report, a member of the general council, a member of the executive, says that he is concerned with examples of indiscipline in the party. [*Interruption*] And this

member says on party discipline: party members publicly speaking against a ruling of the party; members not wearing the PNM balisier tie in Parliament; Members pronouncing in public on matters that are still before the party; Members consistently abusing leaders; members being threatened and humiliated. Mr. Speaker, that is in the alleged one party that they run. They allegedly have one party.

Mr. Roberts: The coalition.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: This is the level of indiscipline which a member of the executive has expressed, but this Member stands today, in that nightmarish scenario, to lead this country. It raises questions as to what are we exposed to in a debate like this? You see, the Member raised several matters, and thought he was raising matters of corruption and so on. The Member raised a matter concerning the Member of Parliament for Tobago East. I had cause to ask the Member across the floor, “Tell us the sums, tell us the money”, because he was talking about this card, because I had an idea—we do our homework. On this side we do our homework. We knew that the Member had in his possession something, so we do our homework. So I asked him to tell us the figure, the number, not just withdrawing cash.

Mr. Speaker, I want to report to you that there is a matter involving \$4,000, and on that the Government should fall. That is what the Member is saying: \$4,000. And I want, for the record, to say that, as of this moment, I want to assure you that that credit card bill has been paid off, and not one single cent of taxpayers’ money has been misused.

You see, Mr. Speaker, we also laid a little trap for him to fall in, which he did. We knew what they were likely to do, but we also knew that he did not know that was completely paid off, not \$1 of taxpayers’ money has been abused.

3.25 p.m.

Mr. Warner: Bombshell boy.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And that was what they came with today. Mr. Speaker, the Member also stands and speaks about corruption and brought the Prime Minister up on a matter of confusion in encouraging wrongdoing. Within the last few days something came to our attention and I think I should draw it to the national community. You see, there has been a mystery for the last 20 months or so as to why the former Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, called an election midterm with a majority of 26 Members in the Lower House, elected to go to the polls. Many people believe that the Member for San Fernando East, one day—as he recovers and we pray for a swift and complete recovery—he

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will tell us. But it has also come to our attention that the Member for San Fernando East was driven and compelled to go to the polls because he had information that there were Members at that time plotting—six of them—to vote against him in a Motion of No Confidence. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I just want to give the timetable of this, and I really have a calendar here. A Motion of No Confidence was filed on March 08, 2010 by the Member for Siparia—all is well we are debating a Motion—but, Mr. Speaker, the former Prime Minister had some information about Members plotting to remove him by way of a palace coup, where they would come to Parliament and undermine the then Government and then he would leave in disgrace like Sandiford did, so he said I would gamble with the people—which I would say is a much more dignified way to go. When you are out you must be caught on the boundary looking for a six. You must not square up and be bowled around your pads. [*Interruption*] So, he went to the people; he said, look, I put my record to the people, vote. And, incidentally, it was because of that experience that the Member for Diego Martin West stumbled and fell into the Leader of the Opposition chair—so, Motion, March 08, 2010.

Mr. Speaker, on March 26 a Member of Parliament then in Opposition goes to Barbados, travels on March 26 to Barbados; that Member stayed from March 26 to 28. At the same time the then High Commissioner in Canada—who, I think, recently got “a 10-days” in the Senate, the other place—leaves Canada, goes to Barbados and arrives on the 27th aboard an Air Canada aircraft. She arrives on the 27th, when a Member of this House, at that time, arrived on the 26th and was to leave on the 28th. It was our information that other Members as well, at that time elected, travelled to Barbados where there was a plot afoot to come back to Trinidad and vote with the then Opposition against the Prime Minister and remove the PNM Government in 2010.

Hon. Member: “Ooooooooooh”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I would ask the Member for Diego Martin West, when he winds up—because he would be allowed a lot of time to do that—to tell us whether or not he knows of anyone, including himself, who travelled to Barbados on this weekend, where the High Commissioner came from Canada to attend a meeting that was starting Monday. The former Prime Minister, we are informed, had word of this, and in the week that proceeded raised a serious issue about the visit of the High Commissioner to Barbados. Then, on getting information, he went and dissolved the Parliament on April 08 because there was a coup led by Members in the then House and a Member here.

They cannot be trusted. They undermined their own party, their own Government, and undermining that Government, you come today to undermine this Government.

Hon. Member: Try! [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, they tried! But a Member of the House at that time was also making some trips on a private yacht, on a boat but not the *Su*. I understand that cannot go on the water. [*Interruption*] They tried to move it today and I think it almost fall down. [*Laughter*]

A Member of the then Opposition was using a private yacht to travel around in the Caribbean at that time as well and to go to other places where it may well be that there were other Members of Parliament. They could not meet in Trinidad, they met elsewhere. When the Prime Minister then found out what was happening, that he was likely to be challenged and defeated by that Motion, he took, really, the glorious way out. He went to the people—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He dissolved the Parliament.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and he dissolved the Parliament. That is the track record they have opposite. Today they come to tell us about corruption—\$4,000 that was paid back.

Mr. Speaker, they come to tell us that some young lady “changed she name”—now if she “change she name again, I pray to God we doh have a next Motion of No Confidence in the Prime Minister.”—[*Laughter*]—what they would not tell you is their own record.

The Member opposite also served as the Minister of Housing, a portfolio that I am proud now to hold. In that Ministry what was happening under the watch of the Member for Diego Martin West is very instructive. At that Ministry and at that time they were giving out contracts left, right and centre. They gave out contracts to all and sundry. In the Ministry of Housing—somebody left here secretly just now, a Member just left the House.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay, I am not mentioning him. [*Laughter*] By 2004, and I just want for the record for us to understand that the Member opposite served as Minister of Housing from November 2003 to November 2007 when he was reassigned to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In that time it was very

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instructive that there were companies that received work and benefits that were linked directly to officers—and I want to use this word “officers”, it is in the Motion—of the Government, even to officers of the party—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The then Government.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The then Government—and two stand out.

Mr. Speaker, there is a company called Vidara Enterprises Limited—what kind of word is that, I do not know—and that company benefited from the HDC. Hear the sums: Vidara, 2006, \$1.5 million.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Who was the Minister then?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The then Minister was the Member for Diego Martin West. But \$1.5 million quickly jumped in 2007 to \$14.4 million.

Hon. Member: “Oooooooh”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It goes on, in 2008—because they got in, they established themselves there, they are inside—\$26.9 million; 2009, \$14 million.

Mr. Warner: Which company is that?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: This is Vidara Enterprises Limited. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you, under our watch there are some payments made—because we are verifying work—so they get away with \$143,000 for some work that they claimed to have done and we have verified.

Add this up, you get almost \$60 million to a company named Vidara Enterprises Limited, and who are the directors of this company?

Mr. Roberts: Tell us! Tell us!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Anybody knows who is Laura Khan, businesswoman? *[Interruption]* Carra Khan, Kiron Khan? Khan is a famous name in that party. *[Interruption]* Are these people related to the Chairman of the PNM, the former Minister of Works and Transport, who, when he had to resign over that Smokey and Bunty business, as Minister, then “cook up a lil deal with them to say, boy, you know I out, I eh have nothing now, give we some contract”. So a company formed in 2005, by 2006/2007 they get \$15 million and they going.

Mr. Roberts: What, no experience?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Imagine! Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you, the Minister of Housing was, of course, the Member for Diego Martin West, Dr. Keith

Christopher Rowley. *[Interruption]* So, the chairman of the party, his wife's company, "hit we" for \$60 million over the period. You think anybody would permit that in this administration? You think the Member for Siparia would permit that in this administration?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Never!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Never! Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Siparia gets wind of anything like that, before \$2 reach, "is shut down" and back to the Attorney General. *[Laughter]*

That is the approach. If information comes to her and she looks at it, she says, "Hello, stop that immediately. You see that, stop that." So, "fellas" could try what they want, they could try, but you are not likely to get away.

Mr. Sharma: You would not succeed.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You would not succeed. Sixty million dollars in work—now, this is the family of the present Chairman of the PNM, who is on television talking more than all the elected people here; talking more than everybody.

Mr. Roberts: And smiling. *[Laughter]*

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, and vote of no confidence. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, the Member served as Minister of Housing and is now positioning himself to be Prime Minister when a party chairman—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, there is a principle in equity; I think the Attorney General could elaborate on it later in the evening. What is it? When you come to equity, you must come with clean hands. *[Interruption]* When you come with a Motion of No Confidence in the Member for Siparia, you must come with clean hands.

Hon. Member: Yes, yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You must come with clean hands to suggest that this is the job you want. You asked questions, what is Kelshall's job? Admiral

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Kelshall has a job that was in existence when the PNM was in office, Regional Security Director. You would not have known because you were fired from the Cabinet. [*Laughter*] You would not have known that. But, I want to tell you, the job is Regional Coordinator of Security; it was established long before.

Mr. Speaker, you know what is interesting, when this Leader of the Opposition and other Members speak, I, for one, get very nervous. I find they have a lot of information on national security. [*Interruption*] Whether it is emails from a commissioner's office, whatever it is, I find they have a lot. I wonder where they are getting that. They talk about the matter involving the Special Anti-Crime Unit and so on. You know the Special Anti-Crime Unit was draining the national security budget every year. How much?

Mr. Dookeran: Four hundred million dollars.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Four hundred million dollars a year, paying some retirees from the United Kingdom, how much?

Mr. Dookeran: Millions of dollars.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Millions of dollars. [*Interruption*] Our hard-working police officers, constables and so on, could not get an increase, could not get the bonus which they got now under the Member for Siparia, the Prime Minister. They could not get that. All the money went towards the Special Anti-Crime Unit.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And crime still did not go down.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: What was the track record? What was the state of crime? Did it go down? Did they make a grand impact on serious crime, homicide and so on?

Mr. Warner: None!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: None! But they defend spending money and wasting money. They wanted us to come in office pledging to change, but do not change.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do not change SAUTT because their friends in SAUTT.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Do not change because they have friends there. They have friends there so do not change them. So, if we did not change them we are doing a good job.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: SIA.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: SIA. If we change anything we are not doing a good job. [*Interruption*]

But, Mr. Speaker, you have to bring change. If it was not working we are under a duty to bring change to reduce crime. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member went on to speak of the economy. I could not help but glance at the Member for Tunapuna, and when I saw that angry look on his face, I knew that we are in for a treat later in the proceedings. [*Laughter*] Because, like the Leader of the Opposition, I am not an economist, but I can tell you that the Minister of Finance would have a lot to say to respond to some of those issues. [*Interruption*]

The Member continued and raised, as I said, matters that we had before. But there was another company in the HDC, again, under the watch of the Member for Diego Martin West. What is the name of this company now? A company named Bolt.

Mr. Roberts: Bolt! “Ooooooooooh”.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this company has benefited from the HDC over the years to the tune—beginning 2004, and right through from 2003 to 2007 when the Member for Diego Martin West served as the Minister of Housing—a company named Bolt benefited to the tune of \$15 million.

Mr. Roberts: “Where the Member for Diego Martin North/East gone?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You draw out \$4,000 and the Government must fall.

Mr. Roberts: “Where the Member for Diego Martin North/East?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, “somebody get up and—that man could be on the maxi-taxi stand now, taking a taxi and getting out of here, eh”. Mr. Speaker, who is the company now? Bolt Trinidad. The Directors and so on, it is quite interesting here, one Susan Williams Imbert.

Hon. Members: Aaah!

Mr. Warner: *MV Su*.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not know who that is? Susan Williams Imbert? I would not give the address, and one Allan Brammer, a civil engineer.

Mr. Speaker, Bolt—[*Interruption*] her profession of course is businesswoman, because in this business, everybody is a businesswoman here. For somebody teaching in a primary school, then they are a businesswoman, “they go and build

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house”. So, Mr. Speaker, of course it is a businesswoman and under the stewardship of my friend opposite, this company, which we suspect has links to the former Minister and a Member of this House, benefited \$15 million.

You see, Mr. Speaker, they talk about corruption and so on. We are told now that even at the Airport Authority, the former administration—there are concessionaires there where you rent a place to sell and so on. Do you know that the manager, the former campaign manager of the former Minister of Finance, Karen Nunez-Tesheira, he was hired as manager there, to manage the airport shops as we say. And do you know how much these airport shops are owing to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago? One hundred and fifty-four million dollars. [Interruption]

Hon. Members: Oooh.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They never moved to collect rents from these shops run by the campaign manager of the former Minister of Finance. They come today to talk about CAL.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard before about the *Su*. You know I want to tell you and I want to confess, today we try not to—[Interruption] you want me to call the person’s name? The person is not a Member of the House. We try today—we knew, Mr. Speaker, that it is not easy to display anything here today, so because we cannot display anything, we asked the Minister of Transport whether or not he could have taken a tugboat of some sort and bring this *Su*, so we could see this *Su*. Put it up right by Tower D and let us look at it. We tried, but we failed. They said if we put it in the water it would sink. [Laughter] So you cannot, by tugboat, bring it here; it would sink. Now, that would have been funny had it not involved “how much” million dollars? Fifty-two million dollars—gone! We cannot even bring this thing in the water to demonstrate as an exhibit, \$52 million. You come today to tell us somebody changed their name and the Government should fall for that.

You see, the argument we are making is that they must come with clean hands. They must tell us what they intend to do. You must come and repent for all your sins and then we may take you seriously. But you cannot come here and tell us—you have nothing new to say—and come to bring the Prime Minister into disrepute. But, Mr. Speaker, what has been—[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West and Port of Spain South I am hearing you and I am sure you are disturbing the House. [Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: My apology.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you may continue.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite was indeed—has been serving as Leader of the Opposition. But you know it is a nice moment as well to reflect on the tenure of the Leader of the Opposition. This Leader of the Opposition was caught making statements about the Attorney General going to New York and uttering words there. He got to the Privileges Committee and in the nick of time the House had to end the session. He got away but made statements about the Attorney General—bringing the Attorney General into disrepute. When we had him at the Privileges Committee the time expired, otherwise he may well have had a lot of time at home.

He criticized the Government for shutting down the country because of a passing cloud. You know that was Hurricane Thomas. *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, he is upset that people who are suffering, who are the victims of some disaster, that Ministers go and mobilize, to give them food—so he said he is upset that people are getting pizza. When people are hungry, when they have been the victim of a natural disaster, they do not have a roof over their head, they have no food to eat, you go there you mobilize quickly, the businesses and so on, you give them pizza, you give them sandwiches—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: He “doh” like pizza.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And, Mr. Speaker, he was vex for that. But I am not surprised because he was vex that children got toys one year, then vex that everybody got hampers the next year, that is what we deal with—vex about the laptops.

Mr. Speaker, when you ask them to contribute to policy they bailed out of the procurement, and today they are talking about procurement, but not going to stay on the committee which the former Prime Minister in all fairness—Member for San Fernando East—he is on record as demanding former administrations bring procurement legislation to Parliament. He did not bring any himself, but he is on record demanding that others bring. *[Laughter]* Having brought the legislation, gone to the committee, they say, “We do not want any part of that.”

You see, we came to this Parliament with a Bill to deal with hanging—execution to, in fact, implement the law. What did they do? They voted against it. We said okay, vote against us, tell us what you want us to do. The Attorney General wrote several letters to the Leader of the Opposition and said give us your

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views so that we may include it in policy and in law. But you know what, Mr. Speaker, they did not acknowledge receipt of the letter. Mr. Speaker, that was not a few tickets for an all-inclusive fete that we sent. That was a letter from the Attorney General asking you, please.

Now, I remember I had the honour and distinction to serve in opposition, and if we were to receive that, we would call our lawyers together, including external support and say listen, draft appropriate responses for the then Attorney General. But we take matters seriously. This Opposition Leader does not respond to the Attorney General who is asking him to give us your policy, give us, you know, anything that you have so that we can work with it. That is how seriously they take this matter. The Leader of the Opposition in his short term accused the Attorney General and a sitting judge of being in collusion. He then apologized to the judge. He will not apologize to the Attorney General, but he apologized to the judge, accusing a judge of being in collusion. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition stood in this House—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Is it a point of order? What is the point of order, the number?

Dr. Rowley: I am forced—you are not the Speaker.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But then you are not interrupting me. Referring to Form 1 students—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: This is a Motion which is different from all Motions. It is a substantive Motion. What we will not tolerate is attacks or assaults on Members of Parliament's personal and private conduct, anything else is on the table. Continue, overruled.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order, 36(5), I ask for your ruling and I ask for a withdrawal of the statement that I did and said that a judge was in collusion with a Member of the House. Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence. I want a ruling on that, Sir, and ask him to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Speaker: What I am saying hon. Member for Diego Martin West, this is a substantive Motion; there is a fine line that I have to make a judgment on in terms of imputation of improper motives. This is an unusual debate and therefore it is one in which flexibility would be allowed. Continue.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] You have something else to say?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Do not be afraid now. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition, seeking to lead this country, referred to Form 1 students receiving laptops as “duncy heads”. They brought this Motion today to express no confidence in a Prime Minister who has distributed 30,000 laptops to the children of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] What is their track record? You see, Mr. Speaker, they knew that when they come—you thought nobody would raise these matters? You thought you would get away?

Mr. Speaker, they were also in office. At this moment I want to indicate to this House, so that we would be very clear, the Government will propose an amendment to this Motion because if you bring the Prime Minister’s performance in question, and say all of these things—I do not want to say anything bad, spurious matters—then you must also admit and reflect upon the context, what is the society, economy and political culture that the Prime Minister inherited on May 24, 2010.

What did she inherit? We have to discuss that if you are bringing into question her record and performance, we must know what she inherited. [*Desk thumping*] We must be free. I will ask that the following recital be inserted after the first recital and I would add this: And Whereas the Prime Minister and her historic People’s Partnership Government inherited an economy in decline—he forgot that—a culture of wastage, raging and rampant crime, debilitating corruption and a style of arrogance in leadership which led to a disconnect between the people and the Government. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: He remembered that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So they want talk, we have talk. Let us continue the debate, but we will have to bring their track record into question so that we can compare, and Mr. Speaker, when you attempt to compare this matter, you would see the wrongdoings of the former administration. Do you know the Civil Aviation Act came into force in 2001? It repealed earlier orders.

The former administration had difficulty in implementing this law that has resulted in enormous chaos in the aviation sector. Mr. Speaker, we are informed, because of their omissions and errors, it has led to almost a situation where this aviation sector could be paralyzed in a crisis, and they come to talk about CAL. But on this matter of CAL, when we inherited the Government, when the Member for Siparia came into office, there was already a deal by the former administration involving Caribbean Airlines and Air Jamaica. Are you aware, is the country

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aware—you talk about Motion of No Confidence—due to their governance and the fuel subsidy today, we must subsidize Air Jamaica to the tune of US \$23 million per year? We must subsidize; multiply that by six, \$23 million, \$150 million per year to subsidize Air Jamaica as a result of a deal by the former administration that we came into office with. And had we done that, had we not followed that particular path there would have been other implications within the Caricom region.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we met. This is what the Member for Siparia met and these are the issues that we would confront today. So the Leader of the Opposition must know of those issues. You can talk a hundred times it does not matter. Who is talking after you? “Or hor.” You will hear who is talking after.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Housing and the Environment we are proud that within 20 months we have distributed homes on the basis of equality. We have distributed homes to all members of the national community. [*Desk thumping*]

3.55 p.m.

Today, whatever your race, whatever your station in life, wherever you stand in this society, you believe that if you qualify you have a chance to get a housing unit. [*Desk thumping*] That never happened before; never happened before! We are also proud that in this administration, while we assess—in the early parts we did some assessment, and today at Egypt in Chaguanas, when you look, you see houses being built. [*Desk thumping*] We are building houses. They are there: Union Hall, San Fernando, Fairfield, Princes Town. Somebody met me a few days ago. He said he passed and saw a beautiful house at Egypt, Chaguanas and wanted to know if it was Kamla’s house. I said, “You see that? Only the Member for San Fernando East does talk about that.”

You see, Mr. Speaker, those are the houses that are now being built by this administration. We are building; we are distributing. We had to come and fix. Mr. Speaker, this Member for Diego Martin West, one day calls me up in Oropouche East. He said, “Come, we are turning sod for construction of a housing area.” So I went. I said, “Of course”. I wanted to see where this housing area was. We turned sod sometime in 2004. Do you know today we cannot distribute those houses? The houses are moving; they are migrating. They built houses without infrastructure. If I do not watch it, those houses could move from Oropouche East to Oropouche West. [*Laughter*] If I do not throw a lid on it and “do some drain, quick, quick, quick”, Oropouche West would have those houses.

That was because they were giving out contracts like this, to friends and family and party people. They gave out contracts to OJT contractors, so today we have to spend over \$100 million to fix houses. That was under the tenure of the Member—not alone, I must add—for Diego Martin West and the former one—who was the former Member?

Hon. Member: “Dicksie. Dicksie.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, yes. She spent all her time trying to jail the Member for Diego Martin West. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] She had no interest in housing; she was trying to jail him. They spent almost \$5 million trying to jail him, and you are bothered with \$4,000 today.

In the area of the Land Settlement Agency, did you remember the Member for Siparia had cause to go to court to stand up for the poor, the underprivileged citizens—[*Desk thumping*]—when under the watch of the Member for Diego Martin West you had a situation where they were bulldozing houses and the court—Justice Gobin, I think—ruled that the Government and the Ministry of Housing did not have the legal authority to destroy those houses, which they were doing?

Now, that is when you bring a Motion of No Confidence in Minister and Prime Minister, when they acted contrary to the law. The Member for Siparia stood up in their defence, took this matter to court; the court ruled in her favour, in favour of the poor citizens. Today we have to change the law, so if we would like to stop and contain squatting, we must do so within the law. We cannot break the law, as they have done before.

The Land Settlement Agency, after 10 years of distributing no Certificates of Comfort, we have distributed over 1,500 Certificates of Comfort. [*Desk thumping*] A certificate of comfort is something that gives you the security that you will not be bulldozed; the Government will not come and remove you. You can stay; you can fix your house. Sometimes people live in a house 15—20 years, you know; they cannot fix the steps; they cannot put new galvanize on the roof because the Government will come and say, “You have no security of tenure; you are squatting.” Today, there are people living in houses for 40 years and they do not have a Certificate of Comfort. That is what we inherited. But they had no time for that; they had time to give out contracts.

In frightening the population, they told the population that if we get into office we will close down CEPEP and send everybody home. Do you know when they

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were mobilizing once for something, somewhere, they told the CEPEP workers, “You have to go and support the then Government because they are coming for your job.” That is how they did it.

We have moved the employment level at CEPEP from 6,000 to almost 13,000 people working in CEPEP today—[*Desk thumping*]*—*and we had always said that we will reform CEPEP. We had the pleasure a few weeks ago to establish the CEPEP Marine Programme where CEPEP is now on the seas cleaning up with machinery and equipment, the garbage, the debris and so on, on the beaches.

So we reformed the CEPEP. But the one that the Member for Diego Martin West will want me to remind him of is UDeCott because, you know, the Member defined his flamboyant attack on the former administration—you accused your former administration of taking the country to hell in—what basket was it?

Hon. Member: A handbasket.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Handbasket. They remember that, “eh”.

Hon. Member: Or a wicker basket.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Your party remembers that. The Member for Diego Martin West accused his party of everything, including misconduct relating to UDeCott. Today, the Cabinet is considering matters of accountability and transparency because his complaint was that UDeCott was outside of ministerial control and accountability. Today, there are in effect ministerial committees of Government that monitor, police and control the work of UDeCott and other state enterprises, and the Prime Minister plays a direct role in that. The Prime Minister is Chairman of the committees that monitor state enterprises. And you raise a Motion of No Confidence in what—the inability to manage the country and so on?

So you see, there is much more I could have said, but I have Members here who are queuing up; they are banging on the door to talk about the corruption of the former PNM administration. They are banging on the door to deal with other matters.

You know, today we turned the sod for the children’s hospital, and if that nightmare I described at the beginning of my contribution takes place, do you know that children’s hospital in Couva will have the fate of the Biche High School? They will stop it. For how many years—10 years?—10 years, thousands of children in poor and depressed areas were denied an education because of that

government, and they called them “douen” and “lagahoo” and so on, there. If they get in office through any nightmare here today, that Couva hospital, the future of the children’s hospital, is the Biche High School.

When we moved to open a university south campus, the Member wanted to know “What you doing that for? No campus should be there. Yuh doh do law.” Do you know a few days ago there was a fatal accident in which a parent who was taking his children to UWI on the highway got involved in a crash and died? So many of our children from Barrackpore, Penal, Point Fortin, La Brea would need an education. They go to St. Augustine. Now, as a result of the vision of the Member for Siparia they will move from the lagoon to the lecture hall. [*Desk thumping*] That is the vision. And they bring Motion of No Confidence.

In concluding, we want to indicate that this Motion is a remarkable piece of fiction. It is utterly vexatious to the spirit. The attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to foist this Motion on the Parliament is, indeed, a gross insult to this country. It is how little they think about citizens. This population is convinced by the work of this Government. [*Desk thumping*] I want to say from the beginning, the Member for Diego Martin West is attempting, under the disguise of this Motion, to prove that the Prime Minister is incompetent. This is a Member of Parliament for Siparia whose courage, strength and determination and whose indomitable passion for service and people literally captured the hearts and minds and caused so many thousands of people to abandon their age-old tribalism in politics, to form a government.

This is a downright insult; it is grossly offensive; it is an affront to the decent sensibility of all right-thinking citizens. It must be rejected. The Prime Minister remains a leader with a clear vision. The Member for Siparia has brought an exciting and refreshing change to the political landscape of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Desk thumping*—a change in style, a change in leadership.

Hon. Member: A change in look.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: A very good change in look. The Member has the determination, the courage, the years of service, and the Member brings a character that comes from a particular culture of humility and modesty. [*Desk thumping*] So when she bows at the feet of an elder person in a cultural context, you do not quarrel.

This Motion is unreal. It is virtually surreal, without concept or substance. Those in the Government intend to speak to the Motion in detail. I do not know what will happen opposite, but I can tell you, the Government will speak in some

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detail to this Motion. The Leader of the Opposition continues to live in the past, to apply ancient solutions to new ideas. They have not adjusted to the new political dynamic of a coalition government, of a consensus-building leader, of a leader with compassion, care and concern for children and for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

This Motion is ill-timed. The Member thought, maybe, that the oilfield workers' strike might have intensified, and when he came today the country would have been at a standstill because of a fuel crisis. Maybe he thought so. If he thought so, it is bad because he lends himself to being misled. But if he did not think so, then the Motion is ill-timed, which means his judgment is under question, so one way or another, this really is a Motion of no confidence in the Leader of the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in the coming debate, our colleagues will speak at length. The amendment is before the House and will be properly taken. At this stage, I beg to move the amendment to the Motion placed before the House.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Members: You cannot do that!

Mr. Speaker: No, no. He has moved it; somebody will have to second it.

The Minister of Sport (Hon. Anil Roberts): Mr. Speaker, I would like to second the amendment on the Motion, and I would carefully reserve my time to speak.

Question, on amendment, proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members who are to speak, you may speak on the original Motion as well as on this amendment.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

Hon. Member: What is your point of order?

Mr. Imbert: I am of view that that amendment is a breach of Standing Order 32—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat. I have ruled on that matter. The next speaker.

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on Standing Order 32(1). I seek clarification because 32(1) speaks to relevance to the original Motion as filed and it cannot be nullified, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. This amendment is relevant and it is within the scope of the Motion.

Hon. Member: No way.

Mr. Speaker: I have ruled accordingly. Next speaker, please.

Dr. Amery Browne (*Diego Martin Central*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I normally begin my contribution by reflecting on the contribution that came immediately before, but I would like to begin, first of all, by thanking Almighty God for the opportunity for us to come here to do the nation's business—[*Desk thumping*]*—*and also thanking the people of Trinidad and Tobago who elected all of us to come to this Chamber week after week to seek their interest.

I listened carefully to the Member for Oropouche East, and I could identify very little content within that contribution that sought to do the people of Trinidad and Tobago's business. The people did not send us into this Chamber to squabble with one another, to seek our own personal agendas, to call the names of people's spouses under whatever cloak or disguise that we choose to do so. That is not why they sent us—

Hon. Member: What about Resmi?

Dr. A. Browne: Whose spouse is Resmi?

Hon. Member: Nonsense!

Dr. A. Browne: They did not send us into this Chamber to do that type of work. But, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of this country who elected me—[*Interruption*]

4.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Member for Fyzabad, please. I do not want any crosstalk and allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I have a message for Members on behalf of the people who elected me and elected them. That message is quite simply, calm down, calm down. It seems there was a lot of anticipation for this debate, talk about bombshells and matadors and political bacchanal and "bussing mark", et cetera. Members seem to have gotten carried away with the emotion. I heard the Government denying that they got hysterical in the lead-up to this debate. But, we saw a massive campaign with private funders and financiers being mobilized once again. And, Members know that that has a price—the citizens pay a price for that later on.

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Lots of excitement, squabbling, talk of titans clashing and so on. But, as one elderly man reminded me about a week ago, sometimes when the elephants clash the only thing that results is that the grass beneath them is crushed. And sometimes, the citizens of this country feel like crushed grass, and over the last two years a number of actions of this Government under the hon. Prime Minister have crushed the hopes and the aspirations of the citizens of this country [*Desk thumping*] who elected her democratically and elected this Government democratically.

So, there is an opportunity here. Our opinions are fairly predictable; we are not impressed with the governance of the hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] The opinions on the other side are also predictable; they are very highly impressed and full of adoration for the hon. Prime Minister. I anticipate we would get speech after speech in that regard. The opinions of those that they forced to gather on the outside of this Parliament are also predictable—[*Inaudible*] we will get to that, we will get to that—they are predictable.

Mr. Speaker, this discourse and this sharing of opinions is most relevant to those who might be looking at this debate on television or who may have listened to the content of the Member for Oropouche East, and it seemed he relished some of that very unfortunate content. They are the ones who in the end would have to adjudicate on this Government, this Prime Minister, and this regime that we call the UNC-dominated coalition. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister would not hear these things at her rallies. I heard the Member for Oropouche East indicate that these were conversations with the public on three occasions this week. Look at the mind of this Government, referring to those political rallies as conversations with the public. Almost casting it as a dialogue, when all that was happening was public officials gathered on a stage, at great expense, broadcast to the nation, shouting speeches at gathered audiences and activists. That is no conversation.

Then, I went to the Member for Oropouche when he was boasting about the existence—and we heard about it for the first time—of a plan and vision of this UNC-dominated coalition. I want to tell the national public, nothing could be further from the truth; this Government has no vision and no plan. [*Desk thumping*] He waved a red document and seemed to indicate that that is the Government's workplan and vision and progress. I want to ask Members of this Government, all of them, who did they consult in the preparation of those documents? That is a very important question because this Government prepared a very fancy manifesto—oh yes, I walked with it, very fancy manifesto that

preaches a lot about consultation. But, they came to the Parliament in response to a presentation by the Leader of the Opposition, waved a red document and claimed that was the development plan for this country, when I can tell you they consulted with no one. I hold up as an alternative example the approach of the People's National Movement in preparation of the guiding document that I believe still remains for this country Vision 2020. [*Desk thumping*]

When there were extensive consultations, genuine consultations with every sector in this country including Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan SC, I am told that he contributed and his thoughts were a part of the development of Vision 2020. Imagine that, those consultations went to that extreme length to bring in a mind like Sen. The Hon. Attorney General. That is to tell you the genuineness of the PNM's approach in terms of developing a national plan. [*Desk thumping*]

So, I would wave some other red documents and assure the Member for Oropouche East these were not hatched in any office but these are the reflections of the aspirations, thoughts and contributions of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. I commend them to this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Then the Member for Oropouche East constructed an elaborate argument which appeared to suggest that the hon. Leader of the Opposition should not have brought this Motion of No Confidence, but should have brought it as Private Members' Business. Now, I think that is just being "fast and out of place" for the Leader of Government Business. He is on that side. He cannot tell the Opposition how to do its business. And, we would get to this foolish amendment that they tried to pull on us here today. He cannot tell the Opposition how to do its business.

Then he sought to hide behind the Constitution and somehow indicate that the constitutional weight was so much that the Leader of the Opposition was sort of skirting into a grey area by bringing this Motion. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Member for Oropouche East, if he is so versed and knowledgeable on the Constitution, should have been in a better position to advise this Government, when in my opinion, they violated that very Constitution in bringing an illegitimate state of emergency to this country without giving specific reasons as mandated by the same Constitution.

So, let us not use constitutional expertise conveniently or for the sake of argument, but let us be fair to the citizens of this country because at the end of the day the Constitution is not there as a political gimmick or tool, it is there to defend the rights of the citizens of this country. And, when those rights were

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being violated—I am not going to refer to specific Members, but Members were very comfortable in their homes, while other citizens of this country were made very, very uncomfortable by the callous actions of this entire Government and those that they directed. That must be a concern to citizens of this country.

They talked about these series of conversations and this is where we must begin to be very disturbed. They claimed that they were not panicked by the Motion that was brought by the Leader of the Opposition. But, persons were calling us and telling us about some of those meetings, and the fact that people were being called “corbeau”. I believe the Member for St. Augustine made some very unfortunate references during those public meetings, referring to “pothound”. I mean, Mr. Speaker, come on. That appears to be a level of a gangsterism and boorishness that should not be tolerated in public life. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Douglas: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. A. Browne:—Stop crying? And hear how the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, who was elected by citizens to conduct himself in a dignified manner is trying to justify that type of behaviour. Even the hon. Prime Minister took time from her speech—[*Inaudible*][*Interruption*—I will speak in silence.

Miss McDonald: Good! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, allow the Member to speak in silence. Member for Diego Martin Central, address the Chair and if you are being interrupted seek my protection. Do not deal directly. No, no, seek my protection. Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. A. Browne: Then the Prime Minister took time from her presentation on that public platform to acknowledge and salute a gentleman who chose to bring a dog cage, a cage, to a public meeting casting references to Members on this side. That is the mind of this UNC-dominated coalition. They cannot expect us on this side to have confidence in that type of mentality and that type of behaviour. Totally unacceptable and should be rejected by every Member and every citizen of this country. Totally unacceptable! This is being broadcast live on national television. This is what they are offering to the citizens of this country and the next generation, completely and totally unacceptable. Sometimes when things happen it allows the mask to slip and you have this smiling, benevolent grimace from the Government, but behind there is an iron fist and a callousness that we have seen time and time again. And, I want the citizens to take note of that.

We had a little bit of comedy hour as well, earlier on, from the Member for Oropouche East—and this is a Motion of No Confidence in the hon. Prime Minister, but somehow the Member for Oropouche East found it convenient to take time to read the minutes of the General Council of the People’s National Movement. I would have to question the judgment of that Member and if he is seeking membership or seeking a balisier tie, all he has to do is ask us on this side and we would be happy to furnish him with one or two balisier ties on that side. [*Desk thumping*] I do not think he would ever be qualified to join the General Council, but at least we might offer him the honour of membership in the People’s National Movement. He has made frequent references with those types of references. Calling people’s names and spouses’ names in the Parliament, that is a discredit to any Member and a discredit to the Parliament. It should never ever be tolerated.

The Prime Minister would not hear these things at the rallies. She would not hear what we have to say from the paid activists and the paid bloggers and so on that this Government has mobilized. But, I want to encourage this Government to use this Motion as an opportunity. I know what they would like to do, and we did it when we were in power. They would like to use the Motion of No Confidence—[*Inaudible*]—What? I am not here to fool you—as a chest-beating exercise; Ministers to stand up and read lists of achievements, et cetera, and try to drown out any criticism that might come.

But, there is also an opportunity in this Motion for the Opposition; that is, to fulfil our mandate under the same Constitution the Member for Oropouche East was seeking to quote, because we have a role in terms of holding the Government to account. And, when we seek to do so, Members should not be offended because once you were on this side and you all were seeking to do exactly that. So, this is not an opportunity to be thin-skinned or hypersensitive and get into personal battles—

Dr. Gopeesingh: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. A. Browne:—hold on, you wait Member for Caroni East, you wait and see. The facts are there. But, I could assure you they are not being brought with any malice, any ill will, or any personal attacks against any Member of this House. So, I just wanted to deal with the Member for Oropouche East and the manner in which he conducted his particular contribution.

Mr. Speaker, someone once told me, fairly recently, that the citizens of this country do not really want too much. They want a Government that respects

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independent institutions. They want a roof over their heads. They want to go to sleep at night knowing that there is someone in charge who cares about them and who is seeking the interest of the future of this country. That is all they require. If the Prime Minister was able to demonstrate that her Government is doing that, we would have a different conversation. But, in the two years so far, I put it to this House that that is not what this UNC Government has provided to the citizens of this country. In fact, it is the exact opposite. And, I will give some very specific examples.

The Prime Minister has a shell around her, a cabal, and a core that shields her from the views of ordinary citizens; but, going to political meetings, I could tell you, you get one view, you get one texture. That is not the reality out there. I am warning this Government, they have a shock coming from the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] This Motion is an opportunity, I said it is an opportunity for them to recognize that that shock is coming and do something about it.

So, instead of just trying to drown out what we have to say with these incessant—what I know is coming—they would do better to use this, and the Prime Minister would do better, wherever she is, to use this as an opportunity to hear a different voice and to maybe change her course to ensure that citizens are better served in this country.

When the Prime Minister went to India to explore her roots recently, I am certain that the core around her told her that there was great admiration; the response to that was admiration and glorification. Many citizens responded with the exact opposite, with a sense of distaste and disgust by that particular expedition, using taxpayers' dollars. [*Desk thumping*] When the Prime Minister takes time to go to fetes and on the stage of soca artistes to endorse them and so on, that cabal is probably telling her that is a good cultural job, she is doing a good cultural job, but many citizens felt a sense of outrage when they saw those types of endorsements taking place.

Mr. Peters: Like who?

Dr. A. Browne: The citizens of the country who you do not listen to, Member for Mayaro. You yourself are within a shell.

4.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we intend to deliver here today, as is our mandate, a message to this Government. They have been stumbling and staggering over the last two

years and they have been deaf to the cries of the citizens of this country. You have been deaf to the cries of the citizens of this country. This is a fulfilment of our duty under the Constitution. So, it is without fear or favour, affection or ill will, as is our oath, that I declare that we have lost all confidence in the Prime Minister of this country. [*Desk thumping*] We have lost all confidence in any ability of this Government to direct this country—[*Crosstalk*] the citizens—wait and see.

The word that best characterizes how people feel about this Government is disappointment. People are disappointed. Many citizens voted with an expectation two years ago, and that expectation has not been fulfilled. Back then, many citizens expected that the hon. Prime Minister would have—no one would have expected that the Prime Minister would have presided over a regime in which ordinary citizens, hundreds of them, would be arrested with no evidence whatsoever. [*Desk thumping*] Unfortunately, that is exactly what had happened. That is her Trinidad and Tobago. That is why we can have no confidence.

Mr. Speaker, many would not have anticipated that this regime would have been characterized by an unrelenting, corrosive, erosive attack on a number of independent institutions within Trinidad and Tobago. We will talk about some of those but that is exactly what we had got. That is her Trinidad and Tobago. We cannot have confidence in that. Many citizens voted with the expectation that all the talk of constitutional reform—and many of those opposite were specialists in talking that talk on the campaign trail—they would not have believed that, to this day, two years into this administration, 40 per cent of the term gone, not a single issue of constitutional reform has been advanced by this Government. Not a single issue! No one would have believed that. How can you expect us to have confidence in your leadership of Trinidad and Tobago if that is how you conduct the nation's business? Mr. Speaker, that is her Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, we would not have expected that after the Prime Minister and her team gave specific assurances to poor people in this country—CEPEP and URP workers. What did she tell them? What did the Government tell them? “Don't listen to the PNM, your jobs are safe, they are just being fear mongers. In fact, not only are your jobs safe, we would give you maternity benefits and we would increase your salaries.” Mr. Speaker, that is the literal truth. Instead, what has happened? The vast majority of them have been dismissed. That is not what anyone voted for, we cannot have confidence in that type of performance, but that is the hon. Prime Minister's Trinidad and Tobago.

Not many would have expected that as a grandmother and a mother, the hon. Prime Minister would sit back as citizens were arrested and abused in their own

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homes but that is her Trinidad and Tobago. That is the reality that this Government does not want to hear about. Not many would have believed that this Government would try to run a nation without a vision, without a development plan, for two years, and then come here and pretend that a document, on which there was no consultation, can somehow be construed as a national development plan. Utter madness and lunacy, Mr. Speaker! But that is her Trinidad and Tobago. That is what they are asking us to have confidence in. I commend Proverbs 29 to this House—when there is no vision, the people perish. [*Desk thumping*] In this country, right now, the UNC has no vision and the people are perishing.

Not many people would have expected two years ago that the hon. Prime Minister and her team would have abused State resources to create a personality cult because that is what we are seeing. We are seeing all of this—a day in the life of the Minister and a day in the life of the Prime Minister—utter foolishness, using taxpayers' dollars. We cannot have confidence in that. [*Interruption*] You hear what they are saying, Mr. Speaker, even the more reverent members. [*Crosstalk*] “The PNM”, they want to talk about the PNM—[*Interruption and crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, I am making my contribution. [*Crosstalk*] They want to talk about the PNM, and I am glad that we have a chorus of back-up singers on this side.

Not many citizens would have expected that a Government would discriminate against citizens and fire them from their jobs, and then stand on platforms and tell them that poverty is on the decrease when everyone knows that poverty has been increasing in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is a good time for us to pause for tea. This sitting is suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for Tabaquite for returning to the Chamber and allowing us to proceed with this debate.

While I was on my legs before tea, I was reflecting that many citizens have felt quite disappointed in this Government during the last two years and the performance of the hon. Prime Minister, and the way that she has been leading or

not leading the Government and the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. I was reminding the House that none of these are personal reflections or attacks on any Member and they should not be so hypersensitive. I would like to indicate on listening to Hon. Members in their pronouncements that this is not a forum for matadors. The people's Parliament is not a forum for matadors. It is a forum for representatives and Parliamentarians, and I would expect that we would have none of that talk in here.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of disappointment. Certainly when casting their vote two years ago, most persons would not have expected a Prime Minister who would have treated her Ministers so unevenly and at times, unfairly, and there appears to be a great deal of unevenness with which Ministers are treated. I would give some examples fairly shortly. That is a cause for a lack of confidence, a cause for concern and it is certainly the type of Trinidad and Tobago that the hon. Prime Minister has created in the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, not many citizens would have expected an environment in which gangsterism and boorish behaviour are facilitated and condoned both within the Parliament and outside of the Parliament. But unfortunately, that is the Trinidad and Tobago that the hon. Prime Minister has offered to us. Not many citizens would have expected a nation under the hon. Prime Minister where citizens would be arrested en masse, based not on what they have done, but on how they looked and where they lived. Not many persons would have expected that under the Member for Siparia, we would have a regime that directs the arrest of citizens en masse, not based on what they have done, but based on how they looked and based on where they lived, and we had some very stark examples of that. That is their record and that is something that would continue to indict them as they proceed throughout whatever the length of their term.

Mr. Speaker, this country, that type of leadership is not what Trinidad and Tobago deserves. The citizens deserve far better, our children deserve far better and the next generation deserves far, far better than that. That is not the country that Dr. Eric Williams lived and died for. That is not the country that many public servants have worked very hard for. It is not the country that our children and grandchildren deserve at all. It is not the country that people voted to create and many persons would have hoped that the hon. Prime Minister would have done better. Clearly she cannot do any better; her Government cannot do any better, and that is why we can have no confidence in their leadership.

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Mr. Speaker, I declare that this Prime Minister has trampled on the mandate that was given to her on May 24, 2010. [*Desk thumping*] I am of the opinion—and I am certain that I am not alone in that opinion—that this, unfortunately, is the most inept, incompetent Government and Prime Minister this country has ever ever had. [*Desk thumping*] It brings me no pride in saying that. But, this is an opportunity for the Government to listen and to realize that not everyone shares their very lofty opinion of themselves, and maybe to adjust what they have been doing. Instead of bad-talking the PNM, as the Member for Oropouche East has specialized in doing—he has become a red-herring specialist—maybe they should listen and try to improve their own performance because, at this point, whether they realize it or not, they have formed the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. They are no longer in the Opposition.

The big concern of our citizens is that of corruption, as they have seen the Corruption Perception Index of our nation rising to record levels under this Government, and also, concerns about the influence of narcotics in this nation. Mr. Speaker, all their talk about accountability and transparency has disappeared during their two-year regime. There are still unanswered questions about the sources of the \$400 million that Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj indicated that those opposite raised during the last election campaign and the sources of that financing.

I see the Attorney General chuckling, maybe he would enlighten us on the sources of some of that financing a little later on. [*Crosstalk*] With that attitude, no wonder the Corruption Perception Index has increased because you just shrug off these concerns. [*Crosstalk*] Anyway, I feel that failed politician might be coming back for Tabaquite at some point. Mr. Speaker, I would try not to be distracted by the Member for Tabaquite.

Mr. Speaker, this is the same regime that promised to jail all those dozens of corrupt PNM officials, and they were elected under that type of rhetoric. But, what has happened since then? Not a single public official has been jailed, not a single charge has been brought against one soul based on all the rhetoric that they were spouting. The hon. Prime Minister made some very lofty speeches back in those days, two years ago. She said, “I would clean up the state enterprises.” But I want to tell the hon. Prime Minister that a different type of cleaning up has been taking place at some of our state enterprises. We got a few examples earlier on and I am going to ask a few questions about another state enterprise, very familiar to some of the hon. Members opposite. A different type of cleaning up has been going on, and I want to ask some questions about a state enterprise, a large one, by the name

of Maintenance Training and Security (MTS). Mr. Speaker, I do not pretend to have all the answers, all the knowledge, but I certainly have some questions that might require examination by those opposite.

Mr. Speaker, it has come to our attention that the current Chairman of MTS was hand-picked and hand-selected by the hon. Prime Minister herself. That is what has come to our attention. It has also come to our attention that this Chairman of MTS is also a significant businessman of note who has made significant contributions to the parties that sit opposite us in this House of Parliament. It has also come to our attention that this Chairman of MTS—as I said, he is a businessman, not just the Chairman, he is also a businessman with a number of businesses including businesses registered at an address of 2 Adesh Drive, Duncan Village in San Fernando, including a car import business registered to that address.

I am advised—and it is a question and I see the Attorney General has chosen to be present at this time—that this company—[*Crosstalk*] this is not a joke—imported 34 vehicles into the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. I am advised that these 34 vehicles were subsequently—this company that imported them—registered and all insured at New India Insurance Company Limited—all 34 of them. I am further advised that a number of cheaper rentals—MTS rents a number of vehicles for their use, security and other uses—were cancelled at cheaper rates, and these 34 vehicles that were imported by this business are now being rented by—guess which company? Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited right here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, Ford Rangers, above market price, \$9,200 per month—I do not know if anyone is comfortable on the other side about these things—used Tiida vehicles at \$6,200 per month; Isuzu vehicles at \$9,200 per month. The worst news is, no tenders whatsoever. Mr. Speaker, no tenders whatsoever! No rental agreement whatsoever governing this arrangement—this very interesting arrangement.

5.10 p.m.

No VAT registration for this exchange was shown to any member of staff at MTS for what works out, at these rates, to be \$3 million per annum, a very sweet and cushy deal. State enterprises that the Prime Minister promised to clean up, this is happening right under the happy gaze of Members opposite.

I heard the Member for Oropouche East talking about committees—he answered the Leader of the Opposition. He said that these committees were set up

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to oversee the state enterprises, therefore, we are all hunky-dory. Mr. Speaker, I want to know which committee is overseeing MTS and why have they not been doing their duty to protect the taxpayers' dollars of this country? [*Desk thumping*] If that is not a clear case of conflict of interest, I would want Members opposite to rise and tell us why it is not and respond to these questions.

If that was not enough, I am pained to report that this is the same Chairman who was reported in the media to have been in receipt of a container of chicken that was contaminated by drugs—hand-picked and hand-selected, came into question by a number of Ministers but has been shielded, cradled and brought on through. That is what we are dealing with, Mr. Speaker. It appears, under this Government, there is one law for the rich and one law for the poor people of Trinidad and Tobago. We still have to hear any results of those investigations that might have occurred. No wonder the citizens are concerned that this country is becoming a narco state, when high public officials are being shielded in that manner. We may say we have heard it all before, but this Government has promised to do things better. They made lofty promises to the citizens and unfortunately they are doing things a lot worse right in front of the gaze of the citizens of this country.

The Prime Minister has to answer. She has never answered. Why did she take so long to appoint the state boards? You talk to the private sector and many of them implicate that very poor chain of decision making, that long period of time to appoint those state boards as one of the reasons there continues to be such low confidence in the economy and why liquidity has been so high and the sluggishness because the state stimulation of the economy dropped to a very, very low level under this Government, besides the poison that they injected into the confidence levels with all of their foolish rhetoric. I have dealt with that. We have dealt with that before. I would not get back into that particular point. Why did the Prime Minister take so long to appoint those state boards? I hope she would not say it was because she was trying to get the process right. Because it seems, in most cases, she got the process very, very wrong and what we have are political hacks in square pegs in round holes in most of the cases, not all. That is what we have filled those boards with.

Then, there is a very troubling issue. Earlier this week, I could not believe my ears when I heard the Member for St. Augustine, on a political platform in central Trinidad rising and boasting about the firing of former Sen. Mary King, a member of the Congress of the People, and thanking the hon. Prime Minister for her leadership—[*Interruption*] I am ignoring these Members who are trying to distract me. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Douglas: “Yuh talking nonsense.”

Dr. A. Browne:—in dismissing former Sen. Mary King. This is the Member for St. Augustine, the Leader of the Congress of the People. I want to ask the Prime Minister and I want to ask the Member for St. Augustine, the Leader of the Congress of the People: Why on earth was the same standard that was applied to Mary King not applied to every Minister in the Cabinet of this country? I want to ask that question.

We are talking about confidence. This is not something that the Government could just ignore or bury. It is not going to go away because it is in the media every single day. These issues are in our face and the Prime Minister remains completely and totally silent. This is not one of those that could be referred conveniently to the hon. Attorney General for sanitization and reporting. This is not one of those issues. This is a very big issue and it speaks directly to the heart of how the Prime Minister is managing her Cabinet. It speaks directly to the heart of the issue of fairness. What example are we setting for the next generation, in terms of how public officials are treated?

Why are they all so afraid to hold all Ministers to the same standard? I hope the Member for St. Augustine would explain that. Why are they so afraid? Why can they not demonstrate brave leadership and do the right thing? Why can they not do the right thing? Why do we have to be saddled with public officials who defy High Court orders and continue to stride in public life as if nothing is wrong? The Prime Minister talks about cleaning up corruption and cleaning up public life in this country. I do not know. I see the Member for St. Augustine smiling. I would smile but I am not in a smiling mood because these are very serious issues, but I think he is agreeing with me in that regard.

They want to talk about the PNM, the PNM, why can they not apply the same example that was applied with the same Franklin Khan and Eric Williams? They referred to Franklin Khan earlier. Why can they not apply that same standard? What are they so afraid of? This issue is a shame on the United National Congress. This issue is a shame on the Congress of the People. This issue is a shame on the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It continues to press to this day. I am hoping the Prime Minister would set us all at ease today, speak on the matter, put citizens' mind at ease and tell us where she is heading on this matter because just pretending it does not exist is not going to help us all and I am sure Mrs. Mary King is sitting somewhere, hearing the pronouncements of the Member for St. Augustine, listening to see what the Prime Minister would say, because the precedent has already been set. She needs to clear the air on these matters. Do not

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send them to the Attorney General, like the Gopaul issue, for sanitization. I think we need to have a better outcome than that. Trinidad and Tobago deserves better than that. [*Desk thumping*]

Then we hear the gangsterism and almost threats being thrown at the Prime Minister about: “I will support you if you support me” and, what is it?—“till death do us part” and all sorts of talks. Some might feel that these are veiled threats towards the Prime Minister. We cannot run a country like that. We cannot sit in a country where this is how the affairs of state are being run and I am hoping the Prime Minister would deal with this and clear the air. I am happy to see the Attorney General is amused by these things but I am telling him not all the citizens are amused at all. Do not tempt me.

Mr. Speaker, I would move on from that particular issue at this point. The message to our children should never be that money is king and that might is right. We need to send a different message to these children. Members might wonder why I am talking about this. It is not a popular issue in this Parliament at all, Member for St. Augustine, but the citizens’ minds are right there and it needs to be dealt with.

I have to tell you, Member for St. Augustine and hon. Attorney General, I am not afraid of any of you. None of you have anything that I want. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Where is that coming from?

Dr. A. Browne: I did not say that you are afraid of me. None of you have anything that I want. If we cannot stand here and speak the truth, then we are in the wrong Chamber. Mr. Speaker, in this Parliament, there should be no caste system and we should all have the same rights and privileges. [*Desk thumping*] In the Cabinet of our country, there should also be no caste system and all Ministers should have the same rights and privileges. That is the example for the children.

Speaking of children, I heard Sen. The Hon. Verna St. Rose-Greaves standing on the Prime Minister’s platform—I could not believe my ears—and chiding the Member for Diego Martin West for wasting the Parliament’s time in bringing this Motion. Do you know why? It is because the Parliament should have been debating the Children Bill. The Member for Oropouche East took up that same bizarre line. I really wonder if sometimes these Members are completely disconnected from reality. The fact of the matter with that Children Bill that they are seeking to pin on the poor Member for Diego Martin West, the reality is, that Bill was brought—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, they are seeking to interrupt me. Member for Caroni Central, I have not been troubling him today at all. Maybe he

wants to be troubled. The history is the Children Bill was brought to this Parliament along with several other pieces of children's legislation. We debated them. The Children's Authority Bill was debated.

The then Minister of Social Development, who happens to be on his legs, brought those Bills and they were unanimously passed in both Houses. The Children's Community Residences, Foster Homes and Nurseries Bill was brought, unanimously passed in both Houses. I welcomed the support. The Children Bill came, the largest Bill, heavily designed to protect our children, to revolutionize the way in which children are even regarded in Trinidad and Tobago and there was contention about that. That is the frank truth. There were some clauses that Members opposite felt were too severe, too austere and too draconian. That is the reality. I am not saying anything is wrong with that; do not be so hypersensitive. But this is the same Government that is screaming every weekend: "hang dem high, hang dem high". But they thought, with regard to the safety of our children, some of the clauses were too severe.

Fair enough, the Bill was referred to a select committee of the Lower House. Members on both sides contributed. It was chaired by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. We did a lot of work, many, many meetings. We arrived at consensus. All those controversial clauses were discussed and debated at the committee. I would not go into the details of the committee. Consensus was arrived at and then the Parliament was prorogued and an election was called. All the new Government was required to do—the Member for Caroni East was a part of the committee, I do not know if he did not report back to his team—was bring the Bill back.

Two years passed when they were doing all sorts of things: filming television ads starring Ministers, a day in the life of the Minister, a day in the life of the Prime Minister, travelling all over the world, and they just tabled the Children Bill and are now seeking to blame Dr. Rowley—because he filed a Motion of No Confidence—for delaying the Children Bill. [*Desk thumping*] That is called huff, that is called fluff and that is called wasting the Parliament's time. Even to say that is wasting time. The Member for Oropouche East came back and said the same thing. Unfortunately, the younger Members of the UNC team seem to be taking the bad example that has been set by some of the older Members, including the Member for Oropouche East.

Mr. Speaker, I really was concerned when I heard the new Minister, Sen. The Hon. Verna St. Rose-Greaves, who now has to take up that mantle that was left idle, the protection of children, and I wish her Godspeed in that regard. But trying

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to blame Dr. Rowley, come on, that is absolutely absurd. That is what I call lazy, inept governance when you try to blame others for faults that you have been guilty of. That is the record and the truth with regard to the Children Bill.

I would not get into the death penalty at this point, but this is the “hang dem high” Government that had problems with the strength of clauses dealing with the protection of our nation’s children. But, the Prime Minister cares about children. You always hear the phrase “as a mother and as a grandmother”. That is sewn into every single speech that she gives.

If the Prime Minister and her team are so caring for children, I wonder why they would have shut down the Accident and Emergency Department—you know I would get there Minister—at St. James? Mr. Speaker, I got thousands of calls; hundreds, thousands might be an exaggeration. I got many, many phone calls from persons in the western peninsula very, very concerned about that issue. I did not raise it with them. The staff or other persons sensitized them. I immediately called the hon. Minister. This was before it was official. He said: “I would give you a hearing and we would see how best we can do that.”

Unfortunately, it seems a decision either was already made or it was being made somewhere else besides the Minister’s office, but the fact of the matter is the unit was shut down. The question is—talking about caring for children—when was it shut down? This was done during a state of emergency, when the communities around, even though they were very angry about that, many of them wanted to come out and protest. They were unable to do so, prevented by decree, by the draconian regulations passed by this Government. That is when they choose to interrupt that vital service. Children who are asthmatic would now have to go so many more miles to get urgent attention; children who are suffering from sickle-cell anaemia and other diseases. That is the caring. As I said, there is a smile but that smile is really a grimace and behind it there is that iron fist.

I am pleased to say that the Minister has very quietly reopened the unit. I want to thank him for that, but that helps. It does not really heal the injury that was done to the spirit of the residents of the western peninsula because that is a decision that should never have been made in the first place, but you have to give credit where credit is due and I want to acknowledge that it has been reopened.

5.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and her team care about children; we hear over, and over, and over again about this caring for children. One of the first things that characterized their administration was spending almost \$1 million on

an adult rap concert where they had a kid zone, and brought little children in front of the stage and there was a lot of back and forth—using taxpayers' money, in my view, to abuse the children of Trinidad and Tobago, but they claim they care so much about children and youth development.

The health centre requires some urgent attention, and I know the Minister still might feel he is new, but the Prime Minister has been there for two years, and she had another Minister there before.

Problems at San Fernando General Hospital have not gone away, there is still an acute bed shortage at that hospital. There are new problems with regard to the anaesthetics department, a lack of registrars and consultants, where the surgeries list for the coming period is going to be severely affected. This is coming from the staff. If the Minister has intervened and solved that problem, he would be happy to tell us; that would be good news to me, it would be good news to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

There are serious concerns about hiring practices in a number of the Regional Health Authorities, and that one I know the Minister is aware of because he has received numerous calls and correspondence in that regard. There are concerns about the hiring practices particularly the North Central Regional Health Authority, and to some extent the South West Regional Health Authority in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I got an interesting memo, an interesting piece of correspondence that seemed—you know from time to time regimes or governments might be concerned about information getting out—let me see if I can find that that memo.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Browne: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying that there was an interesting memo which went out on February 10, 2012, within the North Central Regional Health Authority. This is something the Minister should pay some particular attention to because from time to time public authorities might have concerns about matters coming to the attention of the other side—let us say, to the Members of the Opposition, et cetera. We have been aware of some

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of those concerns in the past and efforts to control the flow of information. This memo is trying to curtail a different type of informer, in a different type of direction of information which seems to have been taking place, because this is a memo to curtail—[*Interruption*] [*Cellphone rings*]

Mr. Speaker: [*Waves his hand*] I heard a cell go off, but I think it is being addressed, continue.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I could make a comment about cells, but I would not at this time. This is a memo which appears to be an attempt to curtail informers, not informers to another political party or Members opposite, not to the Opposition, but informers and information going to the Minister of Health himself, from within the North Central Regional Health Authority. I am looking for some indication from the Minister that he might be aware of this memo of February 10, but I will read just a part of it. The title: Standard Practice Protocol for Submission of Letters of Interest.

Within recent times it has become a practice by employees of the NCRHA to write or copy the hon. Minister of Health in correspondence pertaining to issues, complaints and operations of the North Central Regional Health Authority.

Then they quote:

Employee not to solicit intervention...there is a quote here...an employee shall not solicit the intervention or influence of Members of Parliament, Ministers, members of the board or prominent members of the community to support or advance his individual interest in the Authority.

The memo goes on:

This practice is clearly a breach of these rules and must be ceased immediately.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Regional Health Authority in which there have been numerous concerns and complaints, a litany, now issuing a memo to senior staff members instructing them not to give any information—not to me, or the Member for Diego Martin North/East—but to the Minister of Health, the Member for Barataria/San Juan. I would advise the Minister to look into this matter urgently because this is how corrupt issues, and issues of poor selection can come to our attention and can come to his attention, but that is what is going on at some of these Regional Health Authorities.

While all of the onions are shaking and the trips are being taken, and so on—[*Crosstalk*]*—*there are issues that require governance, there are issues that require leadership and there are issues that require prime ministerial, Cabinet and ministerial attention. If they put as much energy as they put into those three meetings this week, into their duties on behalf of the citizens, then we would have a much better Trinidad and Tobago today after those two years. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister—I had been listening to her, she seems so much more concerned about the strength of the coalition—five fingers like a fist—than about the strength of the country, more concerned about the fabric within that coalition, than about the fabric of our society. A fundamental tenet of democracy is respect for human rights. The human rights of the citizens must always be upheld. Many of those opposite earned a very good living as human rights champions in the past, and there is nothing wrong with that, but somehow on coming into power that human rights agenda seems to have fallen by the wayside. The abysmal implementation of that state of emergency is reason enough for any Government to have resigned, and this Government really should have resigned on the failure and collapse of their state of emergency. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is surprised we do not have confidence in her. If the PNM or any other Government had implemented an SOE in the manner that they implemented it, in that discriminatory manner, I assure you Members opposite would have been raging in the streets expressing deep, deep outrage.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: “Raging! Raging! Ah raging bull!”

Dr. A. Browne: They would have been very upset, Mr. Speaker, I would use a different phrase. This is how they conducted themselves, they were quite comfortable. These human rights champions were quite comfortable. The Prime Minister was a human rights champion. They were quite comfortable when that was unfolding. Whom did they consult? They certainly did not consult the Commissioner of Police because he was elsewhere dodging immigration authorities. They certainly did not consult the Deputy Commissioner of Police; he was jet-setting somewhere else in a real jet, not a toy plane. They both told the nation they were not consulted on this massive anti-crime initiative.

If another Government had wasted \$60 million on a prison that no one in the community wanted, with gypsum partitions, and leaking ceilings, Members opposite would have been totally outraged, and they would have said that was an indictment on the Government. There would have been uproar especially when there were no tenders. If another Government had constructed that cow shed in

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the savannah with no tenders whatsoever—\$50 million, was it? And then the building shocking and flooding and so on, Members opposite would have been outraged. They would have cried—I should not have used that word—they would have been very, very upset, Mr. Speaker, there would have been an uproar. But that is what we had, there were no tenders whatsoever.

What did the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism say? Time was too short to do his business transparently. Apparently, Carnival came as a surprise that year to the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, they probably did not realize that Carnival is early every year. Every year Carnival occurs in February or early March, but the time was too short; I do not understand where they are going. [Laughter] [Interruption]

Members have a very unfortunate habit of referring to the Member for Diego Martin North/East as short, that is discriminatory and the Attorney General is not known for his physical height either, [Laughter] so I am not sure why he would make those comments. I will not be distracted by Members opposite.

Hon. Member: “Yuh sure?” [Laughter]

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, it is very disturbing, that modus operandi of lack of tendering and lack of transparency. It seems that this talk of transparency only applies when the transparency issues affect others, not their own Government, and they were warned about that approach, seduced by their majority in Parliament; “monkey cannot see its own tail.” I am hoping this Government would begin to see that their tail is lagging a bit.

Mr. Speaker, this one pains me a lot, but the hon. Minister of Health seemed very eager to give all of the medical details of a Member of this Parliament, who was ill recently. We got the whole pathophysiology of stroke, the pathogenesis, which hemisphere was affected, lots of very rich medical detail from the Minister of Health on a daily basis, yes, that was good. But when another Member of this House had swollen ankles, the Minister of Health did not give us any of the pathophysiology or pathogenesis, he was completely silent—[Interruption]

Mr. Sharma: “Stop wasting time nah.”

Dr. A. Browne: He left it to the Minister of Education to give us his own theory as to how that occurred. [Crosstalk and interruption] You see, transparency applies to others not to you, so when a Member on this side is ill, the Minister of Health will give the nation the full exposition; it is a very simple issue.

Hon. Member: Keep your focus.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I would like you to address—I mean, I might be far from you, but if you could turn towards me and not debate with the Members there, that is where you get into trouble sometimes. Direct your message at me, please.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, if you are telling me to ignore the Attorney General, I shall comply.

Mr. Speaker: Ignore the Attorney General, just direct your message to me.

Dr. A. Browne: Excellent! [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, that might very well be the best advice you have ever given in this House. Transparency does not apply to them, it applies to others. If another Government had purchased with taxpayers' dollars a Porsche Cayenne, I guarantee you Members opposite would have been in an uproar; that is a guarantee. The Attorney General himself would have led the charge, but what is good for them is different to what is good for others.

If a PNM Minister had been driving a state vehicle and knocked down a citizen, could you imagine the uproar which would have occurred on the other side? If another Prime Minister, any other Prime Minister had given himself or herself Silk, the uproar which would have occurred on the other side. But transparency does not apply to them, it applies to others, or it certainly comes into play when they are campaigning for governance.

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh running out ah things to say.” [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Browne: Yes. Can you imagine with what happened during the state of emergency and those arrested without evidence—Now, the Government feels everyone has moved on from that. The Prime Minister has never apologized, in fact, she said recently she has no regrets whatsoever with what was done during that state of emergency. But I am warning this Government that that is going to affect our human rights index, our perception with a number of international agencies. We have already seen some reports with the press freedom index, the perception of corruption index, and so on. When those human rights agencies bring out their reports, I am predicting, I am not a prophet, but I am predicting that Trinidad and Tobago is going to fall even lower, and that would be due to the direct actions of this Government, led by this Prime Minister in whom we have no confidence whatsoever. [*Desk thumping*]

You add to that the raids on the media houses, the treatment of Fazeer Mohammed. The way that non-compliant media professionals are treated like

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Fazeer Mohammed and David Mohammed and others, even going to the extent of a *Newsday* reporter, and what is happening there. Apply that to the non-arrest of cocaine traffickers and money launderers and gunrunners during this notorious state of emergency, and you realize where we are heading as a nation under this UNC-dominated coalition.

And speaking of poor treatment to non-compliant persons, Mr. Speaker, what has happened at that Tunapuna Hindu School, under the watchful eye of this UNC coalition, is an absolute disgrace to the citizens of this country. [*Desk thumping*] The treatment of that principal is an absolute disgrace to this nation. [*Desk thumping*] And these human rights champions have been silent and I am asking, why? It is obvious what is happening, you do not have to be an expert, you do not have to be a member of any commission, it is obvious and it has gotten to the point of denigration. It has gotten to the point of humiliation. It has gotten to the point of physical attacks and assaults on a sister of all of us, and we want to go and look for ancestors halfway across the world, when our own sister is being destroyed, crushed by a huge organization. Like the man who stood in front of the tanks at Tiananmen Square, that is how I view that principal, and silence on the other side, not one of them would have the courage to say listen, something is fundamentally wrong here and it must stop. [*Interruption*]

5.40 p.m.

No, I am sorry. I know you are going to contribute. You will always contribute, so I look forward to your clarification. I am just speaking on the fundamental human rights aspect of the matter, so do not get tied up with the technicalities at all.

Why is the Prime Minister silent? I can understand the Hazels, the Vernas, the Dianas and so on; but the Prime Minister, someone to whom all of the sisters look up—the Member for Oropouche East said that—an inspiration. Why has she chosen to be completely silent on this very fundamental matter that is in the eyes of every single citizen of Trinidad and Tobago? Injustice is obvious when you see it and I think that something really needs to be done under this Government.

I regard this Government as lazy and incompetent and I cannot have confidence in laziness. I cannot have confidence in incompetence. They set a very, very poor example even with regard to the English language and the distribution of these laptops. It is somehow construed as a brainwave, not realizing that the best form of poverty reduction is the increase in literacy. If we get our children to love books, it will vastly increase their potential. I know it will

not work for some but, Mr. Speaker, we can vastly increase their potential. They focus them more on the technology than on the simple love of reading. I commend the reading of books to all Members opposite.

They violate human rights in the East-West [*Interruption*]*—*the Gulag Archipelago. I am not listening to you. They violate human rights up and down the East-West Corridor and then they give them Colour Me Orange. Now it has come to an end and people are asking: “Well, Madam Prime Minister, what next?” Hands up; hands out. What do we do? They are waiting because that is the callous approach of this Government.

They boast about giving 5 per cent—this has been up and down—of their salary to the Children’s Life Fund and then, very quietly, have brought a Cabinet Note to ensure that Ministers of Government have the use of a state vehicle, in addition to their allowances to purchase a vehicle which covers things like insurance and everything else. They get a driver and so on. This is a Cabinet Note, approved by consensus, where you get a Prado and a state vehicle for your use.

If you compute the value of that additional perk that they have given themselves without consulting the nation or the Parliament, it is far more than 5 per cent of any salary. That is the modus operandi of this Government; give with one hand and take back more with the other hand. [*Desk thumping*] I cannot have confidence in that, Mr. Speaker.

They boast about Caribbean Airlines Limited giving US \$5 million to the Children’s Life Fund, but when you check behind the headlines, not one single red cent has been transferred, to my knowledge, so far. A big fancy cheque was given over with PR, media attention and so on; just a big piece of plastic and not a single red cent was transferred. So they pretend they are giving, but they are really taking the spirit of the citizens with them.

Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister promised a lot two years ago but she and the Government have failed to deliver on behalf of the citizens of this country. She promised never to move into that symbol of extravagance. I remember the words very well. What happened? They moved right into that symbol of extravagance. How can we have confidence in that type of approach to governance in Trinidad and Tobago?

We have a Prime Minister who has decided to use helicopters instead of ordinary land transportation. That is not good enough. When the security details indicate they can get almost anywhere in this country in a matter of minutes, the way they are able to move and negotiate traffic and so on; but that is not good enough. Our leadership requires helicopters.

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We have a Prime Minister and a Government who bad talk Chinese up and down the country, but now every day they are looking to have events with Chinese businessmen and officials. We cannot have conflict. *[Interruption]* They boasted about it this morning; hustling to do that. Mr. Speaker, we cannot have— *[Interruption]* Yes, yes, yes, yes. That is the truth. You did it.

Mr. Speaker, I would not go back into the Resmi Ramnarine issue. We have a Prime Minister and a Government that clearly, even in their utterances here, have no vision for the future of this country, no plan, no programme. How can we be expected to have confidence in them? I have no confidence whatsoever.

They have no clue about employment generation besides CEPEP Marine, Colour Me Orange and CEPEP Airforce. They have no vision for employment creation. They are unable to create jobs for the citizens of this country. *[Desk thumping]* That is a failure of their mandate. We cannot have confidence in that. They have no clue of innovation or diversification. They can talk a good game on the campaign trail. Nothing has materialized. They opened a Rituals in India or something like that. Come on! That is not diversification, Mr. Speaker. We cannot have confidence in that particular approach.

I am pleased to report to this honourable House that all is not lost. There is still hope with regard to the governance of Trinidad and Tobago. That hope lies with the People's National Movement. *[Desk thumping]* Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but have confidence in the party that has brought every major development, advance and piece of infrastructure to the citizens of this country. *[Interruption]* I cannot but have confidence in such an approach to development.

Mr. Jeffrey: Well said!

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, could you take notes? I know you will speak later.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They need to be contained from time to time. It was the People's National Movement that had the vision for the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, met with strong resistance by those opposite; but that is the vision and approach to government that I can have confidence in and I do have confidence in that type of approach to governance. *[Desk thumping]*

It was those on this side who had the courage to liberalize the economy. You need to hear these things because this is the truth. This is the perspective: to liberalize the economy, to float the dollar, et cetera met with tremendous resistance by those opposite—courage that has produced results to this nation till

this day. That is something that I can have confidence in to this day and I know that the Attorney General has recognized the value that the PNM can bring to Trinidad and Tobago.

We were the ones who consulted with all sectors and brought these development plans, which I commend to those opposite; but I do not have confidence that they will ever hear or adopt something that is of value to the citizens of this country.

We built the Diamond Vale Housing Estate and housing estates all over this country for the shelter of citizens. They are laughing and calling it history, but that history is providing shelter to the valuable citizens of our country and that is the value of the PNM's vision. [*Desk thumping*] They are flying and walking all over the place.

We gave this nation every hospital. We gave this nation all the major pieces of infrastructure. I can have confidence in that approach. [*Desk thumping*] A revised energy policy, the monetization of gas, all of these things met with tremendous resistance by those opposite; but all of these things seeking the welfare of the next generation and we are benefiting from those things to this day. [*Desk thumping*] I can have confidence in that.

A lot of courage was demonstrated, so I want to tell the Prime Minister, wherever she is, that all of those advances, all of those policies, futuristic policies were brought to the nation by the People's National Movement. Every time she turns on a light switch, she is benefiting from PNM policy. Every time we walk into this Chamber and sit on these leather chairs, we are benefiting from PNM vision and policy. [*Desk thumping*] I can have confidence in that.

Every time a child registers at COSTAATT, at UTT or at any tertiary institution, to this day that is the legacy—I can have confidence in that. [*Desk thumping*] So, yes, the PNM is and was not perfect. No political party is. Yes, mistakes were made, but when you compare the legacy that every citizen is benefiting from, including those opposite, there is no comparison. There is none whatsoever. [*Desk thumping*]

So they bring their smokescreens. They bring their political rhetoric. They bring things that have never been proven for the last two years. They want to “bad talk” the PNM, “bad talk” the PNM, “bad talk” the PNM; bring personal attacks on people and their spouses, et cetera; but not respond to genuine issues and concerns of the citizens of this country and pat themselves on the back and tell themselves they are doing a great job. They are not fooling any of the citizens. They are doing a very poor job. We do not have confidence in any of them.

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What should we do? How much more time, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: You have eight more minutes.

Dr. A. Browne: What should we do in a country where injustice reigns supreme; where there is one law for the rich and another law for the poor; where there is uneven treatment even at the Cabinet level and right across the country; uneven hiring practices; an absence of vision, et cetera? What should we do?

I commend to this House and this nation some very surprising words—words of the hon. Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism. He was commenting in the newspaper recently, in the *Daily Express* of Wednesday, February 22, 2012. He had some words I want to commend to this House. He was speaking about the Tribe transgression and chiding Tribe. This is what he had to say.

“There are always people who would not want to follow, and we have to deal with those people who do not follow. When you break the rules, there’s a penalty. As a matter of fact, they should kick them off the road because I am a drastic person.” *[Interruption]*

Those are the words of the hon. Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism.

I want to tell him, his Prime Minister and his Government that they have strayed off course; they have strayed off the route; they have no clue where they are going and where they are taking Trinidad and Tobago. I want to tell them that the nation will take this very same approach at the very next opportunity when we will kick them off the court and restore good governance to Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

I support the Motion as brought by the Leader of the Opposition. I reject the amendments brought by the Member for Oropouche East. *[Desk thumping]*

The Minister of Sport (Hon. Anil Roberts): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please forgive me if I start off a little slower than I am accustomed to because with that last speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central, he worked better than NyQuil. He put me to sleep. I would like to say to all the sports fans out there, based on the argument of the Member for Diego Martin Central, the West Indies cricket team was the greatest from 1975 to 1993, therefore Australia should expect a good licking from 2012. A brilliant argument!

This Motion is a very serious one. It is not a joke. It is a Motion of No Confidence in the Prime Minister of our beloved country. It is a Motion that has the potential and was developed within our Constitution to act as the power of

recall. If the electorate votes and a Prime Minister is selected, section 77(1) of our Republican Constitution allows the parliamentarians, who are the representatives of the people, to actually recall a Prime Minister and, thereby, recall a Government.

This is not something to be trivialized. This is not a frivolous Motion. This is a very serious time and I must say that today I am deeply disappointed. When this Motion of No Confidence was brought, I knew there was no validity, reason or rationale, but the Member for Diego Martin West, having presented it to the Parliament, we could not dismiss it. We had to deal with it in a very serious manner. It reminds me of a phrase made famous by the Member for Diego Martin West. He always said to some of us over here that we are playing smart with foolishness. With this No Confidence Motion in this country's Prime Minister, the Member for Diego Martin West has to be playing "dotish" with foolishness. [*Desk thumping*]

I am going to read for you from the Constitution, section 77(1) and understand this is no joking matter.

Mr. Speaker: Member, I think you are a person with more elegance in your language—

Hon. A. Roberts: No problem, Sir.

Mr. Speaker:—so be a little more elegant in your language.

Hon. A. Roberts: I shall definitely try.

Mr. Speaker: We do not like the word "dotishness".

Hon. A. Roberts: I learned from the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Speaker: Well, forget him. That is why he is there and you are here. [*Laughter*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Section 77(1):

"Where the House of Representatives passes a resolution, supported by the votes of a majority of all the members of the House, declaring that it has no confidence in the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister does not within seven days of the passing of such a resolution either resign or advise the President to dissolve Parliament, the President shall revoke the appointment of the Prime Minister."

Hon. Member: We know that.

Hon. A. Roberts: Yes, you know that; but the Member for Diego Martin West did not know it. I am going to show you why.

5.55 p.m.

So understand, that making a mockery of a No Confidence Motion—because the Member for Diego Martin West filed the Motion, and immediately went across to the media to say: “I file it, but I have no chance to win, they have 29, we have 12, one man sick, I cyah win, but I file it”. Then he says; “we ha’ mark to buss”, then “it eh ha’ no mark to buss”, and it is just to come and give a recap. Let me tell this population, that because of this frivolous Motion and this mockery of the Constitution, all the Bills: the Protection of Children Act has to be debated today, maternity protection to protect mothers and to give them conditions that are more meaningful, the Legal Aid Bill, the Electronic Monitoring—[*Crosstalk*]—you want to talk, go ahead.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: It seems like you do not have any discipline. Go ahead.

Mr. Speaker: Please.

Hon. A. Roberts: The Electronic Monitoring Bill, the Equal Opportunity Bill—all of these Bills. The Insurance Bill, which they should be very interested to deal with because they sat down—and the former Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara who was the Minister of Finance who failed to let them know that she was also a shareholder debating and negotiating on behalf of the people, when she is an owner now, and due to the good work of the Minister of Finance and his team, the shares of CL Financial in the next few years are going to multiply. Those shareholders are going to become very wealthy, of which the former Minister of Finance, who did not disclose, is going to be very wealthy with her 10,400 shares. “So doh interrupt meh, doh rush meh, ah going easy.”

So all of those Bills are put on hold because the Member for Diego Martin West “get in a mood”, and find he should file a Motion of No Confidence. It makes an absolute mockery of the Constitution and of the Parliament because he admitted beforehand that this had no chance—“it ha no way he could win”. That is not what the Constitution intended, that was not the spirit of the Constitution, those were not the words written. It is a serious clause put in—for example, if you have a Prime Minister that has gone, you know, a little bit off-key and puts people in charge of billions of dollars then fires everybody else and so on, you could do

that and bring it. The Opposition and people even in the Government who are opposed to such shenanigans can remove that Prime Minister. So it is a very serious thing.

You know what? The Prime Minister took it seriously. She had public meetings to let the population know; “listen, this a serious thing, this is what we have done”. She had consultations with everybody: private sector, Members of the Government, Councillors, the people on the ground, party executives, heads of parties. She even had a strong media presence so media would question her over this Motion of No Confidence, and she made herself available to discuss it because she treated it as a very serious matter. She also made sure that all the matadors were prepared, as you saw the Member for Oropouche East. I do not even need to talk after he destroyed the Member for Diego Martin West, “but since yuh ask for it, since yuh beg for it, yuh go get it”.

Then the Member for Diego Martin West has the audacity to say that the Member for Siparia was afraid of him. Member for Diego Martin West, you are the greatest gift to the People’s Partnership. As long as you sit “dey”, no matter what we do, and we do not intend to do anything wrong, but as long as you are there we will always be here, so we do not want you to move. Louis Lee Sing, the mayor you appointed, may want you to move. That is your problem, you have to deal with that.

Hon. Member: Ouch!

Hon. A. Roberts: Anyone who makes a mockery of the Constitution is not worthy to be a leader, nor a Member of Parliament, certainly not a Prime Minister. A person who abuses the Constitution is unpatriotic, and not worthy of confidence. I put it to you, Sir, Member for Diego Martin West, that by using section 77(1) in this frivolous manner, you have abused our beloved Constitution. The Constitution is confidence, confidence is constitutional. The Member for Siparia upholds, respects, and lives the Constitution thus confidence resides within this Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Member for Diego Martin West, it appears—and I will give you the facts for it—that being and remaining a member of the People’s National Movement and being and remaining a non-performing Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West in an openly corrupt PNM regime means more to the Member for Diego Martin West than upholding, respecting, uplifting and cherishing the Constitution. Let me tell you why—because the very Member for Diego Martin West, in August 2003, went to the Member for San Fernando East—the then Prime

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Minister—and said, Sir, this man Calder Hart, what is he doing? He is lacking all form of good governance, no tenders, in fact he is blatantly corrupt. The Member for Diego Martin West, in August 2003, went to the Member for San Fernando East and said that. But what happened between August 2003 and November 2007? He was moved about to get him away from Calder Hart. Shuffled and shuffled, I think he went to three different Ministries. Right?

Former Minister Ken Valley had a run-in with Calder Hart by 2007, God rest his soul, but he was kicked out because he also agreed that Calder Hart was wrong. The Senator now, and the then Minister Pannelope Beckles had a problem with Calder Hart; the Member for San Fernando East got rid of her. Camille Robinson-Regis had a problem with Calder Hart, and Member for San Fernando East got rid of her. Roger Boynes, Ian Atherly, Diane Seukeran, all of these people had a problem with one man, Calder Hart, and the then Prime Minister got rid of all of them. Christine Sahadeo had a problem. These were all, most—she had a problem with Rao, Julien with Bamboo Networks and Calder Hart. So she got removed three times fast, fast, fast. [*Laughter*]

But while this was going on, in 2007 the then Prime Minister fired a man 25 minutes before he left his office and reach—he was on his way to discuss. He got fired because he asked Calder Hart to account for the people’s money. He decided, not at that time, to do anything other than to sit down on the back bench, remain an MP, stay in the PNM and try to make a little noise now and again. But here it is, a Prime Minister who has come and saved this country from Calder Hart, Uthara Rao, Loc Jack, Ken Julien, all of those people who raided the Treasury, you have the audacity to come and say no confidence in this Prime Minister. I asked you then, way back then, when these seven other MPs had been removed and fired from their ministerial portfolios and you could have garnered their support, understand this, he could have garnered their support. At that time, it was 20/16: PNM 20, UNC 16.

The Member for Diego Martin West had the support of seven other MPs; that means eight votes. Sixteen plus eight is 24. He had that possibility but never filed a Motion of No Confidence to remove the man who was facilitating Calder Hart’s power. He did not do that. That is the time when a No Confidence Motion is supposed to be used. That is what the Constitution was there for, that is section 77, not to come and play stop all the work.

And I do not know what the Member for Diego Martin Central “have with” Minister Verna St. Rose-Greaves. She just reached in six months. He believed the PNM only started in 2007 when Calder Hart got the Member for San Fernando

East to remove Ken Valley and put him. He thinks the PNM started then. The PNM Government began in December 24, 2001. In that period of 10 years they never brought a Children Bill. Miss Verna St. Rose-Greaves brings the Bill in six months, and he “have” a problem with the Minister. Minister, I commend you, and well done. And we shall begin the debate—[*Desk thumping*]

And I wish we did not have to waste time here right now and we could be passing those Bills to impact on the lives of citizens. But the Member for Diego Martin West, his ego and his position—he even went as far to attack a sick man. I would not even do that, I would rest that one for now, let him get better. [*Crosstalk*] You did in your speech, check the *Hansard*.

So he never filed a Motion of No Confidence. The spirit of the Constitution—you see, there are the words of the Constitution and there is the spirit of the Constitution. The spirit is about power to the people. So once people vote, the Parliament, the Constitution is designed to protect that. That is why there are special privileges for Members of Parliament as opposed to, maybe, Senators and so on. When you read the Constitution and the Standing Orders, Members of Parliament are very important because the people have put us there. Whether you get 16,000 votes, like the Member for Chaguanas West, or whether you go in a PNM stronghold that was sure to win and beat the former Minister of Finance by only 1,400, but “licks is licks”, or whether you are a Leader of the Opposition in a marginal seat—and Rocky Garcia coming for you next time—the point is that you were voted in and, therefore, the Constitution, the Parliament, its Standing Orders protect that.

So therefore, even though a Prime Minister has some awesome responsibilities, based on what I have just said, if a Prime Minister is to remove or fire an MP from being a Minister, it must be for a grave dereliction of duty. So in 2006/2007, when the Member for San Fernando East was Prime Minister and fired the Member for Diego Martin West and put him on the back bench it had to be one or two things: either he had committed a grave dereliction of duty, and therefore the Member for San Fernando East was right to move him, or if what he claims is true, then the Member for San Fernando East was wrong and he went against the spirit of the Constitution and, therefore, at that time it was the pertinent time for the Member for Diego Martin West to file a Motion of No Confidence, garner his seven MPs and go across, at that time, and talk to the then Leader of the Opposition, Basdeo Panday; and try to come up to save the country. Had he done that, he would have saved the taxpayers at least \$16 billion. Calder Hart, Ken Julien and Uthara Rao—and he is talking about attacking. What he was

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talking about, that we have to pay because some man was fired on contract, there was some agreement, and they have to pay the man \$1 million. What about when his Government paid Uthara Rao—accuser—there were several accusations, and there were seven women who had accused Uthara Rao of certain things, but his Government paid TT \$410,000 to settle that? And when asked about it, the then Minister in the Ministry of Finance Conrad Enill said: “well we have to take the good with the bad. Uthara Rao is so good that we must accept some of these drawbacks”—

Hon. Member: And that was taxpayers’ dollars.

Hon. A. Roberts:—“some of these negatives.” “A man who anything he see, he grabbin, grabbin, that is acceptable over there, and you saying no confidence here.”

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. A. Roberts: He is a grabber. Yes. But just remember when you play with this Constitution—the Constitution is a very serious document; it is the supreme law of the land. And to come here, throw out all the work of the Parliament, all the work of the people to bring a frivolous Motion of No Confidence and even admitting before you bring that you had no chance—you never even had a discussion with any one of us. You might have called me and said: “boy you might have no confidence in the Member for Siparia, whe yuh think?” You would not dare do that because you know all of us have full confidence in our Prime Minister and we know there is no question about it. Whether it is COP, whether it is MSJ, TOP, NJAC or UNC; you all thought we would crumble in a month. “Allyuh” crumbling now, I do not know how much coalition “all yuh” have. We have five parties, “all yuh look like yuh have seven”. Louis Lee Sing has his own because you appoint him and he attacking you and you are leaving him there.

This Prime Minister is a leader because she supports and believes in the Constitution. And always remember, the Constitution is confidence; confidence is constitutional. The Member for Siparia upholds, respects and lives the Constitution thus confidence resides within our Prime Minister.

6.10 p.m.

Now, it is terrible enough to disrespect the Constitution in its written form but, even worse, to trample on the spirit of our nation’s supreme law. Unfortunately, the Member for Diego Martin West does both with consummate ease and computerized consistency. Let me prove it.

Let us go to the Preamble of the Constitution, this great document, and let us read:

“Whereas the People of Trinidad and Tobago—

- (a) have affirmed that the Nation of Trinidad and Tobago is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, faith in fundamental human rights and freedoms, the position of the family in a society of free man and free institutions, the dignity of the human person...”

Mr. Cadiz: You are giving the lady there pressure.

Hon. A. Roberts: But she could just read it. It is on page—“equal and inalienable rights”—I have plenty things. I need about three hours, you know. “Do not disturb meh.” [*Laughter*]

“...with which all members of the human family are endowed by their Creator;”

So, that is the Preamble of the Constitution. Now, in brief, that deals with rights, freedoms and dignity. Okay? Let us deal with that.

Now, remember, I am proud to be a “dougla, half/half”. You cannot tell, because I have no hair, but proud to be. “So, nobody can’t talk no race ting with me, because meh mother was pure Indian, East Indian, wearing sari every day”—God rest her soul—“and meh father is big, strong black African Tobagonian, so I could talk anything. Nobody can’t talk no race ting with me. But leh we talk about race and Diego Martin West.” The Member for Diego Martin West got up in this Parliament—and this is sometimes why I wonder—you know, you felt so proud to come in here and put your hand on the *Bible* and swear, and he made the most venomous attack on the Attorney General—“that the Attorney General had gone to some Consulate in New York, and all he was interested in was how much Indian, and who is Indian and all of that”, and it turned out to be a total fabrication. He is yet to apologize. That is really not parliamentary. It is definitely not leadership work in a multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial society, and it should be frowned upon.

The Prime Minister went to India—the great leader that she is, 29 seats, 422,000 votes—and saw an elder president, and showed respect based on her Hindu upbringing and touched the feet of this president. That gentleman, the Member for Diego Martin West—I know he is not a gentleman—went on to attack the Prime Minister and said: “We must bow to nobody and he would bow to nobody.” He is bowing to Louis Lee Sing and “he eh even touch he foot yet.”

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It shows, dealing with race, that the Member for Diego Martin West, who has lived in this country for longer than me, because he is older than me—we have the same hairstyle, but he has it longer—clearly does not understand, respect or take the time to learn people’s traditions, their ways and to live our motto about tolerance. He has not done that, because any other human being would have understood that a great leader shows it by being humble.

You do not have to come every day and say, “I am the Leader of the Opposition, I am the leader, leader, leader.” You only say that in a soca fete. [Laughter] “If you are a leader, you doh ha to say that, we go say it.” Do you feel the Prime Minister has to come and say she is the leader? She is the leader. “She doh have to say it.” She is leading.

Then, the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education builds a campus in the deep south or turned sod for a UWI campus, and the Member for Diego Martin West says that is dangerous. Totally inappropriate! Dangerous for what? “Dey have bad doubles down dey that the students might eat and end up having to go in de toilet?” What is he talking about? We are fed up with the implications about any form or fashion of race in this country. We have lifted ourselves out of that, and we are never going back to that. [Desk thumping]

I sat in this Chamber—you could check the *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, where you had to pull me up, because I was sitting and crosstalk—I shouted out at that time. “That is racist!” And you stood up, rightfully so, and said: “D’Abadie/O’Meara that language is not appropriate”, but let me tell you why I said it—because the Minister of the People and Social Development was on his feet speaking, and making a great contribution and the Member for Diego Martin West looked out and shouted at him and said: “Go and put more coconut oil in yuh head.” I looked at him and told him that is racist. My mother used to rub coconut oil on my head every day I come out the swimming pool.

Mr. Speaker: Wait, wait.

Hon. A. Roberts: It is true.

Mr. Speaker: I have ruled on that matter. I want you to withdraw that comment in terms of reintroducing a matter that I have ruled on. Just withdraw that remark, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: So I withdraw and move on, but I must say that my mother did put coconut oil on my head. [Laughter] “Every time we come out the pool,

she put it on to make sure meh head looking nice. I eh ha no problem with that, and she rub meh foot with it and all kind ah ting.” [*Crosstalk*] What is this? They must not say those things.

The Member for Diego Martin West spoke about the Government’s trip and mission to India—about the Prime Minister and so many Ministers going to India—“how long dey stay, and so long dey stay and why dey stay so long, and how much it cost, and what dey do”. All of this, they made a big furore about going to India, also implying that this Government shows a preference. You see, it is all about race politics, and we are here today to debate that and say get rid of the race. [*Desk thumping*] There is no race. It is people in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

But, do you know the funny thing? One of them stood up and said: “Obama does only go for two days, dis one does go for ah day, how come de Prime Minister and other Ministers went for nine days, seven days or however long it was?” Well, I now take you to Cabinet Note 444 which approved travel for the hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West to India. He has to be in India from March 15—20, 2012.

So, by my estimate—and I have travelled to over 147 countries—he has to leave on the 12th and come back on the 22nd. That is about 10 days, and the cost of it is—for the group it is \$522,000—but for him alone, \$74,000. Is that a waste of money? Is that terrible? What is the problem? So do not come in the Parliament and mislead people. All of a sudden we are going—on top of that you are seeing investments coming. This one is laughing about Rituals, but it is 50 Rituals; not one but 50 are going to be set up. Already we have Indian businessmen coming down for foreign direct investment, all because of that. Brazil is opening up, and you come and criticize for no other reason than to appeal to your base.

Let me let you in on a little secret—“tell them the dougla tell yuh”—the race thing done. “All yuh eh ha no base again. [*Desk thumping*] It eh ha no base.” [*Desk thumping*] The base is people who could read, understand, listen, think and vote on their conscience, “So all yuh have ah long time over there. Well, not all ah all yuh, because some ah all yuh was hoping Sando East would ah come back, so all yuh mighten be there,” but if the Leader of the Opposition survives Louis Lee Sing, he will choose his Opposition.”

So we are moving on. Now, this is not new. It is not new of the PNM. I am telling you I was born PNM, more PNM than most of them here. “I come out with diapers—with cloth diapers with big pin with balisier on it.” [*Laughter and*

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crosstalk] “Rowley would ah take down meh pampers and move de balisier, but is all right.” Member for Diego Martin West, it is not new. When you read a PNM analysis and writing about the founding father and the PNM—*Eric Williams: The Myth and the Man* by Selwyn Ryan—I think all of you know him—and you go to chapter 22, The “Hindu Question”, he starts off:

“In the pre-independence period, neither Williams nor his followers understood the political psychology of the Hindus in Trinidad.”

You see what I am saying, nothing has changed.

“If they had, they would never have assumed that a few urban assimilationist Hindus could rally the Hindu masses behind the nationalist movement. In the 1956 elections, the PNM was unable to attract more than a few Hindus...”

The same thing in May 2010.

“...who had any legitimacy among their community, and those who were so attracted rapidly lost most of their supporters. A count of delegates at the seventh annual convention of the PNM in 1963 revealed that only 7 per cent were Indian.”

The convention last year did not have any election because the Member for Diego Martin West wanted Rahael, and Pennelope Beckles wanted to be chairman, and he decided not to have any vote; there was less than 7 per cent of Hindus there.

So nothing has changed, and it is nothing new, but the population is fed up with that. That is why you are on that side; that is why you are going to remain there. We would appreciate if you would stop wasting Parliament’s time about no confidence in the Prime Minister, because the whole country has confidence in her. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, even your PNM.

“Williams’s attacks on the Hindi linguistic movement, the Hindu School building programme (he described the Maha Sabha-constructed schools as ‘cow-sheds’).”

We just had the Member for Diego Martin West talking about one isolated incident about a Maha Sabha school, and across here you are hearing, “Sat Maharaj, Sat Maharaj”. Those days done PNM! It is done and dusted. The people are fed up with that.

They want to know about road, drain, recreation ground and about food. Do you want some? [*Crosstalk*] You might get, because you wrote, but some of your MPs do not write. The Member for Diego Martin West did not write because

maybe his people in Diego Martin West do not want recreation ground, but I am not waiting for him to write. We are going to “fix up” all the people, whether they are PNM, UNC, COP, TOP or MSJ, it does not matter. We are the Government for everybody; not this piece of PNM stupidity. [*Desk thumping*]

Professor Ryan continued about Williams with the “Hindu Question”. “Leh we talk race, leh we open it. I might feel I is the only one who could really talk it franko-men, so leh we talk it.”

“But once in power, Williams became a strict and uncompromising majoritarian; any ethnic group that did not rally behind the PNM was recalcitrant, treasonable or obscurantist. Despite his genuine intellectual commitment on multiracialism, he refused to concede minority communities the right to elect their own kind, or to articulate their own version of the national community. The majoritarian thesis implicitly promised a homogeneous society, a non-racial rather than a multiracial society.”

We now have a Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism that “all yuh did not answer; all yuh didn’t understand”. [*Desk thumping*]

“C.L.R. James, once a leading activist in the PNM, also accused the PNM leadership of fanaticism and gangsterism on the racial question...James himself was not blameless on this issue...”

But what I am reading, this is ’56—’63, and right now I am seeing, under this Leader of the Opposition, the mould has not changed, you need to change it. Maybe you need more “douglas”, I do not know, but you need more understanding, more respect. Do not attack a Prime Minister for her religious belief and showing respect to an elder. How could you do that? That is insensitive to over half the country that we “live, lime and love”. You cannot do that! [*Desk thumping*]

Now, we move on to another issue, and it raises its head right here in this debate, and that is the gender issue. I am seeing the gender issue has continued under the PNM, because we came here for a serious constitutional No Confidence Motion, and all the Member for Diego West could say is, attack a female Member from Tobago East about, “When she here, she used a credit card to buy food and thing” and she paid back every cent. That is attacking a woman for \$4,000.

Now, I have a serious problem, because never have I heard the Member for Diego Martin West—when the Member for San Fernando East fired him for asking Calder Hart, “Where de money gone?” When he put him under integrity

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probe, after probe, after probe, and when former Minister Dick-Forde went at him, went at him, went at him—I did not hear the Member for Diego Martin West say, “Well, Sando East, yuh shoes dirty or wey yuh buy dem shoes, or dat suit eh nice, or dem clothes, wey yuh put on dat make-up. I eh hear that.” But since the Member for Siparia came into office, all the Member for Diego Martin West could say is, “Yuh eh see dat shoe she wearing, all dat make-up and that hair. Why she singing? Why she dancing?” So it leaves me to ask, what is the problem? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “He eh like woman at all.”

Hon. A. Roberts: Is there a fear of strong powerful women, Member for Diego Martin West? “Yuh fraid woman? But I would tell yuh, it is clear that the PNM fraid woman.” Just ask Sen. Penelope Beckles; [*Desk thumping*] just ask Camille Robinson-Regis; just ask Joan Yuille-Williams; just ask Diane Seukeran”—

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: Overruled. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you. As I said, the Member for Diego Martin West, he never criticized the Member for San Fernando East on how he dresses, how he walks and so on, but suddenly he is criticizing the female Prime Minister. It baffles me. He never criticized Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds about the “pomme cythere ras”. He “never say nothing”, but every—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Withdraw that; withdraw that!

Mr. Speaker: Do not make reference to any Member of the other House.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: They are not here to defend themselves.

Hon. A. Roberts: No problem. I apologize, and I withdraw. I would never say that again. I like “pommecythere” to eat.

Now, they also have another Senator in the other place whose tie is always down by his belly button. I did not hear the Member for Diego Martin West—I did not call any name, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Do not refer to any Member of the Senate. They are not here to defend themselves, and that is a distinct House, which has what is called exclusive cognizance over their business. Do not refer to Members of the Senate, please.

6.25 p.m.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a Member of the PNM—who has a card and who is in public with his tie down to here by his belly button—getting on in the most serious of issues and I never hear the Member for Diego Martin West talk about his dress code; but every time the female Prime Minister puts on a dress—to me, I find she dresses very good. [*Desk thumping*] I think I am qualified, in some form or fashion to say who looks good and who does not look good. Not so, Member for Diego Martin Central? [*Interruption*] Oh, he is not there?

Now, moving right along, on this gender issue—because it is a serious one—our country is privileged to elect an intelligent, strong woman to lead; so much so that CNN, *Time* magazine and Harvard are all so impressed with our female leader, but something is wrong in the PNM. When Franklin Khan can beat Penelope Beckles for chairmanship in a party, you know something has to be wrong. Anybody who is unbiased and impartial will know that Penelope Beckles—her political career, her education, her love for people and so on—is chalk and cheese above Franklin Khan.

All Franklin Khan was studying was the Vidara? What was it? Vidara? Something to build houses for \$60 million and so on. Anybody who knows, and wants the best, would know that Penelope Beckles must win. You know she lost in the PNM? [*Laughter*] This is a problem. So, understand, you need to reinvent yourself and come away from that racist paradigm and gender issues. Open up yourself and—[*Interruption*] I am overdoing it? Every day. You want me to repeat it? I will start over, you know. If you want me to start over, I would start over. [*Laughter*] I have other things to do.

Now, let us move right along. Just remember the theme: the Preamble to the Constitution; this section here talks about equity and respect. So, it means gender issues, gender equity, equality of race, ethnicity, all the resources must be shared equally among the people; no fear, no favour, deal with people as people. That is why the Constitution is confidence. This is what we are talking about. This is a serious debate, you know. You would not get that from how the Member for Diego Martin West started off. The debate started when the Member for Oropouche East started.

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The Constitution is confidence; confidence is constitutional, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Siparia upholds, respects and lives this Constitution; thus, confidence is reposed within our Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] This debate is vexatious but, no problem, if they want it they will get it.

Let us go on to (b) of the Preamble which deals with social justice, equity and so on. This Government has started developing areas that have been neglected for decades. Anybody living in the countryside knows that, “Boy, some people eh get water.” I heard my MP for Couva North saying, “After 46 years people get water.” When you see the recreation grounds throughout the countryside, you would not believe that, really and truly, people in the countryside are fitter and more athletic because they do not have all the computers, malls and things. They have to walk to school; they have to run—you are supposed to look for athletes there.

When I came in and checked, there were recreation grounds only in the towns and cities that the PNM was doing. Well, we changed that, so now the focus is national rather than urban. [*Desk thumping*] Do you know the ironic thing? The only one suggestion the Member for Diego Martin West has come up with in 22 months—remember the Member for Oropouche East asked him, “Well, what is your plan? Everything we do you do not like. We put children fund, you vex for that. We bring hamper, you vex for that; laptop, you vex. The pension we raise, you vex. Everything, you vex.” The Member for Oropouche East asked him: “Well, what is your suggestion?” You know the one suggestion the Member for Diego Martin West made in 22 months?

Dr. Moonilal: Remove the balisier tie.

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, “we coming there just now”; you know I would not let that one go.

He said he would bring—it is a good thing it will never happen—a ministry of rural affairs. [*Laughter*] We do not need a ministry of rural affairs, we are the ministry of everybody. The Member is still in that warp, that urban myth of the PNM, that everybody is in Port of Spain and San Fernando and nobody else exists. So, do not worry about that.

This Prime Minister brought The Ministry of the People. Hear the name of that. [*Interruption*] He criticised that too, you know. Government is about people. I just went through and told the Member that the spirit of the Constitution is about people, for people, to protect people. The Prime Minister brought a Ministry of the People, he has a problem with people. [*Interruption*] And it is the People’s National Movement, but like they moved out all the people because they have no

more support. The Member for Diego Martin West said he told his supporters not to come by the Parliament. There are none. *[Laughter]* Early Childhood Centres, 29 in 22 months; they took 10 years and built 22 of which half were not finished. Early Childhood Centres are the essence of development for children, especially in the at-risk communities; you must have that. Laptops for the children; recreation grounds all over, and no \$1.1 billion in Tarouba to waste. Calder Hart?

The Member for Diego Martin West talked about something, “Well, he disclosed, you know”, trying to pretend. The law is, if you have any interest you are to disclose it and remove yourself. That is the Constitution, everybody should be equal to have an opportunity, once they disclose.

Now, the Member did not know about disclosing when Karen Nunez-Tesheira was in D’Abadie/O’Meara, when she did not disclose anything; but he did not say anything about that; talking about disclosure and \$27 million. You know, he had the audacity to say, “That is the next Calder Hart” about that \$27 million. I am sorry, this is a serious debate, but I nearly fell off this leather chair when he said “Calder Hart”. I nearly fell off, laughing. Calder Hart, of Customs building, \$250 million over. Ministry of Legal Affairs, \$375 million over. The NAPA and the SAPA \$700 million over. The Tarouba stadium, \$800 million over. That is the same Calder Hart he is talking about? In the words of the young people, Member for Diego Martin West, “rest meh nah”. *[Laughter]* *[Interruption]* You do not want to hear it again? Obama needs a hug, he is coming back. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker: Member—

Hon. A. Roberts: Withdrawn, sorry, Mr. Speaker, I take back that hug there. *[Laughter]* Sorry.

Mr. Speaker, another issue made by this People’s National Movement Opposition is, “look, labour protesting, look at all the protests” and so on. Well, let me deal with that in two ways: The CPO, the Ministry of Finance and this Government have concluded negotiations with 94 per cent of the unions for 2008—2011; finished. We now started to negotiate 2011—2014. Now the last time I checked, the Government in 2008 was the PNM. They refused to negotiate with labour.

In 2005, they had Hilton workers still working for 2003 salaries; the former Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, when oil was US \$147 per barrel and gas was \$13.81 per MMBtu, “tell labour tighten dey belt.” And, you all have the audacity now to come and say that the People’s Partnership, even though we have MSJ, is anti-labour? We are not. The economy is turning, we are moving

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and we are still negotiating and settling. The reason people feel free to protest is because they actually have a hope that we will listen. How many people remember when the Member for San Fernando East and the PNM beat our people into submission?

Mr. Speaker, if you like a girl you will call her and talk to her or you will write a letter to her and she ignores you once, twice, three times, five times, 10 times, 20 times, 100 times, a normal human being will give up at some point. They might say, “Boy, dis gyul really eh like meh, she eh taking meh on” and move on. That is what the PNM did to the population. They beat us on the head. The only protest that succeeded was the smelter protest which was the longest, most sustained protest in history. And, what did the Prime Minister say? “All yuh keep protesting, you eh go get one, you would get three.”

They told you do not build Tarouba, you say, “Forget that, any Tom, Dick or Harrilal could say what they want, you are getting Tarouba.” Look where Tarouba is and you all have the audacity to come and talk about \$4,000 in chicken and doubles that has been paid back? That is the No Confidence Motion; that is what you have the whole country on pause for? Today in the *Daily Express* and the *Newsday*, five pages, no confidence; Rowley versus Siparia. Heavyweights do not fight in lightweight battle. [Desk thumping] Media, let me tell you the real battle and you all can take a picture. The real battle is the Member for Diego Martin West versus the Mayor of Port of Spain. They are two lightweights and they will fight it out. Do not bring the Prime Minister in that thing.

Now, you can always tell what the character of a human being is when they remember where they came from. You see, the Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, proud; a little girl from Siparia becomes Prime Minister; 30 kilometres of road; 15 kilometres of drain already; four recreation grounds started; campus coming; house building; she is taking care of her constituents after years of PNM neglect because she remembers where she came from and that is good.

Let us talk about Diego Martin West and where the Member came from. He comes from Tobago. Now, remember, my father is from Tobago, too. [Interruption] What is this about? You listen.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the Hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [Hon. W. Peters]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Before you continue, may I just appeal to hon. Members that even though it is a very important Motion before this honourable House, let us try to maintain a certain level of dignity, decorum and the richest traditions of parliamentary standards in this honourable House.

I would want to go to the records, after you are through, to deal with an expression you mentioned, attributed to Members on the other side. I think you mentioned something about “racist paradigm”. I think we are all honourable Members in this House and I think it is not proper to attribute—because when you talk about the PNM you are talking about members of the PNM and that, by implication, could give the wrong signal.

So, I want to go to the *Hansard* and have that expunged from the records. Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also say that when I made that statement I gave examples of the people existing over there right now. It does not matter.

6.40 p.m.

Let us talk about Tobago because the Member for Diego Martin West is from Tobago. I recall that at one time in 1995/96, he was the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Marine Resources! Yet, in Tobago there is no marina for any form or fashion of boat. The Member loves to go— as you know, I coach George Bovell, his father is an avid fisherman on a nice, big boat, and the Member for Diego Martin West is frequently on that boat over in tournaments in Tobago, and so on, from time immemorial. So he cannot say that he does not know about the situation in Tobago that has existed forever. But he was Land and Marine Resources and they have no marina in Tobago. All the sport fishing, all the money, all the tourism going up to Grenada, St. Kitts, Antigua. He did not care to take care of Tobago—Marine Resources.

When a fisherman in Tobago wants to go fishing in his little pirogue, you know what he has to do? He has to take some bottles, gallon, plastic bottles, which is illegal—forcing fishermen to do illegal things— go and fill them up. If he “doh have a car, he have to hope he stop ah taxi who would not mind the car smelling of gas and put the gas in the trunk, walk down so.” There is no jetty, so then “when he reach he have to swim; good thing Tobagonians strong and could swim with two thing, ah gallon ah gas, swim onto the pirogue and pour it in.”

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That is Tobago, that is Mr. Tobago, Land and Marine Resources. But Siparia would not suffer that because this Prime Minister remembers where she came from.

But one thing Tobago has—the world was waiting, but one of a kind, you know, ESPN was lining up, Fox Sports, all CNN, all the sports channels were waiting for the goat track, a hundred million dollars on a goat track but no marina. That is PNM. That is what they are confident in.

I notice the Member for Diego Martin Central talked about all kinds of historical things that the PNM did, which is good, granted; but he “never once say he have confidence” in the Member for Diego Martin West, and this debate is about having no confidence in Diego Martin West. That is what we are debating here.

They build, PNM again—oh, you want more? Okay, Tobago. They “build a fish market in Tobago now,” we have the Minister of Food Production here, he built over 19 across Trinidad, “he moving to Tobago shortly, right,” and the fishermen are happy. I could not believe my eyes when a fisherman asked me, “Boss, yuh know what that is?” I saw a closed-up yellow building with a green roof, with one window. “Ah say that, wha is that? They say wha is that?” I said, well, that is something to store. They said it is for fishermen. I said, well, that must be to store their engine and equipment, and so on, if they have to do a little repair. They said that is the fish market. Mr. Speaker, a fish market, closed up, no window? “I eh know if all yuh understand fish, yuh know,” but that is PNM confidence. That is Tobago “for yuh”.

In 22 months the Leader of the Opposition has not written the Minister of Sport a letter to say, “Boy, Scorpion, we need a recreation ground, Northern Savannah, Cumana, Point Cumana by the primary school.” He has not written one letter to me as Minister of Sport, he has not called me, texted me. “All the time we here he eh pull me aside and say: Aye, mih children need equipment—not true?—I have a football team, cricket team.” Nothing. I was listening to my voice mail about a week ago, “next thing ah hear a secretary saying, give me a number, and call Dr. Keith Rowley. Well, as ah hear that message, ah call him one time.” Leader of the Opposition, I am privileged to know what he wants. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “He resigning.”

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, I do not know. You know what the Member for Diego Martin West called me for? Not about children, and the uniforms, and football and cricket, and things like that, you know; he called me to tell me that he

is playing a golf tournament in Tobago with some pro golfers and the hotel bill needs paying. Golf. Golf is a nice sport but, I mean, I thought a Member of Parliament—remember he attacked me there and talked about some inter-constituency games, he did not even know Diego Martin West won the tournament, \$150,000, first prize. He did not even know a team from his constituency won. He and the Member for Laventille West attacked me. “And is a PNM group that put it on but we doh care, we support.” If you have a good idea whether you are PNM, Independent, COP, UNC if you have a good idea, we support it. And they are looking very red, he did not even know, but they beat D’Abadie/O’Meara in the finals, so congratulations.

Now, part (c) of the Preamble deals with meritocracy. Now, just looking across there at the PNM MPs, you could show that PNM “doh know nothing” about meritocracy because out of 188,000 people to choose from, this could not be the best. It could not be. And it is not my words. No, no, no, “doh look at me vex, yuh know, doh look at me vex because I eh saying it.”

The Mayor—insulting you? It is not me, not me. Your Mayor, appointed by the Member for Diego Martin West— he is not elected, he is an alderman. Mayor Louis Lee Sing says that “given the weak PNM”—“doh get vex” with me, I love “all yuh because all yuh is very good fuh us” over here—“team within the Parliament, we will not only be outgunned but outmatched.” So “doh watch me vex”, call Louis. You understand? Do not ask Anil, ask Louis.

Let us talk about Tobago and the philosophy. Mr. Speaker, I was in Tobago and I read the *Tobago News* and I was totally shocked because you know you are talking about— I apologize for using strong terms, but let us read what the PNM arm of Tobago says now. And people listen— you must read *Tobago News*, you know, because this is a serious thing, and this is what that Leader of the Opposition, who is claiming no confidence in this Prime Minister from Siparia, who loves everybody— from child to 105-year-old, man, woman, child, in between—she loves everybody and takes care of everybody with policies across the board, from legal affairs to health, Ministry of the People, education, foreign affairs, local government, everything to deal with people. Listen to what this leader, who says he is ready to be Prime Minister—well, boy, anyway, this is an article printed in the *Tobago News* by the Tobago Council of the PNM. Now, listen carefully; the story was created October 13, 2011, at 10:00 p.m., Eastern Time, so

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it would have been printed some time in that week, October, and it was put on the website there; the story was updated October 13, 2011, okay. Hear the story now:

PNM Council: However this column has always placed full confidence in the intelligence of the majority of people in Tobago and as such we remain confident that they will recognize the harm that is likely to come to Tobagonians by the attempt by the Tobago Organization of the People to sell out the heritage of Tobago and Tobagonians to strangers. Already hundreds of Tobagonians have begun to realize the seriousness of their position and they are gravitating away from these people who are traitors to the interest of Tobagonians. The people of Tobago can expect to see strangers providing huge sums of monies to the Judases of Tobago to buy out the island. We know that Tobagonians are smarter than that. The huge crowd that attended the activities on the weekend is but a small indication of support by the people who are willing to protect this place from aliens from another dimension and the erosion will get worse as time goes on as more Tobagonians say to Ashworth Jack and his other puppets: Tobago is not for sale, we will not be wined and dined and be kicked and spitted—ah, that is not my words—upon tomorrow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious thing because, as far as I know, for the longest time, foreigners cannot purchase land, and so on, in Tobago. We will soon change that because it is impacting on the economy. So the only strangers they are talking about here are Trinidadians who are coming across to Tobago to invest and to work. It is one twin-island state the last time I checked, and I check every day, Trinidad and Tobago, and yet this is PNM— who are saying no confidence in a People's Partnership that is all-embracing—are saying Tobago for Tobago.

So therefore, if this is the philosophy of the Member for Diego Martin West, his house in Glencoe and all his property in Trinidad should be taken away because he is from Tobago so he should not have anything in Trinidad. This is a dangerous thing. My father is from Tobago, so all his property and his house in Trinidad should be taken away. This is the philosophy of the People's National Movement. And I give you a chance, Member for Diego Martin West, to distance yourself from this. [*Crosstalk*] Throw it on Orville London, or somebody, but you cannot stand in this Parliament, the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and

Tobago and endorse this, talking about Trinidadians as aliens. We are one people. How we reach aliens from another dimension? Where did that come from? Cucharan Trace.

Now, it was amazing to hear when we are talking about meritocracy, but I think the Member for Diego Martin Central and even the Member for the Member for Diego Martin West—oh, Diego Martin Central is asking about how it took so long to appoint boards. Well, it is very easy if you are the PNM, you say: “Calder Hart, you is my boy, I will fire everybody else, including the MP, including Diego Martin West, ah fire everybody because you are my boy, and I put you on 10 board.” Yes, that happens fast. All you have to say is, “Calder Hart, you on 10, bam, bam, bam, Cabinet Note, Calder Hart, 10; Ken Julien, six; Uthara Rao, take two; Noel Garcia, you take three.” That is easy.

But when you are putting proper corporate governance structures in place, saying one board per person, one chairman for one board, no interlocking directorship, so that one man cannot be in charge of Home Mortgage Bank, talk to the PNM treasurer and sell \$110 million in shares, “take ah thing”, come back, make \$20 million and sit down. That is what we are about. So if it took a little longer, so be it, because we must protect the Treasury from the PNM way of doing things. So you all could learn. So I really want to know where this no confidence thing came from.

Now, talking about meritocracy, the Member for Diego Martin West had the audacity to talk about lack of consultation. This Government, the Prime Minister does consult with everybody. The Prime Minister does consult with everybody, whether it is Cabinet, whether it is Councillors, whether it is party officials, whether it is people, whether it is businessmen, and so on. The Member for Diego Martin West just woke up one morning, did not discuss anything with the other PNM members, did not go to the General Council and tell them, “you know, I had a idea, ah woke up this morning and while I was drinking meh Nescafe ah got a idea.” He just “take off he balisier tie” and walks into Parliament and expects everybody else to follow, and is talking about consultation. A simple thing like a balisier tie, “he eh consult nobody and coming to discuss that we doh consult. Ah mean, please.”

Now this is a debate about no confidence, and it is meritocracy, the Constitution which—Diego Martin West is against the Constitution in his actions, because everything I have shown goes against the Preamble.

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I congratulate him on being a geologist but this Prime Minister not only has “a LLB, not only pass the Bar, not only a practising lawyer, not only have Silk, she have a Masters in Business Administration. So all ah that, I think a reasonable person see MBA and LLB and Bar and lawyer and thing—geologist, I wonder who they have confidence in.” Because it is clear that this geologist definitely has “problem with stones, whether it is National Quarries or whether it is gravel from Scarborough to Landate, he ha problem with stones. Any time it have stones, it have problems, National Quarries, Scarborough to Landate, gravel moving, buh yuh talking about no confidence in this Prime Minister. Doh watch me, you know, doh watch me.” [*Crosstalk*]

Now, “ah running out ah time, you know”. The Member for Diego Martin West brought some report on one contract of something from Caribbean Airlines. This is the Uff report, the whole thing fraught with PNM, Calder Hart, procurement, lack of procurement.

Remember in 2001, December 24, the then PNM Government was formed, 18/18, based on procurement, based on moral and spiritual values. You know since that time, that entire 10 years the PNM came in on one thing, anti-corruption, they said they were going to change procurement. “Ten years pass, any procurement reach? They reach White Paper. You know what they do?” They took the White Paper and handed it to Calder Hart and Ken Julien. They said, no, they pulled back the White Paper and went back to discuss. [*Crosstalk*] That is exactly what happened.

Now, in 2012, this People’s Partnership is moving forward with procurement, a Joint Select Committee. The same PNM who came in 2001, in 2012 they pulled out of the Joint Select Committee saying the People’s Partnership has no position. But what is your position? It continues because they will never want procurement legislation. And you know who has the audacity to talk about it? “Oh gosh, leh me see, all you help me nah, boy, ah have too much—ah running out ah time, boy.” You know who has the audacity to talk about it? The Member for Diego Martin North/East. The Member for Diego Martin North/East says:

“We are,”—this is *Newsday*, Clint Chan Tack, February 29, right, 2012,—“of the view,”—that is the PNM—“that the Government must articulate its policy position of procurement before we can contribute to a further level. There are too many mixed signals coming out of the Government Ministries, State Enterprise”—not People’s Partnership Government—“he claimed under the coalition, it is almost a free for all where tendering procedures are concerned.”

This is the man who bought a *Su* that can—they “tie it up there, if they only release the rope it sink,” for \$50 million. This is the man that, when the Joint Select, when the JCC; this is the Member—yes, he is not a man, the Member of Parliament, who, when the local construction industry was up in arms because they had not, they said they did not even do a feasibility on the Rapid Rail, the country was hearing that the Rapid Rail was \$8 billion, \$16 billion, \$24 billion. The Member for Diego Martin North/East stood in this House and said it is sour grapes, “all ah them contractors, because they eh getting nothing.” He said that a feasibility study had been done and therefore they were upset because the feasibility showed that foreigners had the technology, and so on. You know what Phase One turned out to be, Mr. Speaker, at \$575 million? You know what Phase One was? A feasibility study. And this is the man, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who is talking about procurement. [*Crosstalk*]

6.55 p.m.

But then, let me give you a story now; let me give you a little story. You all remember a while ago with this Rapid Rail, there were two major companies bidding, Bombardier and TriniTrain Consortium, China Rail, and so on. And while the process was going on, and this was under the Ministry of Works and Transport, one Monday we opened our *Express* newspaper and we saw a picture of a Bombardier jet, a big nice picture, and then we read a story that told us where the former Prime Minister and his wife had gone on this plane and where it went—it went around Antigua—and what they had for lunch. It was brilliant reporting. “I in the media and I never see reporting so.” The report was so pellucidly clear that they knew everything.

But then let us follow the story: if you all remember there was a time when Bombardier was claiming—after the contract was awarded to TriniTrain, Bombardier put full-page ads saying: “Listen, we don't understand this. Our dual propulsion trains”—now “dual propulsion” means “if current go, and under the PNM current used to go all the time”, you flick the switch and diesel will come on. So, nobody is stuck, you could keep moving. So Bombardier said, but the then Minister of Works and Transport—I am not going to look at him now. The then Minister of Works and Transport told the Tenders' Committee that dual propulsion was not to be tolerated. It was not industry standard.

Mr. Imbert:—according to Standing Order 36(5); he is not speaking the truth.

Hon. A. Roberts: For the first time.

Mr. Imbert: Not for the first time, he is lying.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, withdraw that word, please. Hon. Member, do not repeat that language, the word.

Mr. Imbert: He is speaking untruth.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Members, this is a substantive Motion. Wait, wait, wait, wait. This is a substantive Motion. It is not the ordinary Motion. You have to give members flexibility. What I am not going to tolerate is bringing indignity to this House. It is a serious Motion. It is not an ordinary everyday Motion. It is the only time that Members have a freedom that they do not normally have. And I am going to be exercising a certain kind of judgment in this. The Standing Orders have not been suspended, but at the same time, it is a substantive Motion. It is not an ordinary Motion, it is not an ordinary debate. So, Members must have a certain degree of flexibility in this debate. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, he said I spoke to the Tenders Committee and gave them an instruction that is untrue. He is imputing improper motives.

Mr. Speaker: All right, all right.

Mr. Imbert: I did no such thing.

Mr. Speaker: All right, take your seat. Whilst I am on my legs, you cannot stand.

Hon. A. Roberts: I will change it.

Mr. Speaker: You are going to have a chance to rebut in this debate. All right, okay.

Mr. Imbert: I did no such thing.

Mr. Speaker: All right, okay.

Hon. A. Roberts: That is what you say.

Mr. Speaker: The Member is saying he said no such thing, withdraw that and move on.

Hon. A. Roberts: No problem, I will move on.

Mr. Speaker: Withdraw that and move on.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, what I said was, and you could check *Hansard*, was that Bombardier, the company, said that the Tenders' Committee had been instructed—Bombardier said that, not me, right—that dual propulsion was not to be considered because it was not the industry standard. Bombardier then showed in the newspaper that the industry standard was two to three years, I believe, of a train using that technology in operation. There were trains in France and so on that were using that standard, that dual propulsion system.

Therefore, what happened is that, without the dual propulsion, all of a sudden TriniTrain jumped up above Bombardier—this is Mr. Procurement—and as we have seen with our Government, there was an issue brought forward by the Opposition about lights of the airport not having been done properly. The Prime Minister immediately put a stop to it and said, “Do it over,” understand that, because the Prime Minister has the authority. The only person who could have that authority—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, in 36(5), I gave no instruction to any Tenders Committee at any time, it is a complete untruth. He has to withdraw that.

Mr. Speaker: Members, any time we get into this route about withdrawing—we dealing with a substantive Motion.

Mr. Imbert: Not on me.

Mr. Speaker: You will have a chance to speak.

Mr. Imbert: The Motion is not on me.

Mr. Speaker: No, but you will have a chance to speak.

Mr. Imbert:—not speaking the truth.

Mr. Speaker: All right, well at the appropriate time—you object.

Mr. Imbert: Those are not the words.

Mr. Speaker: Member, move on.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you. How much time— could I have some injury time, please, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: No, you have seven more minutes.

Hon. A. Roberts: Blasted liar?

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, thank you.

Hon. A. Roberts: Stay calm, stay calm, stay calm, ease yourself, right. And we are moving through. So, all of a sudden—

Miss McDonald: I am just seeking clarification of your ruling. This is a substantive Motion brought on the Prime Minister. Is it that each Member of the Opposition or the House, as a matter of fact, is under a substantive Motion also? Mr. Speaker, I just seek the guidance of your office.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I cannot tell Members of the Government how to respond to a No Confidence Motion. This is a wide debate. It is a wide debate. So, I cannot direct the Members of the Government how to respond to your Motion. They have a right to respond, continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have now, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: You were supposed to finish at 7.06, you will now finish at 7.07.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Sir. And just to let them know, the amendment and the substantive Motion by the Member for Diego Martin West talks about all—not only the Prime Minister—the officers under her purview, which includes all of us and our amendment includes crime, corruption and all that went on for the last 10 years, so do not be frightened, right.

And so let us go back to the story. All of a sudden TriniTrain jumps up above Bombardier. But remember, the Prime Minister is the only person who could really stop, as our Prime Minister did, any tendering process and so on and start over. But think about it, what sort of plane did the Member for San Fernando East go flying around with Mrs. Manning in at that time? Was that a Bombardier plane?

So, do you think that if there was something that Bombardier was complaining about—impropriety and so on—do you think someone who was going on a Bombardier jet could say: “Stop that to help Bombardier”? And I will just ask the question, who organizes or arranges test flights and so on for the Prime Minister; is it the Minister of Works and Transport?

I move on. Dealing with the Member for Diego Martin West now. Talking about, talking about—

Miss McDonald: He is not speaking the truth.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, even though a Member is not speaking the truth, you cannot use offensive, objectionable, and insulting language. It is unparliamentary to shout across the floor that a Member is what you have just said. It is not proper and you as a senior parliamentarian must know this and use more elegant language.

Mr. Imbert: I must just take that?

Mr. Speaker: No, whether you take it not, you take notes. I am saying you take notes and you respond, okay? Okay, but I do not want you to use that expression again, please. Continue, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find Usain Bolt is a very great athlete also. But now moving on to the Member for Diego Martin West. What else in the Police Service Commission chairman Motion, the Member for Diego Martin West said, “Who else in this country”— when talking about, you know, the Police Service Commission issue with the police and so on. Who else in this country could have found himself or herself in that situation where you are accused to have disobeyed a lawful instruction from a police officer and you could determine that the matter can now be settled by mediation? What are you mediating, says the Member for Diego Martin West. If you place yourself above the law there is nothing to mediate. That is what you have done. If you place yourself above the law, there is nothing to mediate.

I now “flash forward” to a document from the EMA after a request—a belated request for a Certificate of Environmental Clearance was made by an individual for a sheep farm in Tobago. Let me read what the EMA said. This application—let me read it properly.

The Environmental Management Authority hereby refuses your application. The refusal is being issued for the following reasons: Section 35(2) of the Environmental Management Act, Chap. 35:05 states that no person shall proceed with any activity which the Minister has designated as requiring a certificate unless such person applies.

The mover of this Motion is accusing the Prime Minister of being incompetent—gross incompetence and all sorts of things. I ask him, when he is winding up, to say whether he—who was the Minister of Integrated Planning and Development in 2003 before he was removed and should have known the EMA rules inside out because he was the Minister—did he in an estate in Tobago, Alma Estate,

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Eastapeal Road, begin creating and producing a sheep farm without applying for a Certificate of Environmental Clearance. The law states that you must apply. Did he go ahead, start his thing and then try to apply? I ask the Member for Diego Martin West to answer.

Mr. Speaker: All right. I have ruled that personal and private matters involving Members of this House are not up for debate. So, he has nothing to answer in that regard. No, no, I am saying personal and private conduct of Members are not to be brought into this debate. I made that very clear early. So, I am saying he has to withdraw that and you have nothing to answer.

Hon. A. Roberts: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and I proceed with silence of the lambs. My deceased mother, Patricia Antonette Roberts, may God rest her soul, always believed that the Member for Diego Martin West had potential. Yes, because she was a PNM and she helped him out all the time; she thought he had potential but she also taught each and every one of her children that—you know what potential means? “Potential mean you eh do nothing yet.”

Mr. Speaker: All right, your time is up, but I will give you two seconds to sum up.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, we have the tale of the tape. The Member for Diego Martin West, the Member for Siparia, education, geology, LLB, Silk, law, political exploits, unopposed. Siparia beat Basdeo Panday, beat Manning, beat everybody 100 times, people meter—no Christmas presents, no hampers, no laptops. The Member for Siparia: loves children, elderly women, the downtrodden; support in the Lower House, all 29 here support in the Lower House: your guess is as good as mine, “we go wait till they vote.” Votes in last election 422,000; votes over there, 8,000. International accolades, woman of the year CNN, Harvard lecturer, Chairwoman of Commonwealth, countless international magazines. International accolades, none. Media—

Mr. Speaker: Okay wind up.

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, Mr. Speaker, I shall wind up by saying, the Member for Diego Martin West is a cricketing all-rounder. We played cricket in your Parliament cricket game. He is a cricketing all-rounder: “cyar bat, cyar bowl, cyar field.” And also a political all-rounder: “cyar lead, cyar debate, cyar win.” I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Patricia McIntosh (*Port of Spain North/St Ann's West*): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the privilege to make a contribution to the debate this evening in this honourable House on the Motion of No Confidence in the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Oropouche East commented that he could not understand why the Leader of the Opposition brought this Motion against the Prime Minister. He felt that she had committed no wrongdoing, she had “no charge in court” and she was doing very well. I would like to advise the Member for Oropouche East through you, Mr. Speaker, that individuals are judged not just by sins of commission but also by sins of omission and I should deal with these two acts as I progress in my contribution.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to inform the Member for Oropouche East that one of the indices of the performance of effective leaders is the level of satisfaction of those led. And, Mr. Speaker, this is what basically my contribution is going to be about. The level of satisfaction of those led.

7.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am very conscious that through you I am addressing the public. I am speaking to the public and I know that the public is listening attentively to what I have to say on this issue of the Motion of the lack of confidence in the Prime Minister as leader of our country. As far as Members on this side of the House are concerned, this Motion is not about winning or losing, but rather it is about judging or adjudication of the performance of the Prime Minister and her Cabinet since this UNC-dominated coalition assumed office on May 24, 2010. It is about assessing whether our beloved country and citizens are in a better place now than before that date, before this Government assumed the reins of power under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Since the hon. Leader of the Opposition laid this Motion in this honourable House, the Members opposite seemed to have gotten into full gear. They began mobilizing, running from pillar to post, like the proverbial “chicken without a neck”. They started taking out a lot of ads. You heard a lot of ads on the electronic and print media. You saw them on the print media. They started staging private and public meetings, and it came to our attention that members of the URP and CEPEP were forced to attend these meetings under the threat of a withdrawal of their salaries.

Mr. Speaker, they began to make all sorts of spurious suppositions and derogatory comments about the Opposition. They began holding church services

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and appearing to be literally running scared. They have come today, the Members on the other side, to do what they do best—what they have been doing in this honourable Chamber for the past 21 months. As we have seen, they will praise, they will sing their praises, the praises of their Prime Minister and of their own achievements, and then they would resort to engaging in the scourging at the pillar of the PNM just like the soldiers did with Christ at the whipping post. This is their favourite pastime. This is what they pass off as good governance.

Mr. Speaker, I remember some time, it could have been much earlier this year or late last year, when a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference took place at the Hyatt hotel. One of the foreign presenters commented that such an unholy practice as beating and bashing upon the Opposition was not advisable. He said it did nothing, it promoted nothing good in the national interest. But our Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, is of an entirely different view. The Prime Minister stood in this Parliament on October 17, 2011 and she vowed that her party would ensure that the public will never forget the PNM in the past and all the sins of the PNM in the past as though the PNM never did anything good for this country.

It seems that this Prime Minister and her Cabinet are running this country on a PNM vendetta and passing this off as good governance. It would not work because people speak and they are sick of the Members opposite wasting this Parliament's time with this continuous flagellation of the People's National Movement. The public adjudicated on the PNM almost two years ago. They voted for change, I am not blaming them, and they have been crying out for this UNC-dominated coalition to move forward into the future and present and implement plans for a changed and better tomorrow for all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. But that has not been happening and the citizenry feels betrayed, disappointed and disenchanted.

Mr. Speaker, by virtue of the vast majority on the other side they will always have the advantage, and in respect of the vote they will win, as it always happens in this honourable House. But the true victors in this debate would be the hundreds of thousands of people out there who the Members on this side have come here this evening to represent—those would be the victors. [*Desk thumping*] Those hundreds of thousands of people who feel disenfranchised, alienated, victimized and discriminated against under this UNC-dominated coalition led by the Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar. Those hundreds of thousands of people out there are listening carefully to this debate.

Those disadvantaged souls have no voice in the Government of this country; their only hope is our voice, the voice of the Members on this side. Those hundreds of thousands of people are depending on the Members on this side of this august House to do what they have elected us to do and, today, that is to represent them by voicing their opinion of no confidence in the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Mr. Speaker, the Oxford dictionary defines confidence as a firm trust and assured expectation. The Members on this side—and I am certain that I speak for more than half of the population—have lost all trust or any assured expectation in the ability of the Prime Minister to govern our beloved country. Actually, this is the crux of the matter under debate in this House this afternoon. Instilling confidence in people, trust and faith, and assuring them that all will be well are salient functions of good leadership, but the Prime Minister has failed dismally in this regard.

She is no longer to inspire in a large percentage of the population, the confidence that she possesses the ability to guide this ship of state through rough and turbulent seas to calm and peaceful waters. The population is not assured what to expect from one day to the next. The country seems to be moving from one debacle to another, from one crisis to another. Crime continues unabated. Murders are committed every day. The state of the economy remains tenuous and uncertain with no real light on the horizon. Locally and internationally, our corruption ratings are high and our transparency ratings are low. Unemployment is rising, the cost of living is skyrocketing and opportunities for advancement for all citizens have been stymied because of inequality, injustice and discrimination. Victimization seems to be the rule of the day, and race relations in this country have never been as bad as they are today in this beautiful “rainbow country” that is called Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, many citizens, especially those who are perceived to be politically aligned to the People’s National Movement feel ostracized, cast aside and discriminated against, but the irony of it all is that many of them voted for this UNC-dominated coalition because they wanted a change. [*Interruption*—yes many of them. Well they did not even get a change. They did not even get small change; they got robbed and they feel cheated. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister and her Ministers keep saying, over and over, that they are doing very well—her Government is doing very well. The question begs, to whom is she listening? Certainly not to the man on the street, certainly not to most of my constituents, neither to the constituents of the Members on this side of this

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House, not even to many of the constituents in their own constituencies. Mr. Speaker, I have to ask again, is the honourable Prime Minister reading the daily blogs? Is she perusing the many Facebook sites? Is she reading the many complaints too numerous to mention here in the daily and weekly newspapers? Is she sensing the growing anxiety amongst the people of Trinidad and Tobago? [Desk thumping]

The plain truth is the public is fearful for the future of this beautiful country under the leadership of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar. They are fearful for their lives, for the lives of their children, for the lives of their grandchildren. They speak of it and they are crying out for help because their cries are falling on deaf ears. Mr. Speaker, John Kenneth Galbraith once said, and I quote:

“All of the great leaders have had one characteristic in common: it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership.”

If we measure the performance of the Prime Minister by the yardstick proffered by Galbraith, she has failed miserably in her job of leading this country. [Desk thumping] The Prime Minister simply has not demonstrated that she is possessed of this vital characteristic of leadership. She is not listening to the people, neither are the Members opposite. She is oblivious to their concerns and to their anxieties and, as a consequence, she fails to qualify as a good leader—simply put. [Desk thumping]

The Members on this side of the House have lost total confidence in the Prime Minister’s capacity to manage the affairs of state so that all citizens, not just some citizens, could enjoy a better life. The hon. Members on this side of the House support this Motion brought by the Opposition Leader today in this honourable House, because we are of the opinion that the Prime Minister has demonstrated a consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and, as such, has failed the nation as a leader. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, there was much talk this afternoon about that very emotive and sensitive issue of race and it is not pleasant. It is not a pleasant issue but I do believe that it is one that does need ventilating, and ventilating in this august Chamber. I should like to refer to an article which appeared in the *Trinidad Express* newspaper, dated February 03, 2012, entitled, “PM: Govt strong despite Opposition using race card”:

“The People’s Partnership Government remains strong despite the tactic of the Opposition to incite divisiveness in the country by using the race card, says Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

‘The attempts by the Opposition to use the race card...it is something the Partnership intends to look into greater depth to explore how we relate to that particular strategy from the Opposition’, she said.”

I find these remarks inflammatory, irresponsible, unfounded and volatile, and inimical to good race relations in this beautiful “rainbow country” of Trinidad and Tobago.

I should like the Prime Minister to come in this honourable House and state—she must do it—exactly what she means by these remarks. They are very damaging remarks. She must explain. She has the duty and responsibility having made these remarks to elucidate, in this honourable House, her very spurious statements for the benefit of the public and let them be the judge. Let the public be the judge! The PNM was never about race despite the fact that the Members opposite “like to make this out”. [*Desk thumping*]

All the policies and programmes developed under the PNM were intended— [*Interruption*] I will handle all the issues—for the advancement and betterment of every single citizen in this country in spite of colour, creed, race, social standing or political affiliation. Mr. Speaker, were this not the case, I should like to know how did Trinidadians of every single race benefit from the tremendous education opportunities instituted under a PNM administration? [*Desk thumping*] I am sure most of the Members on both sides of the House benefited from under a PNM education in the field of education. They became lawyers, doctors, engineers, on both sides of the House—everyone. There was nothing debarring any single person.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, every single race was able to take advantage of the PNM’s social programmes in order to enjoy a better quality of life.

7.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, how did all the entrepreneurs big and small of varied racial backgrounds achieve their success? Of course through the PNM, Sir, being able to optimize the opportunities for economic growth under 35 years of PNM administration. The PNM made available to every single citizen, opportunities for personal and social advancement and economic growth. The PNM did not serve some of the people some of the time, they served all the people all the time. [*Desk thumping*]

I spoke of the past achievements, and actually I would not go into it, it is rather long. I do not know if I have to remind the people of the youth camps that

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we established, of the OJT programmes, of the John Donaldson and San Fernando technical institutes. All these were shut down under the UNC administration in 1996, and we had to rebuild the Civilian Conservation Corps, the community centres. Since 1962, under Prime Minister Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, we had free primary and secondary education, free universal education; a free and seamless transition was developed from early childhood to tertiary education. We like to say from ABC to Ph.D.

We had the GATE programme that afforded every citizen, of every colour, creed, race, social and political persuasion, the enviable advantage of accessing tertiary education free of charge. We had HELP, the Higher Education Loan Programme for those that needed help with accommodation, books and transport. Because of the GATE and HELP programmes, within the five years between 2005 and 2010, tertiary level participation increased from a mere 7 per cent to 22 per cent, and the PNM was working to 60 per cent which is one of the hallmarks of developed nation status, First World status.

We had the MuST programme, the HYPE programme, the YES! programme, giving youths an opportunity to learn a trade while still receiving a stipend and, at the same time, receiving training and making a contribution to the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, we established the early childhood centres. They could say all they want: how much money was spent, that we only established so many, but the fact remains that under the PNM the early childhood centres were established. They are building on them now, that is what the PNM did, we left a solid foundation for this Government to build on. They have it easy, they have it nice.

Way back in 1979, the PNM under Dr. Eric Williams, understanding the relationship between cognitive development and nutrition, instituted the School Nutrition Programme. At that time, 63 lunches were served on a daily basis. Today, there are 1,000 lunches and 57,000 breakfasts served to children every day. [*Desk thumping*]

We had the Textbook Rental Programme which was initiated in 2003, providing essential texts for all students. We had free bus passes. I was amazed to hear the Prime Minister announce that she was now giving free bus transport to students. Mr. Speaker, I, not as a principal, as a vice-principal at the Marabella Junior Secondary School, was there with all my batches of bus tickets giving out to as many children who wanted. [*Desk thumping*] I used to have to call PTSC and tell them, "Take back some; they are piling up. I do not have any use for them", after I had given out to any and every child who wanted. I do not know how

people could come and make these claims that are unfounded and misrepresent the facts. They are not true. They are building on what the PNM did. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, under us we had Niherst, COSTAATT, and I spoke of the technical institutes. As the years went on, we made a greater financial investment with the On-the-Job Training Programme. The Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education was instituted in 2001, and then of course we had the University of Trinidad and Tobago which was established to allow students to pursue different subject areas that would give worldwide aid in the thrust of global industrialization.

The junior secondary school system was replaced by the regular all-day secondary school system. A financial literacy programme was instituted in primary and secondary schools, teaching youths the importance of becoming financially prudent, saving their money and becoming financially productive citizens. A national library system, NALIS, was commissioned and technologically upgraded, and mobile libraries were introduced in rural areas. They say that we do not care about rural areas; we had mobile libraries in all the rural areas.

What about the social programmes? We started the community centres, I said that. They could expand on it, but we started it. That came with us. We had health care, a series of programmes: the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme, GAPP. We had the national community care programme taking care of people in need in the community. We had the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme, CDAP. Up to now people are glad to get their medications free at CDAP. We had the national oncology home care rehab and community support programme, that was initiated under us. When people are sick with fatal diseases, you could get assistance for them at home. We had the Adult Cardiac Surgery Programme, and to help business people we had the development of NEDCO to help small businesses grow.

The PNM made a tremendous investment in the development of the human capital and in the welfare of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Let it not be said and let it not be pretended that the PNM sat and did nothing, with all the sins that they like to pound the PNM with, every day they come here.

I would like to know what the Prime Minister meant. Having spoken about all the PNM did, the Prime Minister's remarks about this current PNM, as you said, reflect on the Members of this Bench. When the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara made his allegations, they reflected on the Members of this Bench and on the PNM

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body. What does the Prime Minister mean? We would like to know. We would like to know, because I am sure every one of us here would like to correct any instances where racial victimization is visited upon anybody. These are serious aspersions on this present PNM.

The Prime Minister cannot be allowed to make such spurious and potentially inflammable allegations and get away with it time and again. I have to ponder: what is her rationale? Why is she saying this? I have been thinking, having read this, it disturbed me greatly. I have to think: is it because Members on this side of the House are fearless in our representation of our constituents who are being victimized? Is it because of that? People tend to see our constituents as people belonging to only one race, and that is erroneous because our constituents are of varied races.

Our constituents are losing their jobs by the thousands, and they are being deprived of development in their communities. All this is taking place under the stewardship of this UNC-dominated coalition led by Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*] Does the rationale stem from the fact that we on this side are vociferous and relentless in exposing the unequal allocation of goods and services to citizens in this country, so that so many of them—too many of them—do not receive a fair share of the national pie. Is it because of this? Let her tell us.

Is her claim based on the fact that Members of this side possess the courage and moral fibre to raise in this august Chamber instances of victimization of citizens like Sita Gajadharsingh-Nanga, the embattled principal of the Tunapuna Hindu Primary School? Is it because, when armed with bona fide documents endorsed by authentic signatures, we are unafraid to reveal to the public discriminatory practices based on race and religion against members of our society? Are these the instances to which the hon. Prime Minister is referring as playing the race card? What is it? She must tell us; it is her duty to tell us, if she feels that she has some basis to say that, and if she is interested in our country. She must come here and identify the instances; the public will judge.

I want to ask: did our constituents not elect each and every one of us to come to this Parliament and seek their interests? As Members of Parliament, did we not all take the sacred oath to conscientiously and impartially discharge these responsibilities to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, without fear or favour, regardless of colour, creed, race, social standing or political affiliation? Why are the Members on the other side so defensive? Is it that they have “cocoa in the sun”? What are they defending and why are they throwing this on us?

Mr. Speaker, was it not the Prime Minister herself who interrupted the proceedings of this honourable House to make a major pronouncement that the Minister of Transport, Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj, was a victim of racial discrimination, having been denied a scholarship under the PNM? The Prime Minister said that the Equal Opportunity Commission would investigate the case, and a big brouhaha was made, and she threatened jail to anyone found guilty, saying, "Jail eh nice."

What were the findings of the Commission? I have them here; it is a rather long document, but I am going to read some parts. [*Interruption*] No, no, the case has been sent for conciliation. I cannot read the whole thing. [*Crosstalk*] The case has been sent for conciliation but, Mr. Speaker, I should like to read some salient features. I should like to get to the conclusion because we are not interested in the entire case, where they quoted from the English and whatever and whatever.

"From the information supplied by the Ministry it is clear that the intention and purpose of the Community Development Scholarships Programme (CDSP) was intended for availability to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. There was no indication by the Ministry that a criterion existed to prevent certain individuals from applying.

On the facts submitted therefore no criteria existed which would legally exclude the complainant."

However they did find, in all fairness, Mr. Speaker, that:

"...it seems the act of not advertising the existence of the CDSP may have had the effect of excluding the complainant which resulted in the Complainant being treated in a less favourable manner than his comparator."

All in all they found no basis for racial discrimination. [*Desk thumping*]

The issue went to the Equal Opportunity Commission for conciliation, and what did the complainant do? He walked out of the meeting because he said that the wrong people had been invited. [*Laughter*] Must all conditions be weighted in their favour or it is a no go? This is a joke. You have invited me to the commission and you walk out, after stating it was the wrong people. They did not invite the right people. What is going on in this country?

Miss Cox: "What de wrong people mean?" [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. P. McIntosh: But all in all it was fine. It was all right for the Prime Minister to come to this honourable House, to this hallowed Chamber and make

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such inflammatory allegations. The Members on this side said not a word. We said not a word. We never accused the Prime Minister of playing the race card. If we come to defend our people, we are playing the race card.

She came—Oh, the hon. Minister was fortunate, he had the Prime Minister to come and present his case. Our little people have us and we will do it. We will present them. [*Desk thumping*]

7.40 p.m.

We said not a word. We never accused the Prime Minister of playing the race card. In fact, we accepted that the hon. Senator, a citizen, like all citizens, felt discriminated against and was seeking redress. That was, and still is, his inalienable right under Part I section 4 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. So we never said a word—that was his right; it is his inalienable right.

Whenever the Members on this side or in the other place attempt to plead a case on behalf of their constituents, and indeed any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who might have fallen victim to any real or perceived discriminatory practice of this UNC-dominated Government, suddenly we are accused of playing the race card. We cannot say anything, Mr. Speaker, we have to sit down here, hush our mouth, and agree with everything. That is what they, the Members opposite, expect of us and want of us. But, we were not elected for that. [*Desk thumping*]

Whenever we try to represent the needs of our constituents and seek redress on their behalf from the hardship and victimization visited upon them by this UNC-dominated coalition, that is what happens. Tell me, do our constituents not possess the same constitutional rights as the hon. Minister of Transport. Do they not have a right to redress? Do they not have us to come to, and present their case here?

I should like to know since when does the hon. Prime Minister and her Ministers possess the supreme and sole authority to make claims of racial allegations? Since when do the Members on the opposite side possess exclusive rights to register claims of racial allegations? Since when are allegations of racism the sole domain of this Prime Minister and her UNC-dominated coalition, and we have to stay here and we cannot make a claim because we are playing the race card if we do? Since when they alone can make claims and we cannot make a claim? We have to take it, and stay with it and stay there. [*Desk thumping*] I would like to warn this Government the people are out there suffering for this, I am not coming here to talk in vain [*Desk thumping*] and they must be careful. I

challenge that this claim on the part of the Prime Minister is spurious, and nothing more than reverse psychology to counteract the UNC-dominated coalition's own discriminatory practices. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Preach!

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, it was brought to my attention—and when the hon. Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara stood up and he said, “We done, it is a ting of the past”, and threw so many allegations. I sat down in this honourable House today, and I hardly said a word, but I am learning; I would sit down here, zip my lip, and I am listening. [*Interruption*] Not what I do not know, Sir; am I listening in awe, disappointment and sadness, and I will tell you, I am glad the Member is not here. It was brought to my attention on Tuesday night that at a meeting in the Couva South constituency office, over the airwaves— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: You were listening?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: I had other things to do, but it was brought to my attention that in a meeting in the Couva South constituency, the Minister of Trade and Member for Chaguanas East referred to our Leader of the Opposition, and our political leader of the People's National Movement, as a “pot hound” dog.

Hon. Member: Oh my God.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: And on Wednesday night at a meeting in the Siparia constituency office, over national television, the Minister of Legal Affairs, and political leader of the Congress of the People, the second most powerful party in this UNC-dominated coalition, referred to our political leader and Leader of our Opposition as a “corbeau”, and said, “It was not me who said it, it was meh friend, I did not say it, it was meh friend”. [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, there was a time when I used to come here and admire the hon. Member for St. Augustine. He use to speak for hours and hours on values, standards and norms, and I used to admire him, and he said that he wants to change the face to politics, and I was interested because I myself have come to change the face of politics, and to see that he has degenerated into this, I have no respect for him. [*Desk thumping*] When I took up— [*Interruption*] and I am going to come to it—the case— [*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Bring back Mr. Dookeran.

Mrs. P. McIntosh:—of my fellow principal, my colleague in education, as an education issue affecting a school in the nation, the leader of the COP had it all

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over the papers that I was playing the race card because I was seeking vindication on the part of somebody who was abused. [*Interruption*] It is sad that you cannot speak for righteousness in this place, unless you are accused of playing the race card. [*Desk thumping*]

This is the abyss—[*Interruption*] that is why, I am coming to it—to which our beloved country has plummeted. It is a sad day when Ministers in the Prime Minister's Cabinet—Chaguanas West listen and learn—specially selected, hand-picked by the Prime Minister to serve in high office—hon. Minister of Legal Affairs, hon. Minister of Trade and Industry—in this country to degenerate to such unacceptably low levels of conduct, making inferences of racial and social connotations about the Leader of this country's Opposition. The Member for Diego Martin West is a leader in this Government. They might be the ruling party, but we form part of the Government, and he is the leader of this side [*Desk thumping*] and to make such allegations.

Mr. Speaker, when this information was brought to my attention, I thanked Almighty God that when He summoned me to serve His people—because He did—[*Interruption*] He ordained that this would be done under the People's National Movement, and not under any of those other political parties. Today, I would not have been able to raise my head, I would have been a sad person.

In any developed and civilized country such conduct would have been highly condemned as being totally outrageous and unacceptable, and those responsible would have been called upon to resign. It could never have happened in the United States of America or in Great Britain, but did the Prime Minister take any such action? No! Such deplorable conduct on the part of Ministers of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar's Government endorses why the Members on this side of this honourable House, and half the population or more of Trinidad and Tobago, have lost total confidence in the Prime Minister who governs our beloved country in such a manner that, according to our national anthem, every creed and race will find an equal place, and her ability to control her Ministers is causing a lot of confusion in our country.

When the Member for St. Augustine said that I was playing the race card because I rose in defence of a colleague who was embattled in a school, I would like to state something in this honourable House. I am a product of a very multiracial background. Everyone in Trinidad knows that I do not have a racist bone in my body. I will tell you something, I have had the pleasure of teaching from south to central to north.

Mr. Warner: Not you alone.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: I have been assisting students and their parents, without bias, working hard to ensure that their personal, social and intellectual development and going beyond the call of duty to help them achieve that goal without prejudice or bias, and I can hear them saying, “Tell them Miss, tell them Miss”. I have put my hand in my pocket to help children of every single race get lessons and come to school, and they and their parents are looking now and they know that. [*Desk thumping*]

Sometimes you all want to know how I get information. I tell you, when you have served, and you have served well, all people—parents and children—across the board, forever remember you, and many of them are found in Ministries and other quarters, and they will call you to give you information because of the respect they have for you and they know what you have in your heart, and they know what you are trying to do, and that is why I can always get information.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 10(11), I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the completion of the Motion presently under consideration.

Question put and agreed to.

PRIME MINISTER KAMLA PERSAD-BISSESSAR SC (LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN)

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can lay claim to an indisputable legacy in race relations throughout my 33 years in the field of education in Trinidad and Tobago. I can say this without fear of contradiction; I have the moral authority to say so. My reputation precedes me. So when they try to make up these things about us on this side, they must think again because all of Trinidad and Tobago knows my reputation.

I wonder how many Members—and I know there are some, I will be fair—on the other side, who were hand-picked by this Prime Minister to form an integral part of her Cabinet, can say the same without fear of contradiction.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All can say.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, what track record have some of the Members on the other side, and indeed in the other place, carved out in the minds of the public? Some Members on the other side constantly claim to have a moral

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authority to pontificate on various issues. I sit down here and I hear them talking about a moral authority, and I am flabbergasted and ponder on what basis do they make such claims.

Miss Cox: Why you did not stop the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: [*Interruption*] What impression, they must ask themselves, have some of those on the other side carved out in the minds of the public in terms of race relations? What moral authority can some of them claim in inspiring the confidence of all of the people, and allaying the fears of all of the people that this UNC-dominated coalition—led by this Prime Minister—is working, and will work, for the advancement of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and not some of the people. The public does not forget. Deeds committed in the past often come to haunt us, to bite us when we least expect them to.

Mr. Warner: Next, next.

Hon. Member: Only race you want to talk about, next point.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Anything but race.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: The Prime Minister used to say, serve the people, serve the people, and the Members opposite, serve the people. It is a refrain that we seldom hear anymore, but I should like to advise them to serve all the people, serve all the people, serve all the people, or else they would have to deal severely with the Members on this side of the House.

I am wondering if this Prime Minister would be able instil, within the population, the confidence that all citizens would be served without bias. And how will she accomplish this, when this UNC-dominated coalition continues to marginalize and neglect PNM constituencies, and constituents continue to be victimized? In the meantime, the Members on that side come to this honourable House, and they stand and boast about the work being accomplished in their constituencies, and they praise their respective Cabinet colleagues for implementing projects to improve the lives of their citizens, and we come here and we cry out for help for our constituents, who are suffering, to no avail.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

7.55 p.m.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let us look at what continues to happen. Citizens who are perceived as PNM supporters are losing their jobs by the thousands: URP workers, CEPEP workers—I am telling you, you will see—Government employees, contract workers, legally registered security firms, other companies engaged in businesses with Ministries and state corporations. And when the contracts of these companies are terminated, Mr. Speaker, hundreds of people are put on the breadline. This is what happens. It is spiralling out of control.

Lawyers in state enterprises are being changed out for lawyers favoured by this Government. I know, I know. I know. I know. I know. And highly qualified and experienced professionals who have been making unparalleled and stellar contributions to national development are separated and they go with a wealth of institutional knowledge. Mr. Speaker, is this good for national development? Yet, all of them are being replaced by supporters of this UNC-dominated coalition.

Mr. Speaker, most people, especially the small man, are not even given advanced notice. Most people are not even given any severance benefits. They are being told today that from tomorrow their services are not being required, and some of them, I know several of them, Mr. Speaker, over the—by email or by telephone, “do not come back”. That is what this Government is about. In one fell swoop, people are being put on the breadline. Suddenly no job, no money, and families to feed, and this is a caring Government.

Mr. Speaker, others have been put on month-to-month terms of employment—for example, school safety officers, MTS workers, early childhood facilitators—they are in a veritable limbo without security of tenure. They cannot even plan for the future. They cannot go to the bank for financial assistance because they do not have job security. And more and more, Mr. Speaker, employees are being given the boot and replaced by UNC supporters.

Mr. Speaker, I am finding out that some of those who are replaced are illegal Guyanese nationals. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, the Members on this side of the House are of the opinion that the Prime Minister has demonstrated a consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and today we shall register a vote of no confidence in her.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to an issue on November 18, 2011, at the 13th Sitting of the Second Session of the 10th Parliament, the Member for Port of

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Spain South posed a question to the Minister of National Security. The question was in two parts, and I would like to read them as follows:

Could the Minister state with regard to immigration into Trinidad and Tobago the total number of persons admitted into Trinidad and Tobago between July 2010 and June 2011?

The second part is:

And a breakdown of the total number of persons admitted by country of origin or nationality?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have it here. When I looked at it, and I am looking particularly at those who came from the Caribbean—and we are happy to have our Caribbean neighbours—I saw 15,534 from Barbados, and then I saw from Grenada 12,909 people, and then I saw 12,838 from Jamaica, and I saw 6,695 from St. Lucia. There were 124 for Montserrat. There were from St. Vincent and the Grenadines 16,090 people. From St. Kitts and Nevis, 1,523. And, Mr. Speaker, from Guyana there were 38,019 people who came in the country over this 12-month period; 38,019. This is the information that they gave us.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know where are these people? Have they left? Are they still here? How many people are still here? The reason I have brought this—it is passing strange that the refusal to admit illegal Guyanese children into the Tunapuna Hindu School was cited by the principal as one of the reasons she became embattled with the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha board. I have her letter here. I am not going to read it out, Mr. Speaker, because we dealt with it. But it is right here in her letter signed by her, that is one of the reasons cited by her why she became embattled, because she refused to admit illegal Guyanese students.

Mr. Speaker, the continued presence of illegal immigrants in this country can have serious and far-reaching implications for employment, housing accommodation, social services, health services and, very significantly, local government and national elections.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to focus on development—human resource development in our nation—and as an educator I am very interested in such trends. And I saw that the honourable—I saw him there just now—the hon. Minister of Science and Technology, Mr. Speaker, announced the expansion of the offerings of the UTT's Energy Campus in Point Lisas to include an Energy Institute of Trinidad and Tobago, which would incorporate the various technical

and engineering disciplines currently offered at the UTT Energy Campus. This is a welcome addition to the prospectus of the UTT's Energy Campus, and it would surely add tremendous value to the programmes offered at the institution and enhance its accreditation. You know, it would provide competencies and skill sets that are necessary for employment in the energy sector. It will also provide for invaluable development of our nation's human resource potential in the energy sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister, when he announced the opening of this campus, he said that Government wants former Caroni workers to use the coming energy institute which will add to the line of tertiary education facilities in the country. Tertiary Education Minister Fazal Karim made the announcement Saturday saying the institute would be just like other universities, adding that it was important for UTT and other affiliate institutions to take a key role in terms of innovation and new development opportunities. He ended by appealing to former Caroni workers to take full advantage of the new institute.

Mr. Speaker, I want former Caroni workers to take advantage of the institute. It is in Point Lisas, it is their right. But why is it that we must recognize one body, one set of people, one sector? Is this not a national institute open to all citizens? Would it not have seemed fairer, better, more just, for the Minister to urge all citizens, including the Caroni workers, to enrol in this institute? [*Crosstalk*] You see what I am saying, Mr. Speaker? Any time—

Mr. Speaker: Members, you will have an opportunity to respond. Take notes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, but she is offensive.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, it seems that one sector was courted in the Minister's speech. But, any time that we register anything of this sort we get this thing of race from the other side. But I shall continue.

Mr. Speaker, life just does not seem fair and just for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago under this Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government, and so, the Members on this side of this honourable House are of the opinion the Prime Minister has demonstrated a consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and this is one of the reasons we have lost confidence in her leadership.

Mr. Speaker, when a Government is in power, the Prime Minister, as official head of that Government is accountable not only for her own actions, and her own performance, but the performance and actions of all those who report to her.

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Having said this, I should like to critique the performance of the Minister of Education, and I should like to begin with the laptop eCAL project, the Prime Minister's pet project, a project that she should be having under a microscope. It is her pet project, very proud she is.

Mr. Speaker, I heard them say there are 30,000 laptops now in the system. Lovely, I am glad. And you know what they like to say, "You do not want the children to have laptops." But, Mr. Speaker, I think that I have made it clear that I am a strong advocate—that is established—that I am a strong advocate for the use of technology in schools and in the curriculum. I have made that very clear and my past—my reputation speaks of it because of what I have done, already accomplished in schools.

In the academic year 2010/2011, \$83 million was spent on the purchase of laptops for Form 1 students. I am not knocking the money, I am just stating the fact. In 2011/2012, \$53 million was spent on laptops for the new intake of Form 1 students. There was a decrease, and we are very glad to see that decrease, but I am not going to nitpick about the money because, this is about education and human development, and when we develop our nation's human resource potential, we are developing our nation; when we develop our people, we are developing our nation, Mr. Speaker.

Together that money so far spent, \$136 million, and that is just for the machines and the peripherals. I am not talking about other things associated with the implementation, poor as it is, of this programme. It still represents a sizeable figure of taxpayers' money and in a very uncertain economy. While I want, as an educator—because I am an advocate of technology in learning—I want to see the programme succeed, that is my wish, but I would also like to see that the money invested in this programme is really utilized for the children's development effectively and efficiently, and that taxpayers get the best bang for their buck in this very uncertain economy. I do not want them to spend money and then it is a waste of time.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that while I am happy to see this investment, several times in this honourable House—I think this is at least the fourth time—I have expressed grave concern about the extremely poor implementation of this project and I have expressed the concern that it is becoming a colossal waste of taxpayers' money, and it is not fulfilling the goal for which it was intended.

I am particularly concerned about the Government secondary schools. Mr. Speaker, do you know that many of the laptops distributed last year are in a

state of disrepair? I could tell you where to find plenty of them. I will go on. Remember, these were the expensive, supposedly sophisticated machines from Hewlett-Packard. They were very expensive. We were told they were very high-quality machines.

The IT technicians who had come to the end of their contracts were rehired on a month-to-month basis without any effort to reassess their previous performance nor improve their skill sets. There is absolutely no supervision for the technicians, like under the SEMP under the PNM, where there was an Education Technology Specialist Department, where personnel would visit the schools to monitor and assess the performance of the technicians and ensure that established standards were maintained. Many of the technicians are not sufficiently competent to effect the requisite repairs. The best ones leave, they leave for greener pastures because the Ministry's compensation package is not a very lucrative one. So the best ones, they go to corporate world.

Even when I sat on the board and I was on the panel to interview and make recommendations for hiring them, by the time we hired them, when it was time to place them in schools, the best ones had gone because the compensation package was poor. Now they are month-to-month, who is coming? So we are stuck in schools with technicians, some of whom—I am not saying some are not good, but many are of a very low standard, so they cannot repair the laptops.

In one school there was a big sign, “Do not bring the laptops for the technicians to repair.” This sign was up in the school. But I understand there is an arrangement now with Memory Bank Computers, and we can find a lot of the laptops at Memory Bank for repair. So there are many broken laptops at Memory Bank computers, and some are still piled up in corners of schools.

The Minister had boasted that he had increased the bandwidth in schools. Yes, he did increase the bandwidth from one megabit to five megabits; five megabits could do very little in schools. Schools need a minimum—and Mr. Speaker, this is a minimum, minimum, minimum—of 20 megabits to successfully access the Internet, not for teaching and learning to take place, you know, just to access the Internet; reason being, each school possesses a language lab and at least computers in administration, in the library, in the staff room, and now some schools have 200, and some schools have 240 according to the size of the school, they have laptops; 200 to 240 laptops in the classrooms. So all these laptops cannot access the Internet. So, the increase from one to five megabits is doing very little.

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Mr. Speaker, you know what is happening in schools? The more diligent students, some of them are using the Word document. But most of the students are playing with the laptops, or they are at home, or they are broken.

With the annual increase of approximately 100 to 120 laptops in schools, schools would need at least 50 to 100 megabits of bandwidth for optimal Internet access. The hon. Minister seems to understand. You see, I do not think he appreciates the concept. I do not think he knows. He seems to—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Only you alone appreciate it.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: You know why I appreciate it? Because I did it, I did it. The hon. Minister seems to think that training teachers in computer literacy skills— he cites the various levels, level 1, 2, 3, computer literacy skills— and increasing the bandwidths or megabits, he thinks that will suffice for successful integration of ICT in the curriculum. Nothing could be further from the truth. Teachers still have not been trained adequately to infuse technology, ICT, in the curriculum as an integral part of smart pedagogical practice. There has been no attempt to go beyond the acquisition of the various levels of computer literacy skills to the acquisition of pedagogical skills using ICT, thereby bridging the gap between education and technology.

So, teachers do not know how to guide and facilitate the learning process using ICT, so that learning takes place effectively. And, Mr. Speaker, I shall give it as long as the situation exists because taxpayers' money is jumping up and every year more computers are being delivered to the schools, and nothing is being done.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, schools do not possess effective networking systems and Internet connectivity that would allow the teachers to successfully engage the students collaboratively in the learning process using laptops. The successful integration of ICT in the curriculum is not a function of increased bandwidths or megabits. It is a function of training teachers to effectively use the technology and setting up a networking system whereby laptops used by students in the various classrooms could be connected to this network, enabling access to the Internet and any other programme installed on the server. This is not happening.

Mr. Speaker, I have a document here produced by iGovTT. This is the first draft, and this was produced since October 2010, and this was for a request for proposals for the supply of equipment and services for the implementation of wireless Wi-Fi network—that is the same network I am talking about— connectivity at 152 secondary schools across Trinidad and Tobago. It was

produced in October 2010. There is a list of all the schools here, denominational and Government, all the secondary schools are here, nothing was done with this paper. They visited St. Francois Girls' College to view the model, and after that this was produced, and nothing was done with it. It is lying there, and they are boasting about the laptops. *[Interruption]* I talked about it; they are boasting and they are pumping laptop after laptop. What is happening? Nothing.

Dr. Rowley: Something to buy.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Yes, something to give, a gift, another hamper, a technology hamper.

Mr. Speaker, more laptops were given out at the commencement this new academic year—

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Member for Caroni East, Minister of Education take notes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, I am taking notes.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but you cannot be shouting across the floor to a Member—

Dr. Gopeesingh: She is offensive.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but take notes. Take notes, okay. Do not interrupt the Member. Continue, hon. Member.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, I ask for injury time, please, at least five minutes. *[Laughter]* *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is the pet project of the Prime Minister, and it is so poorly implemented by the Minister of Education that it has become a colossal waste of taxpayers' money in a scarce economy, and with the exception of select schools like St. Francois Girls' College and some of the denominational schools, this project has not added any significant value to our children's education. There was nothing more than an intemperate rush to fulfil a campaign promise, and not a properly thought-through nor well-planned project.

Mr. Speaker, I had anticipated all these problems and I had warned this Government. I had called out the Prime Minister and I had warned her over and over, and they are annoyed, but I am warning them over and over because I am about education and about schools, and I would not have had my school in that condition. I saw that my school moved from that to where it is now, and I told them it was putting the cart before the horse, and the laptops would not achieve the intended goals, and so be it. "So is what happened."

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Mr. Speaker, I hold the Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, accountable for the inefficient and ineffective performance of her Minister of Education in respect of the implementation of this eCAL laptop project, and I declare no confidence in her ability to effectively manage the officers under her control.

This Parliament is the highest legislative chamber of the land, and one of the most critical roles of the Members of this honourable House is to assist in enacting laws that would benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, in particular, and our country, in general. Indeed, Mr. Minister, we are all legislators, who upon assuming office took a sacred oath to conscientiously uphold our country's Constitution, which is the official manifold that guides and informs how our institutions function.

Mr. Speaker, when we have a Minister of Education who does not appreciate, or who does not seem to appreciate his role and function vis-a-vis those of the Teaching Service Commission, which is the umbrella body that oversees the effective and efficient function of the Ministry of Education, we are heading for chaos in one of our most critical institutions.

The Minister often seems on a collision course with the Teaching Service Commission, appearing to be acting ultra vires to the Constitution. This was evident especially in the case between Sita Gajadharsingh and the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha board, in which he challenged the constitutionally enshrined independence of the commission, attempted to interfere with the work of the commission and threatened to bring the commission into public disrepute.

I should like to refer to an article, to two articles, the first one—I would refer to another one where he rescinds, but I will refer to this one: “Tim Cracks the Whip,” in the *Trinidad Express*. It was December 13, 2011:

“Education Minister Dr. Tim Gopeesingh yesterday lashed out at the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) for its ‘inaccurate’ findings on the principal of the Tunapuna Hindu School. He also threatened to enforce the Education Act that gives him overarching power over the country’s school system.

‘This matter is going to come to a head because I intend to deal with the TSC,’ Gopeesingh said...

Gopeesingh said when he received the TSC report, he considered ‘going public’ with it to highlight the discrepancies between the two reports.

‘The question is now over the role and function of the TSC as a so-called independent committee. They are autocratic and high-handed...I am now questioning the independence of the TSC.’”

Of course, better sense might have prevailed because, thereafter, on December 15, quite a long while, because this was the 13th—well, two days after—he published a statement in the Trinidad and Tobago Government News saying that he purports to give—this article purports to give the impression that Dr. Gopeesingh has taken issue with the independence of the Teaching Service Commission in the matter of the investigation of the principal by the board of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha. And Mr. Gopeesingh wishes to put in public that he in no way questions or challenges the constitutionally enshrined independence of the Teaching Service Commission.

But, Mr. Speaker, the damage had already been done, and in truth and in fact, the Minister failed to discharge his responsibility in the case of the Tunapuna Hindu School, since he ought to have intervened in the game, early in the game, and brought the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha board to heel. Instead, he gave the board full autonomy and allowed the situation to get out of control, and then sought to cast blame on the Teaching Service Commission. Yet in the case of the ASJA board and the teacher at ASJA Girls' College, the Minister came right out and declared that the board was wrong. Why did he not do the same in the case of the Tunapuna Hindu School? Was it because of the fact that the chairman is a strong supporter of the UNC? Where is the Prime Minister in all of this confusion? How could she tolerate one of her Ministers acting in direct contravention to the Constitution? Should she have not called her Minister and put him straight, or was she reluctant to do so because of the very close political affiliation of the chairman of the Maha Sabha board?

Mr. Speaker, because of this absence of effective management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister, resulting in persistent confusion and wrongdoing in the conduct of the national affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, the Members on this side of the honourable House wish to express concerns and lack of confidence in Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

And so, the saga continues. The Chief Education Officer is now due to retire and the Minister has set up a committee to redefine the role of the CEO, totally ignorant of the fact that this is a function of the Chief Personnel Officer. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education does not seem to understand his role as Minister vis-a-vis that of the Teaching Service Commission and the Chief Personnel Officer. He seems to want to arrogate unto himself the duties and responsibilities of the CPO, and to control the Teaching Service Commission which is contrary to the Constitution.

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Mr. Speaker, education in this country is in a sorry state. Many schools are out of control, absenteeism and punctuality are disturbingly high, and the Teaching Service Commission has requested from the Minister of Education to forward to them term reports on teachers' attendance so that they could institute proper disciplinary action, where necessary. To date, none are forthcoming and the Minister says the principals are not complying. Does he not have control over his Ministry and its operations?

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

Mrs. P. McIntosh: In the meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the Minister keeps blaming the Teaching Service Commission for the many vacancies that still exist. But, Mr. Speaker, we have to note that when applications are sent to the Ministry of Education, they take almost a year processing before they are sent to the Teaching Service Commission, and the Teaching Service Commission cannot arrange interviews or appoint people until these applications are sent to them.

Mr. Speaker, in this beautiful rainbow twin-island State of Trinidad and Tobago, we should all be afforded equal opportunities for advancement despite colour, creed, race, social status or political affiliation. We should be advancing as one people, as God's people, as Trinidadians, and our Prime Minister should be demonstrating her ability to take charge and lead our nation to a better tomorrow. Instead, she is showing an unwillingness to do so. I am afraid the Members of this side of the House and, indeed, a vast percentage of the population of Trinidad and Tobago wish to express concern and lack of confidence in Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

I end with a quote by Colin Powell, Mr. Speaker, "They have either lost confidence that you can help them or conclude that you do not care. Either case is a failure of the leadership."

I thank you.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was not concentrating at all on responding to the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, I thought that we should shift this debate to a point of sanity and proper focus.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion of No Confidence, I want to suggest, was most observant and very opportunistically timed to be debated against the background of mass confusion, in an environment of no transportation fuel, systems collapse,

recrimination, no talks, and no reason. The energy sector was anticipated to be on strike at this time; we averted that shutdown, which was going to be quite legitimate, insofar as the rights of the workers' organization is concerned. But one needed to look perhaps a little bit more, a little bit beyond that right, and secure the broader interest of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Had this Government not been working, we would really be today debating this No Confidence Motion in an environment of the kind of confusion that I alluded to a while ago.

This No Confidence Motion, Mr. Speaker, was supposed to be taking place, the debate of it taking place—

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, I am hearing you and the Member is on his legs. I would like you to just be silent whilst the Member is speaking. Hon. Minister, you may continue.

Mr. Imbert: Keep quiet. Just keep quiet.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Thank you very much. Well, you will be short on everything, I anticipate. [*Laughter*] This Motion of No Confidence, Mr. Speaker, was supposed to be debated against the background of strike action, and in the heart of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. For the PNM, the important reason for attempting to gatecrash the workers' struggle—for the PNM, the important reason had nothing to do, absolutely nothing to do with 5 per cent wage cap, felt hat, sombrero or beret. It had nothing to do with that, if ever such a cap or limitation existed. Indeed, over the past four years, it was the People's National Movement Government that had made offers limited to 3 per cent, and I want them to deny that. Indeed, a couple of the workers' organizations were offered "zero by zero by one".

Somebody spoke about people being beaten into submission. I do not think that that is quite correct. People were biding their time and waiting for that opportune moment when they would intervene in the manner that they intervened. It is that sense of freedom that they now enjoy, that would fuel some of the demonstrations, and so on, that we have been having.

So that, notwithstanding the repugnance of the PNM's offer, the Government, in addition to the ridiculous offer, invoked injunctive action against three principal unions in the country: you do not gather, you do not march, you do not participate in any action that will debilitate the work processes.

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There was no declaration of any state of emergency, but, in fact, some of the measures that would normally attend a state of emergency had been declared against three principal unions in the country. All of this coming close to the end of the midterm of a Government that was elected with—26 seats, was it?—in 2007.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. McLeod:—and was moved by its leader to engage the national population in election activities just at the halfway mark of their term in office. As if that were forgotten, as if that were not enough, as the workers' legitimate demonstrations took form and purpose, representatives of the PNM, including PNM Members of this Parliament, were gatecrashing the workers' demonstrations and wanting to mount the workers' platform. Those who did not attend those demonstrations, inviting themselves to the workers' platform, were extending invitations for the workers to bring their problems to the leadership of colleagues sitting opposite, and they were wrongly dismissed by those unions, because the unions do not forget those who treat them badly.

All of this was really an attempt to increase the “kuchoor” making process. Endless “kuchoor”—[*Laughter*]

Mr. Warner: Shot boy! Shot boy!

Hon. E. McLeod:—shut down the place. It is not anything new, you know. They were accustomed to doing that. In 1989, in an earlier incarnation, when the workers in Trintoc had difficulties with the employer and we engaged the company in strike action, the then Leader of the Opposition, visited the workers' strike camp, when the leadership of the union at that time was away from the camp and engaged some of their opportunistic minions in the camp in games of All Fours, and his jack was wrongly hung. [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*]

So, they are accustomed to that. They are not supportive of any strike action when they are in Government, but if they are in Opposition, as they are now, they will mount everybody's particular struggle so as to gain, again, political ascendancy. You see, there is a mindset amongst some of them that power, office and privilege in Trinidad and Tobago belong to the PNM. No more since May 24, 2010. [*Desk thumping*] No more!

So, their coming today, really, is a serious miscalculation of what really ought to be happening in the country. And they will have the public believe that the economy is stalled; that nothing is working; the Government is merely occupying the seats of power; people are being retrenched—

Mrs. McIntosh: “Mm-hmm, mm-hmm”.

Hon. E. McLeod:—school leavers are not being employed—

Mrs. McIntosh: That too.

Hon. E. McLeod:—the education system is not working—

Mrs. McIntosh: “Um um”.

Hon. E. McLeod:—and services that the Government is supposed to be dispensing to a deserving population, those services are shut down.

Mr. Speaker, the problems that are being experienced now and, in fact, there are problems that are being experienced, but those problems that are being experienced now are residual from the mismanagement and the shutdown of Government in 2008/2009 and for the first couple of months in 2010. This Government, of which I am proud to be a part, has been working assiduously to relieve all of the problems that afflict the society.

We came to office on the basis of a manifesto and a particular campaign strategy supported by the majority, the great majority of the voting population. I have been assigned responsibility for the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. There is a lot that I should like to report to this Parliament and to the national community. We set about immediately addressing those commitments that we had made to the people, the workers and the citizens of this country, and I might identify a number of the things that we have done so far and the progress that we have made, not necessarily in chronological order.

We committed to the workers’ organizations, the trade unions and the employers’ organizations that we are going to examine, review and bring about important and fundamental change to our industrial relations laws, and we committed to working on all of these laws from the standpoint of tripartite participation. It is not a case of a Minister coming from the labour movement, pretending to know, to understand and to appreciate all of the deficiencies and backwardness of the laws that have affected us. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, I spent many years in that earlier incarnation having to battle against PNM laws, PNM anti-worker action, even while some of them might have been sympathizing with workers, you know, but they could not carry that to their leadership.

Mr. Warner: On the surface.

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Warner: He says he wants to have a drink sometime.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: I would want to examine very carefully what I drink with you, you know. [*Laughter*] We will talk about it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, we have been having consultations with the partners. Not as much as we should like to. Not as often as we would like to, but one has to consider the particular ground on which we find ourselves at this time, and we are moving, not in any way that would earn us the title of “pagal”. [*Laughter*] We are moving, perhaps slowly, but surely to bringing all of the parties together and have them, as we would have said in the manifesto:

“Labour within Trinidad and Tobago should be organised as a positive force for economic development. We will partner with labour unions to work beyond the frontiers of traditional collective bargaining for higher wages and better working conditions. These considerations, important in themselves, must be seen within the framework of workers taking up their responsibility to participate in decision-making and control at the level of the firm, as well as the national level. The major emphasis of organised labour then, would be the economic development of the country, ensuring this development so that workers’ rights can be protected...”

These are big tasks. These are not ordinary commitments that we have made, and we are going to deliver on those commitments. [*Desk thumping*]

At section 80 of the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01 of 1973, there is provided for the establishment of an Industrial Relations Advisory Committee that would advise, that would be in a constant review of the Industrial Relations Act, and that would advise the Minister with responsibility for labour on any important and necessary changes that should be brought about to have the legislation modern, providing a good basis and fair ground upon which all can productively contribute to the development of the country, and guarding the rights of the worker as one would guard the rights of the employer and, of course, the importance of guarding and developing the interest of this State.

Now, an attempt was made, I am advised—some 23 years ago, a committee was called very hurriedly and they may have met for a month or two and that was the end of it. So, for the first time in 20 years, at least, we are going on March 9—that is next Friday—to install this committee that will be led by one of our national experts on labour laws and so on—one Mr. Lennox Marcelle.

8.45 p.m.

The committee, according to the legislation that exists now, is supposed to have on it, workers’ representatives, representatives of the employers’

organizations, professional industrial relations practitioners and members of academia. Next Friday, by the time we come to the Parliament, if there is a sitting, the country would be made familiar with the personalities of the other members of that committee. The committee would be advised to immediately set about working on a long list of proposals that the unions have already submitted to the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

We are going to be doing that work at the same time that we engage principal parties in the whole production, the economic process upon which the country depends so dearly. We are going to bring them to the round table to begin to devise a means by which we would engage in social dialogue and continue in that social dialogue to develop seriously Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And that is going to be done in some collaboration with experts from the International Labour Organization (ILO), of which governing body Trinidad and Tobago is now a member representing Caribbean territories.

Last June, at the 100th Conference of the ILO, Trinidad and Tobago—and I had the distinct pleasure and privilege to do that on behalf of our country—successfully campaigned to be elected to the governing body of the ILO, [*Desk thumping*] and we represent Trinidad and Tobago and 13 other Caribbean territories.

So there is a big task before us. We are going to be attempting to solve the problems in Trinidad and Tobago—and there are problems—but we must also be giving representation at the level of the ILO to brother and sister territories in the Caribbean. So there was the commitment to amend the Industrial Relations Act, and the action taken so far, Mr. Speaker, if I might reiterate this: on March 9, 2012, next Friday, the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development will host a ceremony at which the Industrial Relations Advisory committee will be officially appointed in accordance with the IRA, and this committee has not been in existence for 20-plus years. Section 81 of the IRA outlines the functions of this Industrial Relations Advisory committee is as follows:

“It shall be the duty of the Advisory Committee to keep this Act under review with a view to ensuring its development and reform, including in particular the modification of any of the provisions thereof and the elimination of anomalies, and for that purpose to prepare and submit to the Minister, from time to time, specific proposals for changes therein.”

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The Minister is saying to this committee, even before they receive their instruments, that “from time to time” it is going to be changed to “this time”—we want it done now.

Another commitment we made to bring Trinidad and Tobago in line with international standards, insofar as maternity protection is concerned: we committed to amending the Maternity Protection Act, No. 1 of 2000, to provide for 14 weeks’ maternity leave, which is the international standard—[*Desk thumping*] and because that particular provision—[*Interruption*] yes, it is on the Order Paper for today as a matter of fact—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: We should be debating that.

Hon. E. McLeod: Yes. There are provisions in the Maternity Protection Act, which are affected by an old colonial, long outgone Master and Servants Ordinance, which really by its very title, I find offensive to Trinidad and Tobago. We would be repealing that, getting it out of sight, out of our statute books as we bring into being, maternity leave at 14 weeks for all of our womenfolk in the production process. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Perhaps she could benefit from that.

Hon. E. McLeod: And that Bill is entitled: The Miscellaneous Provisions (Maternity Protection and the Master and Servants Ordinance) Bill.

Another commitment: we committed to reviewing for improvements, commensurate with a modern enlightened society, the repeal of the Workmen’s Compensation Act and to have instead more modern, more up-to-date provisions, that would give decent coverage to people at work. What we have done so far is to engage our tripartite organizations and stakeholders in consultations on some draft legislation, at least a body of ideas that we would bring together to replace the Workmen’s Compensation Act, Chap. 88:05, and we would have it replaced appropriately. We have had consultations here in February 2011. The last round of those consultations was held in Tobago, two months ago, January 17, 2012. So we are working.

We also committed to engaging the unions to have them play a constructive role in productivity and competitiveness. Trinidad and Tobago cannot continue to be at position 81—I think it is—in an index of 138 countries. We cannot continue to stay there and have everybody else go past us. So, having committed to doing this—and there was a bit of confusion in our own minds and we came around to realizing that productivity by itself as it would contribute to competitiveness must

have its own body and own operation. The action that we have taken so far was to launch the National Productivity Council of Trinidad and Tobago, January 31, 2012. It is my information that since having been launched, that productivity council represented by Government, employers' and workers' organizations and academia have since had one meeting.

Commitment on migrant labour, Mr. Speaker, and we have had quite a bit of debate in this House recently on the trafficking in persons. A migrant labour is closely associated and we committed to implement a proper policy on migrant labour. We committed to establishing an authority to monitor migrant labour and to ensure that migrant labour is not to be used to the disadvantage of local labour. We are not going to—this Government is not going to bring in, whether it may be the Chinese, the Portuguese, the Guyanese, the whoever, with their grants, their loans, their aid in whichever form with a bundle of manpower to come and do that work while there are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago able, qualified and willing, left idle. [*Interruption*] We are not going to do that whether we are going to build prime ministerial palaces, stadia or whatever—Trinidad and Tobago first. The old people had a saying, and I hope I remember it well, “Of all of my mother’s children, I love myself the best.” [*Interruption*]

Mr. Baksh: You from long time. [*Laughter*]

Hon. E. McLeod: The action that we have taken so far, Mr. Speaker: a work permit sub-unit was established in 2011, within the national employment service, to monitor the work of migrant labourers who were granted work permits and ensure that transfer of knowledge to workers takes place. This is a matter that is still under very serious consideration.

We are about building a healthy nation. Responding to chronic diseases, cardiovascular, cancer, diabetes and HIV/AIDS. We are committed to strengthening the implementation of the national HIV/AIDS policy. The action so far taken and insofar as this is concerned, we are working with other similar agencies in other Ministries. The establishment of the HIV/AIDS Advocacy and Sustainability Centre in November 2010: that was officially launched in February 2011. The HASC—HASC being the HIV/AIDS Advocacy and Sustainability Centre—is responsible for implementation of the national workplace policy on HIV/AIDS and the sustainability plan. I am sure that officers coming after me will have some contributions to make on this particular point.

9.00 p.m.

Another most significant commitment that we had made and which we have discharged is the commitment to review and, where appropriate, bring about

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amendments and improvements to the minimum wages applied in the country and the appointment of the Minimum Wages Board. As we should all remember, the action that we took saw the Minimum Wages Board being reappointed in September 2010. That is how many months after coming into office? It must be about four months. A new board was appointed in April 2011 and that board is chaired by Miss Bunny Rambachan. And the national minimum wage was increased after how many years? It was increased from \$9 to \$12.50 per hour with effect from January 01, 2011. [*Desk thumping*]

I think it was in 2005 that the last increase was applied, and in reading the 2007 budget I think there was a promise to increase it by \$1 and it was never applied.

Mr. Sharma: What a shame. Shameless!

Mr. Roberts: “A dollar, boy? Jack whole salary?”

Mr. Warner: My whole salary, yes. [*Laughter*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: There was a commitment to strengthening our governance model and providing us with good and better governance than we had been realizing; strengthening execution and delivery capacity.

Mr. Speaker, we completed the Ministry’s strategic plan, 2011—2015 and that has been submitted to the Government and taken to the Ministry of Planning and the Economy. For the purposes of taking our services to the people where they live, where they work, to the extent that we can do that, we opened an office in Point Fortin, and any service that can be had at the head office of the Ministry can be accessed at the office. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: No need for a Ministry of Rural Development.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: That office was opened on February 09, 2011. In October 2010, we established a Labour Market Information Unit that will be working very closely with the Ministry of Planning and the Economy and with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and will impact the planning and determination of the curriculum in the Ministry of Education and so on, so that we educate our people along lines that will identify with the kind of economy that we wish to develop, preparing our scientists, artisans, technologists and so on. We commenced implementation of a programme of promotion of rights and responsibilities of workers and employers under labour legislation at the community levels.

May I just give an idea under the enhancement of social dialogue as to the number of entities that fall under the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, and how these entities are going to be pulled together to satisfy so many of those commitments that we have made. The appointment of boards, committees, councils, all of these are going to impact the work of the Ministry. The Board of Governors of the Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, that board was appointed October 2010, and that board has been working feverishly at remodeling its legislation and preparing the Cipriani College for—the word is escaping me. I should come back to that, Mr. Speaker.

The Minimum Wages Board, September 2010; the Boilers Examiners Board, October 2010—and most people do not know what this board is about. Even in the steam laundry you have boilers and many of these boilers assist in—well, they are fashioned to produce steam, but the Boilers Examiners Board also has responsibility for a number of the safety mechanisms that you will have on vessels that are under pressure, whether steam, air or otherwise. That board was installed in October 2010.

The Occupational Safety and Health Authority, October 2010; the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, January 2011.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. C. Sharma*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. E. McLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and colleagues.

The ILO 144 Tripartite Committee was appointed April 2011. That committee deals with ILO issues. They will examine ILO standards, ILO conventions, and they will recommend to the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development such convention and standards that we should take to the Parliament for acceptance and approval.

We have talked about the Minimum Wages Board. That was appointed in April 2011. The Board of Directors of the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO) had been terribly abused prior to our coming into Government. NEDCO was so terribly abused. NEDCO had some lending limits of \$30,000, yet people were able to walk into NEDCO on the recommendation of important powerhouses in the country—walk into NEDCO—and get loans of \$250,000—

Mr. Sharma: PNM “eh shame”?

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—in 2002, 2003, 2004 and there has been no servicing on those loans at all. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Some of the files were lost.

Mrs. McIntosh: “Shame like all yuh.”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Mr. Speaker, it is not easy—

Hon. Member: “Yuh shame.”

Mrs. McIntosh: “Like all yuh.”

Hon. Member: “Tell de people yuh shame.”

Mrs. McIntosh: “Like all yuh.”

Mr. Sharma: “What yuh borrow de money for?”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: I should come back to NEDCO in a little while, as I advise on the very important role that NEDCO is going to be playing in the coming months.

The National Productivity Council of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, just a minute. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, you had your time. Forget the crosstalk. Do not encourage—and Member for Fyzabad, please, you all are interrupting the hon. Minister. If you want to talk, come behind my chair. Hon. Minister, continue, please.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West knows that I am quite capable of making a report to some other person about the interference here—the conduct.

The National Productivity Council was appointed January 2012; the Standing National Labour Market Council of Trinidad and Tobago appointed January 2012. All of these are actions that we have taken. The working committee—and this is an important feature that I should like to speak about just for a minute or two. A working committee was appointed in January 2012 to develop a plan for the establishment of a heroes park and museum in Fyzabad. [*Desk thumping*] I heard from the Opposition Benches somebody talking about how much we have benefited from the PNM having been in power for however many years.

Mr. Warner: Forty years.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Forty-three years.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: I want to posit at this time that the labour movement, particularly the earlier labour movement—trade unions have been responsible for the majority of the very fundamental changes that have taken place in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Many struggles were fought; many struggles were led by quite ordinary people who had a conscience for Trinidad and Tobago. They took on the colonial masters in that 1937 popular uprising, and they were not “pagal”.

9.15 p.m.

We thought that we should identify in this heroes park and museum as much of the history of Trinidad and Tobago’s labour movement and trade union organizations as we could. This People’s Partnership Government that has been very ably assisted by the labour movement would contribute to realizing this heroes park and museum in Fyzabad.

We established a committee for action against discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. There are too many instances of such infractions taking place and, quite often, it is the victim who is disciplined. Of course, we talked about the Industrial Relations Advisory Committee, and Cabinet recently approved the establishment of the social dialogue process in Trinidad and Tobago by Minute No. 28, January 05, 2012. Accordingly, the Ministry would soon establish a multipartite task force to serve as the technical arm of the social dialogue process responsible for its conceptualization and operationalization.

Our commitment to the economic transformation of Trinidad and Tobago and providing an enabling environment for growth and expansion of locally owned businesses. In that regard, we have taken the following action: Cabinet approved the establishment of community-based business incubators over the next three years, and we have been working with consultants from the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) of India. We are informed that the small, micro and medium business enterprises contribute some 22 per cent of India’s GDP. That is “small” business, but when we look at it from here, we see big business—if you get my drift, Mr. Speaker.

We have mounted a programme of making more fisherfolk who would feed themselves for a lifetime rather than continue to give a fish to the poor and hungry every day and feed them only for a day.

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So, the business incubator system is going to provide seed capital and is going to provide operational and infrastructural assistance. You have an idea, you are engaged in small business development, you come with a business plan, and that business plan is examined by experts, but you do not have money. This business plan is going to establish you and those whom you may wish to bring in. IBIS is going to provide the training in business development and business organization, and NEDCO, which is going to be used as the implementation arm of this whole idea, would source the seed capital and so on that will be necessary.

A national Integrated Business Incubator System policy document was completed and launched in October 2011; a business incubator operational model has been completed. There was the launch of two business incubators: one in Siparia, and that should become operational by June of this year and the other one in Toco/Sangre Grande. And, we have already begun to examine Point Fortin, San Juan/Barataria, Laventille. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Warner: *[Inaudible] [Desk thumping] [Laughter]*

Hon. E. McLeod: As we start, we are looking for those areas where you have large catchments of people, particularly young people who are unemployed, who are looking for some direction. We are also looking at Tobago. So, this programme began in September 2011, with 40 clients selected and interviewed for Sangre Grande and Siparia. Accommodation has been identified and these two incubators are expected to be operational by June 2012.

The implementation of the FairShare Programme. This FairShare Programme, Mr. Speaker and hon. Members, would provide for preferential arrangements for qualifying MSEs and co-operatives up to \$1 million. As it is now, you invite tenders, proposals, for big, medium-sized contracts. The small businesses, as properly operated as they might want to be, because they are small, they can hardly impact the market, and it is the big ones that go in there and on the basis of economies of scale and so on they are able to shut out the small ones.

So, there is going to be an arrangement that would provide—however big the particular business, the particular undertaking might be—they would be provided access up to \$1 million for the small and micro enterprise. *[Desk thumping]* And, our co-operative development sector would also be involved. So, we build the co-operatives, we build communities, we build incubators, we build small business, we build people, we build Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

Approval was given to grant loans to such maxis and taxis which will be in keeping with Government's thrust to expand the tourism sector. And, Mr.

Speaker, the loan ceiling by NEDCO was increased to \$250,000 for first-time borrowers. But, we are not going to be just handing out money you know, especially at election time. You must have a business plan. Your character is going to be examined and properly identified.

We heard people boasting about their reputation. I am told by—is it Dale Carnegie?—that it is more important to build and protect your character because that is who you are, than it is to protect your reputation, which really is people's perception of what you are. Very important, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] So, we are going to be examining very carefully. Nobody is going to come to this programme and show a party card—MSJ, COP, UNC, PNM or anybody—and feel they are going to pass through. It is on the basis of your character and your business plan, your ability to carry the thing forward and to service the people's money that you get as seed capital. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. McIntosh: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. E. McLeod: You will hear more sweetheart. Mr. Speaker, to the end of last year, December 2011, we very effectively did the disbursement of 237 loans, valued at \$7,334,063.72, by NEDCO to enhance employment, wealth creation and poverty reduction by the end of the period that I just identified. [*Desk thumping*] But, you hear “all kinda talk” about people losing their jobs and there is so much retrenchment. Let me just give you an idea. There has been retrenchment, there has always been retrenchment.

I had it here, Mr. Speaker, I will find it. I had the manpower unit investigate this for me. For the period June 01, 2010, that was when we took office—actually walked into office. From June 01 2010 to, just about a week or so ago, February 24, 2012, there were 1,845 persons retrenched. An analysis by sector found that the workers in the manufacturing sector were the most affected by the slow economic growth rates.

It is true, the economy is moving slowly, but Trinidad and Tobago is not unique in that regard. So, the manufacturing sector, our local manufacturing sector, has been affected by the slow economic growth rates both locally and regionally. We are still not so badly off, but, you go through the rest of the Caribbean where we have a large part of our market for the manufacturing sector and they cannot buy anything. So, we have that problem. So, it is both locally and internationally. You have Barana Seafood Processors Limited, I think that is in the Port of Spain South constituency. Is it?

Mr. Sharma: Are you familiar with it?

Miss McDonald: Yes, I know it, all of it. [*Laughter*]

9.30 p.m.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Three hundred and eleven were retrenched in September 2011. Surely, it is not the People's Partnership coming into office on the first of June that would have so adversely affected Barana Seafood Processors Limited that by September 2011, they retrenched their people. So you had, of that number 1,845—285 in construction; 759 in manufacturing; 347 in petroleum and gas; and 454 in services. We looked at a corresponding period, Mr. Speaker—June 01, 2009 to May 31, 2010—1,437 persons were retrenched. At September 30, 2010, the labour force stood at 620,800—of whom 36,600 were unemployed.

As I gave those figures there, Mr. Speaker, I should warn that these are numbers that we have compiled on the basis of employers reporting to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development that they are retrenching workers in accordance with the provisions of the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, No. 32 of 1985.

There are other people who are retrenched and they do not report it. There are some employers who have relationships with unions and they do not report it. But, there are people who have gained employment and those figures we do not have. [*Interruption*] Okay, the Minister of Finance has some figures. I know that the manpower unit of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, the National Employment Service—many of us do not know that we have a National Employment Service.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members on that side of the Bench, this consistent conversation that you seem to be having, you are disrespectful to this House and to the speaker who is on his feet. I mean to say you could speak for a little while but you cannot be having a constant conversation when the hon. Member is on his legs. So I ask you to listen or if you want to leave, you can stream out, but you cannot be having this continuous conversation while the hon. Member is on his legs, please. Hon. Minister, you may continue.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I should be winding up now anyway. The National Employment Service is a small unit in the manpower section of the Ministry and that unit has been compiling CDs and setting up interviews with people both in the public and private sectors. It has been doing

that for some time now with a reasonably good measure of success. But we have not been making all these things as known as we ought to make them known for the wider population and we will set about doing all of that.

Mr. Speaker, all those initiatives, all those successes, which I related, were as a result of people putting their heads together, recognizing the better interest of Trinidad and Tobago and working, some of them, very feverishly to ensure that we gain the results that we have set ourselves. But even so, Mr. Speaker, we would not have come this far had we not had the most effective, the most encouraging, the greatest assistance, perhaps unchallenged, serious leadership skills and management ability such as we have been realizing with our hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Hospedales: Which management ability?

Hon. E. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, you would hear some noises that do not necessarily make sense. So, the Motion, that is the original Motion, I would like to dismiss out of hand and encourage hon. Members of this hallowed Chamber to accept and support the amendment which says in the following recital:

And whereas the Prime Minister and her historic People's Partnership Government inherited an economy in decline, a culture of wastage, raging and rampant crime, debilitating corruption and a style of arrogance in leadership which led to a disconnect between the people and the Government.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank you and hon. Members very sincerely for the opportunity to disclose a number of these issues that I have brought to the attention of this honourable House. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the hon. Member for La Brea to make his contribution, I wish to advise hon. Members that dinner has arrived and Members are invited to stream out at your convenience since we would not be suspending the Sitting because of the importance of this Motion before the honourable House. So, hon. Members can stream out and come back in but this House would not be suspended until the conclusion of this Motion before it.

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (La Brea): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Motion that is before us has absolutely nothing to do with the stewardship of Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley. It is about the lack of confidence in the Prime Minister who happens to be, at this point in time, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*] That is the question. We all know that Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley has superior qualities to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago when

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compared with our present Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] Therefore, try as you may to belittle our Leader of the Opposition by calling him Mr. Rowley, but we in the PNM and the majority of the mature population of Trinidad and Tobago know him as Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley with a doctorate in geology at the internationally acclaimed University of the West Indies. No paper mill. He did not have to buy any university.

Mr. Speaker, his stewardship is not in question; he enjoys unanimous support from this Opposition Bench. [*Desk thumping*] He also has some support on the Government Benches. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, there are some people on the other side, as a matter of fact, I can count four of them. If we had secret ballots, they would have gotten 25 votes against the Motion, but, because of the openness, they are intimidated, and therefore, would not vote with us. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] The majority of the population, Mr. Speaker, supports Dr. Rowley as well. And I would like to challenge those opposite, the Prime Minister is not here, if she is so brave, call a general election and you would see what would happen. More support.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister believes that she is in Opposition and that Dr. Rowley is really the Prime Minister, but I say, do not get over anxious to get back into Opposition. If you want to go back to Opposition, call the elections. Mr. Speaker, the whole question of gross incompetence and absence of effective management is about the Prime Minister. You know that she has to smile, she could use some fancy slang but that would take her nowhere. Now that she has come to her senses, she is panicking.

Dr. Browne: Hysteria!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Hence the reason you had this mad rush of public meetings begging and inveigling for support.

Dr. Browne: One hundred million in onions.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: If you have done so much for this country and you have so much support, relax, and satisfy yourselves and wait for the debate. What did you do? All CEPEP workers, all URP workers, were threatened to come to Port of Spain or else. [*Desk thumping*] That is the fact. Mr. Speaker, they know that.

Dr. Browne: They had prayer meeting only to the Prime Minister.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: But, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows as well that during that first year of office, her rating fell by 14 per cent—ask Prof. Selwyn Ryan—and it has been falling more and more as time goes by. She is running scared.

So, Mr. Speaker, in my contribution, I would provide this House with the evidence to show that the PM is grossly incompetent. [*Desk thumping*] She has failed to stimulate the economy. She has failed to create sustainable employment. She has shown a consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and she cannot manage her Cabinet. All this has led to the conclusion that she lacks the confidence; she lacks the support of the labour movement, the youths and the majority of people in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we have no doubt in our minds that anytime a general election is called, our next Prime Minister will be Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley. [*Desk thumping*] “Put that in yuh pipe and smoke it.”

9.45 p.m.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Imagine they had three political meetings, one after the other and they had to bus and maxi-taxi people free of charge to go to those meetings—five political parties and they could not fill a room. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Ah, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ah.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister says that this No Confidence Motion is a test of the confidence in Dr. Rowley. I told her that the numbers game “doh cut it”. Let us go back to 1995—Wednesday, June 14 and Thursday, June 15 to be exact, when the UNC party lost the No Confidence Motion against Mr. Patrick Manning by 19 votes to 12. How is it that they did not ask for the proverbial head of the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Basdeo Panday? The Member for Fyzabad, I am sorry he is not here, voted for the Motion but never called for the resignation of Mr. Panday. Never! By the way, if you had 17 Opposition Members in the House “how come is only 12 voted against the Motion? Where the other five went?” You would see tonight that all 11 of us will vote in support of the Motion, balisier tie or no balisier tie.

This lack of confidence in the Prime Minister is inextricably linked with her leadership and managerial traits. This is a very serious debate. I went and researched what were some of the main traits or qualities to become a successful manager or a good leader. In almost every instance, integrity, trust, honesty and fairness featured.

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I want to look at Barbara White who is the Director of Product Marketing Management of AT&T with over 20 years' experience in leadership. She listed seven qualities of a good leader. Number one, hear what she says:

“A good leader has an exemplary character. It is of utmost importance that a leader is trustworthy to lead others. A leader needs to be trusted and be known to live their life with honesty and integrity. A good leader ‘walks the talk’ and in doing so earns the right to have responsibility for others.”

That was Barbara White.

Kristin Marquet, a public relations expert, number one on her list—and she was talking about nine characteristics of a good leader—is that the leaders who are most successful are those who are able to gain the trust of colleagues, employees and stakeholders.

I take a third—Wade Hartsell, experienced educator, team leader and US Government consultant. He listed seven characteristics of a good manager. Hear what he says:

Integrity, this is probably the most important quality. Your integrity defines not only who you are as a manager, but more importantly who you are as a person.

Let me go through three others he mentioned.

Fairness: this is paramount to your effectiveness. You need to demonstrate parity and fairness in your governing style from the beginning.

I would refer to La Brea in a while, to show that there is no fairness.

Ethical standing: in anything you do, you must demonstrate a fair and balanced ethical approach and style in how you manage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, William James is an experienced American psychologist and philosopher. Hear what he says:

“Integrity

Good leaders mean what they say. They have integrity. They're individuals who keep their guarantees and they do not play the old political games that plenty of others do.”

I want us to look at these characteristics and see whether or not they are present in our present Prime Minister. Can we trust her?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Does she have integrity? Well, let me tell you something: many “Trinbagonians” are of the respective view that these qualities are absent in our Prime Minister’s army. [*Desk thumping*] My deceased grandmother used to say if an enemy says something about the character of someone they do not like, you can dismiss it, but when a bosom friend says something about the character of another friend, sit up and take note. As an obedient grandchild, I sat up took note.

A statement was made, not by Members of the Opposition, but by one now in Government—one of the one-time favoured, friend of the Prime Minister. That favoured friend should know what he is talking about when he said of the present Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago—here is the statement:

I do not know of any politician today who could be as charming and at the same time as deceptive as Kamla.

This was carried in the electronic media and it is still on YouTube. Up to this morning I saw it. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Who said it?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: The Member for Chaguanas West. It is on YouTube. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: On a point of order, Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A point of order.

Mr. Warner: I never said that. I never said that and I would like the Member to withdraw it. I never said that. I never said that.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: It is on YouTube.

Mr. Warner: I never said that. “I doh care which tube!”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, if you are bringing material into the House, we would like to have the source, the date and who said it. If you saw something on YouTube or the electronic media that cannot be substantiated you cannot bring it into the House. I would like you to withdraw and continue, Member.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: If YouTube is not an accepted source, I withdraw.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I have ruled on the matter. I would like you to withdraw it and continue.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: What does the word “deceptive” mean? I want to know all the fine qualities of my Prime Minister. I took up the very accurate *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* and looked up the meaning of “deceptive”. On page 371 “deceptive” means:

“giving an appearance or impression different from the true one; misleading.”

When we look at “deceive” it says:

deliberately mislead or misrepresent the truth.

To deceive is to deliberately mislead or misrepresent the truth. If you are misleading the population, the population will not have faith in you and they would lose confidence in you. Hence the reason that the root of today’s debate is about the public’s lack of confidence in the Prime Minister. You just cannot take her word.

I would produce some more evidence in just a while. There are certain qualities that a Prime Minister is supposed to have. I would talk about integrity just now. The gross incompetence of the Prime Minister is shown—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members for Port of Spain South, Diego Martin North/East and Laventille East/Morvant please, allow your colleague to speak in silence. I am having difficulty in hearing him from this point and his colleague next to him is having difficulty.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: The gross incompetence of the Prime Minister is shown in her very deliberate, vulgar, calculated and obscene outburst at the infamous Colour Me Orange programme when she said—I am quoting my source again—in the *Newsday*, page 3 of Wednesday, November 16, 2011. I want them to see this one. The article is written by Miranda Larose. This is what she had to say. This is what the Prime Minister is quoted as saying:

“To those who say that we are insulting you by giving you food and an opportunity to give you food, I say to them, ‘Take your mouth and put it where you don’t want to show it to anyone, and let us take the young people forward’.”

“Ah know dat eh mean nothing.” This is “the kinda things” that are bringing down the country to where it is; these kinds of vulgar and reprehensible statements made by our Prime Minister.

The employees on the programme are the people who live on the margins; some who may have had infractions with the law or have some inclination to break the law, and you are making these vulgar statements. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Colour Me Orange is supposed to be a social intervention for crime; tell me, in making such a statement how right could that be?

10.00 p.m.

Dr. Browne: Encouraging gangsterism.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: What kind of example are you setting? What message are you sending to our nation's youth? [*Desk thumping*] You have reversed any gains that you would have made from this programme. As Prime Minister you have let the youth of this nation down. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: You were supposed to be the mother of all our nation's children, are you not ashamed? You have lowered the bar of prime ministership in our democracy. [*Desk thumping*] Our youth have lost faith in you.

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Just look at the high quality of statesmanship from our past Prime Ministers: from the late Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, down to Mr. Patrick Manning. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: The voice of La Brea.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Say what you want about all our past leaders, they never stooped so low. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to apologize to all those in the Colour Me Orange programme, and to our nation's children whom she claims she loves so passionately. Madam Prime Minister, we forgave you when you held the portfolio of Minister of Education, when on a public platform you were very vulgar in talking about "Ganga Singh pipe", we forgave you then—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—because in your usual exuberant self you were not in control, this time it seems to be very deliberate. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can go on. But in looking at the whole question of trust and integrity, I want to refer to the 5 per cent cap. I asked the question whether or not you believed the Prime

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Minister when she said that she did not know of any 5 per cent wage cap. Do you really think she was speaking the truth? The Prime Minister made the following statements in the Parliament on April 08, 2011; and this is what she said:

The agreement remains within the 5 per cent, 2-1-2... We wish we could give more, but the economy cannot permit that at this time...

That was April 08. In May, she did not know about any 5 per cent cap. But more than that, quoting from *Newsday* of April 10, an article written by Richardson Dhalai, this is what the Minister in the Ministry of Local Government—I think he is the Member for Couva South—hon. Rudranath Indarsingh says:

“Time and time again Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the Minister of Finance Winston Dookeran indicated to the country and moreso the trade union movement that we cannot offer outside of five per cent, taking into consideration what is available in the coffers of the treasury of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, are we saying that the Minister in the Ministry of Local Government is not speaking the truth? How could we trust this Prime Minister? In the Parliament you are saying you cannot give more than 5 per cent, and subsequent to that you are saying you did not say anything about 5 per cent. How could we trust you? How could you be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago? What example are you setting for all children? [*Desk thumping*] “This eh no joke, Mr. Deputy Speaker.” The labour movement cannot trust this Prime Minister, they have no confidence.

Mr. Warner: Nor you.

Dr. Moonilal: “Dey doh want to see you.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: When “yuh” give back Haiti “dey” money, talk to me.

Hon. Member: Ooooooooooh!

Mr. Warner: I will tell you when.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Ah boy! Ah boy!” [*Laughter*]

Dr. Browne: Oh my goodness.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: All the money that was invested in UNC internal as well as the general election, I hope he “geh” it back to pay Haiti.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they said—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That matter which you are dealing with has nothing to do with the Prime Minister or an officer of the Parliament.

Hon. Members: No! No! No way! You joking. Amendments! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a personal matter against the Member. Let us be careful as to what road we are going down, please. [*Crosstalk and interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Wat madness is dis?” Nonsense!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Outrageous!

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—the labour movement said they broke the Fyzabad accord and, therefore, they are threatening to withdraw their support for your party in the next general election. According to the *Guardian* newspaper of Thursday, June 09, 2011, Ancel Roget, President of the Oilfields Workers Trade Union:

“...accused the—Kamla Persad-Bissessar—Government of ‘squandering’ the support given to them by the labour movement in the May 24, 2010 general election. Roget reiterated his position that the Government would ‘pay a heavy political price’ should it not remove the five per cent offer...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the long and the short is that the labour movement has lost confidence in the Prime Minister and her Government—plain and simple. [*Desk thumping*]

We hear the Prime Minister talking about corruption and in *Newsday*, Sunday, January 01, 2012, page 3, in an article written by Corey Connelly, the Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, is quoted as saying:

“Over the years, this country’s image has been severely tarnished. But my Government is doing something about it. If corruption surfaces in this Government, I promise you to deal with it. I made an early commitment to transparency and accountability and I stand by that.”

This is a tough-talking Prime Minister. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you believe what the Prime Minister said? Do you believe that she is really committed to stamp out corruption? How can you trust our Prime Minister when we saw how Resmi Ramnarine was promoted from a \$5,000-plus per month job—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Oh Lord! [*Crosstalk and interruption*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—as a technician operator, a lower-end job, to director of the SIA at a whopping \$40,000 per month job, under the guise of being the holder of a university degree which she did not have. What is even more reprehensible is that most of the Ministers opposite in this ill-fated, UNC-led coalition stoutly defended down to the hilt, until the media reports showed that the qualifications were falsified. I ask the question, can the Prime Minister look the population in the face and say that she knew nothing about Resmi’s lack of qualification?

Mr. Sharma: “Did the population say you making sense?”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, “how come” somebody could move from \$5,000 to \$40,000 and not have a degree? The Prime Minister made the appointment and did not know that she did not have a degree.

Hon. Member: “Who from La Brea tell you dat?”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Who was going to be disciplined for that action? But that is not all. We can go to His Excellency Makandal Daaga, leader of the National Joint Action Committee which is a member of the five-member coalition. According to the article in the *Antigua Observer*, May 23, 2011:

“Speaking at the founding congress of the Movement of Social Justice (MSJ), another coalition partner, earlier this month, Dagga called on the government—the Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government—to jail those involved in corrupt activities.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, hear the stinging part, and I quote. He said:

“In my whole 40, or 50, or 60 years, I have never heard so much corruption in my land as I have heard in this country over the last few days...”

“Who in power?”

Mr. Sharma: “De PNM!”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: The People’s Partnership, the UNC-led coalition.

Mr. Sharma: “Talk about de PNM!”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And he continued:

“I cannot understand why we cannot open our jail doors and pack them in. People are stealing money as if they have invented it; as if it is their right to thief. I tell my party over and over again what we are experiencing today here, is because of our failure to act...”

What is he telling us? That there is rank corruption in this Government. [*Desk thumping*] Not the Member for Port of Spain South is saying that, not the Member for Diego Martin North/East but His Excellency Makandal Daaga, one of the leaders of the movement.

Let me take another quote from Martin Daly, highly respected columnist in the *Antigua Observer* May 23, 2011, and hear his statement, —[*Interruption*]— Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking for your protection?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please do allow the Member to speak in silence. Standing Order 40(b). Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And I quote:

“My disappointment doubles every time the Government—the Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government—is caught uncomfortably and unaccountably close to the cookie jar, or, as I have dubbed it, the national cash register, and its spokesmen respond by saying the other side did it too...”

Things seem to be getting terribly wrong under this Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration. [*Desk thumping*] Do not take Makandal Daaga’s word for it, do not take Martin Daly’s word, but let us take the Transparency International index, which they used to quote from when they were in Opposition. They released a document in December 2011, and if you go to page 3, again *Newsday*, January 01, 2012:

“Trinidad and Tobago placed 91 out of 183 countries...falling some 18 notches from the previous year. In 2010—the last year the PNM was in government—the country was ranked 73...”

Mr. Speaker, if corruption is getting worse in this country, how could we say the Prime Minister is competent? She is incompetent! [*Desk thumping*] She is a weak leader and a poor manager, incapable of inspiring anybody in this country.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. Member: Competent at corruption.

10.15 p.m.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Very incompetent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister loudly proclaims to the nation: “Serve the people; serve the people; serve the people.” Nice words, but we have come to understand that what she says in Parliament or in the electronic media is not very important. In fact, what goes on behind closed doors at Rienzi Complex or at the Prime Minister’s residence in

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Philippine is what matters. The misdeeds and spiteful actions of some of your Ministers, and your deafening silence show how consistently you are willing to act in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the UNC's "120 days of immediate action", number 21:

"Each Minister will be required to present a one-year action agenda for consideration and approval by Cabinet after consultation with senior ministerial staff within 30 working days of swearing in. Each ministerial action agenda, once approved, will be included in the next budget."

Very nice, but I would like to make this statement: not a single recreation ground in the entire La Brea constituency was mentioned, even though I made several requests dating back from when they came into office in 2010 to the present time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara speak about fixing all the grounds. I felt good. I said, "Nice, man; that mean La Brea go get something." I see a document here, January 31, 2012 and he is listing the recreation grounds that they are going to see about. We see Fyzabad. "I glad eh; I glad for the people there." I am glad that all these recreation grounds are getting fixed. My question is: why is La Brea left out? We are talking about fairness.

[*Reads from document*] Fyzabad, Siparia, Debe, Penal, Penal, Siparia, Tableland, Claxton Bay, Gasparillo, Arima. You pronounce that word, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Samaroo Village, Tunapuna, Samaroo Village, Arima, Couva, Point Lisas, Preysal—we see a Diego Martin here and a Cocorite. Nothing for La Brea and you are talking about serving all the people?

What we show here is the concentration. Under PURE, we had a similar scenario where 95 per cent of the work was concentrated in Barrackpore, Oropouche, Penal and Siparia. That is the ridiculousness with this Government and that is why we are talking about the whole question of integrity, fairness and honesty that is absent from this Prime Minister and her Government.

This La Brea constituency is where Augustine Logie, Bobby Sookram, Brian Williams, Edgar Vidale, Jocelyn Haynes, Michael "Billy" Montague, Philbert Jones, Anthony Rougier, Quintin John, Yvonne Mitchell, Aldwyn Ferguson, Avery John, all those and a host of others, hail from.

How is it that you can deny the youths of this area recreational facilities? Continue to spite the youths of La Brea, Lot 10 Village, Los Bajos and Rancho Quemado. Continue to be wicked, vindictive, dangerous and deceitful. Continue

to operate with sanctimonious hypocrisy. [*Desk thumping*] The next general election is coming and you will feel the weight of the PNM, not only in La Brea, but in the rest of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I asked the then Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs right in this Parliament here—at the time he was Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs—when he was going to do some upgrading of recreation grounds in the La Brea constituency and with arrogance he refused to disclose the date.

Do you know what is bad, Mr. Deputy Speaker? His colleagues smiled when he made the comments. I ask the question: is the Prime Minister really in control of the Ministers or is this Government controlled by the cabal? Do you really care about our nation's children and others? The youth of this nation are becoming even more resentful of this Government.

We look at the road paving in Trinidad. When you go to Penal, Oropouche, Siparia, the roads, the streets, the tracks are paved, but 20 kilometres away, in La Brea, the main road from Santa Flora to Erin and from La Brea to Point Fortin, they are not seeing about those things properly at all. These two roads are the ones used mainly by locomotives from the oil rigs and heavy machinery from Atlantic Energy, TGU, Trinmar and Petrotrin.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker and hon. Members. Those two main roads are very important for Trinidad and Tobago. Atlantic Energy, Petrotrin, TGU are major revenue earners for this country and when the people of La Brea, Fyzabad, Santa Flora, Erin and Point Fortin block the roads, productivity declines at Atlantic Energy and Petrotrin, et cetera and the country suffers. What I am demonstrating is that this callousness by this Government is not in the best interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I move to housing, under the Ministry of Housing and the Environment. Under the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, there is an allocation which empowers the Minister to distribute HDC houses, in emergency cases, or to persons in critical need. So, as soon as a little flood passes on the banks of the Caroni and Caparo rivers, squatters who live there get HDC units in a flash. I have no problem with that; you have to help them.

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On the other hand, persons in the La Brea constituency whose homes were destroyed by falling trees, as in the case of Mr. Idi Beard of Rancho Quemado; or whose homes were destroyed by fire, as Mr. Neville Lakhani, Miss Betty Suite, Mr. Ronny Roopnarinesingh, Miss Elizabeth Sylvan, Mr. Jerome Chambers, Mr. David Dookeran, Miss Susan Jerome; not a single housing unit was allocated to them. Not one! I ask the question why. Why is it easier for people on the Caroni and Caparo riverbanks to get help and not one person in La Brea was helped? I call these names because I made representation on their behalf—letter after letter and no help. You are not serving all the people; you are only serving your constituents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a good Prime Minister would have shown some empathy and either discussed the matter with the line Minister or the Member of Parliament for the area. You hear the Member of Parliament for La Brea raising the issue in the Parliament time after time and you refuse to act. It shows incompetence on the part of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us look at more incompetence on the part of the Prime Minister. There is a lack of competence on the part of the Prime Minister for not keeping the agreements that were made between the last Government and several partners. We are looking at the one between Trinidad and Tobago and Sural; the Buyers' Credit Loan Agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and the China Exim Bank; the project agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Votorantim Metais of Brazil, the engineering, procurement and construction agreement between Alutrint and the Chinese company CEMEX; and do not forget the contracts with the OPVs.

Your Government committed the cardinal sin when it broke all those agreements. You see, there is an internal protocol that is observed when governments change. The agreements remain in force. Your action has failed to stimulate the economy and has crippled the chances of sustainable employment. That is the reason we have had no foreign investment over the past two years coming to Trinidad and Tobago. None!

10.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very hypocritical on the part of the Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government to lead any delegation to Brazil and China and to beg for business.

You turn your backs on the project agreement with the world's largest vertically integrated aluminium complex from Brazil; you turn your back on

them. You turn your back on the buyer's credit and loan agreement with China, and of course the procurement and construction agreement with CEMEX. That is economic suicide.

We cannot snub the Chinese and the Brazilians. China is one of the world's most powerful economies and we are paying a heavy price because of your lack of foresight and incompetence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask the question: Is the Prime Minister, again, a prisoner of the cabal? Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister is supposed to be an experienced person. She was in Government between 1995 and 2001. How come you do not know that you have to respect those agreements? How come? [*Crosstalk*]

I am not speaking to any geriatrics tonight, none; no geriatrics tonight. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the plain truth is that this UNC-led Government is really and truly, operating under the international goodwill built by the PNM. As evidence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they inherited a Heritage and Stabilization Fund of TT \$19.5 billion or US \$3.1 billion; a foreign reserve of TT \$70 billion or US \$11 billion or 11 months' import cover, as well as a very stable exchange rate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government has done nothing significant in the past 21 months—nothing. And that is why we are saying here tonight that the Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government is really and truly incompetent and unable to lead this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the failure of this Government to stimulate the economy in La Brea is very much evident in housing construction and industrial development, as well as in the discrimination with the awarding of CEPEP contracts to only UNC supporters. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the infrastructure for housing at Pierre Road in La Brea has been laid, yet, the Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government came into office and refused to give the okay for the houses to be built.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that La Brea has high unemployment. Employment would have been created for the numerous skilled plumbers, carpenters, masons, painters, steel benders, electricians and even labourers on the housing construction site. But what do they do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What do they do? Instead of building the homes, you go to Pineapple Smith and Egypt Trace and bulldoze 40 acres of bodi, cassava, sweet potatoes, pumpkin to build houses, when in fact, you could have allowed those crops to mature and build the houses in La Brea and create employment. But no, no, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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We recognise the problem because of the fiasco between the Minister of Housing and the Environment and the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs; we saw the bacchanal. On the one hand, okay is given to people to occupy and cultivate State land, and on the other hand, you move in and bulldoze people's crops, and so on. That is the confusion. That is showing a lack of leadership on the part of the Kamla Persad—

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also recognise that there is serious infighting in this Government. We know full well what happened recently between two Cabinet Ministers—physical confrontation; and we know as well that there are many Ministers in that Government who are not on speaking terms with each other. God knows what could happen in this country while we are in such a mess.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I advise the Hon. Prime Minister to get out; get out of this situation. You are like an ant in a jungle when elephants are fighting. Get out of the way. Call a general election and leave it to the People's National Movement to really and truly lead this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on page 3 of the *Newsday* of January 01, 2012, Corey Connelly quotes the Prime Minister as saying that her greatest wish for the year ahead of us, 2012, is that our people will come together as one, in the spirit of unity and harmony to do the things that will boost our collective pride and self-confidence and give our children inspiration and a spirit of optimism.

Oh, such nice words. But I ask the question: Where is the spirit of optimism for the children of the southwestern peninsula? Where is the spirit of unity and harmony when the State resources are being spent in UNC strongholds and very little or nothing in the southwestern peninsula of Trinidad, Mr. Deputy Speaker? When you are depriving children's parents of an income, so that they cannot feed, educate and clothe their children properly? When they cannot provide their children with a proper roof over their heads? When they cannot provide the basic furniture and appliances: bed, radio, TV, refrigerator, furniture, stove?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you systematically close down the contracts of hundreds of CEPEP contractors, throwing thousands of CEPEP workers on the breadline. In La Brea alone, over 300 CEPEP workers were sent home. On the average a family is five, so you are talking about 1,500 mouths—1,500 mouths—to feed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those CEPEP workers are honest. When they take out equipment, furniture, et cetera from those finance houses, they want to pay back the loans; they want to pay the instalments. When they go to the bank and borrow, they want to pay their instalments. But in comes this wicked Government and in

one fell swoop terminates the contracts of the CEPEP contractors. You know what is bad, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Many of those CEPEP workers were working for eight and nine years; no termination package; nothing to tide them over. You left them high and dry to fend for themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of these children were not able to pursue the short courses in the NESC programme because GATE is not offered for those. Some of the single parents who had the desire to do certain courses could not continue because they could not afford the high transportation expenses.

I know you had laughed the last time, but there are people whose staple is roast yam and bush tea—roast yam and bush tea. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the privilege of going to Salazar Trace and see that—roast yam by the fireside, and a pot as well to make the little tea.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why they do that? They did not have money to give them termination packages, but you found US \$85,000 for you and your 40 friends to go to an excursion in Brazil, dining in luxury, eating the best steaks and lobster, as well as consuming beverages from bottles of all shapes and sizes, while my CEPEP workers have to face their families with their lips white like chalk from lack of nourishment. You had Caribbean Airlines paying a whopping \$2.2 million to lease a Boeing 707-800 jet as a replacement for the plane chartered to Brazil.

Brazil was not enough with your small team of 40, but you went to India with 100, at a cost of \$10 million, eating and drinking the best, but you could not find money to renew the contracts of remedial teachers in our secondary schools. Our contract staff at the VAT office were “catching their nennin” to get the \$600 travelling allowance to go through the length and breadth of this country.

Renewal of contracts for office staff in our primary schools was at a standstill and even our pan tutors had to literally beg to get their contracts renewed at schools, while you wined and dined. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know the problems they experienced. We know that. We know that. They had to beg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, but not only that, the Union Estate is where we have the biggest fiasco. What has been happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have been transferring industries that were destined for the Union Estate in La Brea to Point Lisas. This Government is showing a consistent unwillingness to act in the national interest. How can you unite when you blatantly show favouritism to your supporters?

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, listen to this: Two plants, methanol to petrochemicals and methanol to olefins were destined for La Brea. In one fell swoop, they are going to Point Lisas and the argument is La Brea or the Union Estate does not have adequate space. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the area very well. It is a large expanse of flat, well-drained land, with some secondary forest that could be cleared, the same way how they cleared the mangrove on the Mucurapo foreshore to enable PriceSmart and Movie Towne to be constructed; the same way— [Crosstalk] Mr. Deputy Speaker, could I have your protection, please?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the same way they were able to reclaim the mangrove lands in Point Lisas is the same way they could do it for La Brea. But, more than that, I have to resurrect the smelter argument. I have successfully debunked the health and environmental risk with the smelter, but there were two outstanding— one was the whole question of usage of the gas and the other was the viability.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they say the gas is in short supply; we cannot waste the gas; we cannot use up the gas like that. So whereas Alutrinc smelter was using 46 million cubic feet of gas per day, so you could not use that, but you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these two plants, you know how much they are using? Two hundred and sixty five million cubic feet of gas per day. But “is all right, it going to Point Lisas.” You understand? It is going to Point Lisas. But the Alutrinc smelter that was going to La Brea that was going to use 46 million, no, that is using too much gas.

Not only that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the cost, the price Alutrinc was going to pay for the gas was US 85 cents per MMBtu, which is about the cost price, the cost price. You know how much it is rumoured that these two companies will have to pay? Thirty six per cent below the cost price; 36 per cent below the cost price. Ah, Mr. Deputy Speaker, “injustice will never done. Injustice will never done. Injustice will never done.”

When we look at the Alutrinc smelter and we look at the jobs that they were going to create— because as far as that was concerned, it was going to take seven million cubic feet of gas for the average petrochemical industry for each job they create. Alutrinc was only using 50,000 cubic feet for each job they create.

On top of that, when we look at the number of jobs that were being created under the Alutrinc smelter, where 892 permanent jobs would have become available and 7,000 jobs indirectly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government squashed that. So sustainable employment, they are not interested in that, particularly if it is happening to the southwestern peninsula.

Mr. Warner: Nothing for La Brea.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: So correct. We understand that even tonight, “so bad things going now”, that the president general of the OWTU, I understand in Mayaro he tore up the UNC manifesto; tore it up. You know why? Because what in that manifesto is not being carried through. It is not being carried through.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you see, I am all for development and I have nothing, absolutely nothing against other areas getting things. I am glad, for example, if in Couva you are going to build a children's hospital. I am glad if in Couva you are going to have an energy institute. I am glad if in Couva you are going to construct an international airport. I am glad if in Penal you are going to build a UWI campus. I am glad, but what is reprehensible is to deny the people of the southwestern peninsula of a share of the national pie. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a UTT campus was destined for Point Fortin. In comes this Government and plans are quashed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can see that this Government is not acting in the national interest. Under the People's National Movement, we placed country before party—country before party—as evidenced by the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. We did not put the Point Lisas Industrial Estate in La Brea or Point Fortin, PNM strongholds. We put it where it was best for the country—where it was best for the country—country before party. Therefore, whether you wear a balisier tie or you do not wear a balisier tie, in the PNM “is country first and party after”. What is even more dangerous, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the UNC-led coalition—MSJ, TOP, NJAC, COP, UNC—they place party before country.

Mr. Sharma: Which party?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “You right to ask that because is the UNC party, because MSJ and COP and them, they not getting anything, is just shame they shame.” They are getting nothing. Everything is in the UNC-controlled areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, more than that, you see they are making overtures to the TOP. I want to warn my colleagues from Tobago that that really and truly is to get control of the THA. When they get control of that, they will douse the TOP. And I am saying to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just look and ask Sister Pam Nicholson and she will tell you about her experiences with this UNC Government. You know, our Prime Minister—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you have 20 seconds.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: The PNM Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we built universities north, south, central and in Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, let us not throw any slang towards the Chair, please. Anyone who would like to take this Chair and conduct the House's business, I have no difficulty with that, but when a Member is on his feet, allow the Member to speak in silence, please. Continue, Member. You have two seconds more.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the presence of the Alutrint smelter had begun a transformation that was taking place in La Brea. Interest in education was being heightened.

With the presence of this UNC-led Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and their vindictiveness in the La Brea constituency and the rest of the southwestern peninsula, we have seen poverty once more rearing its head. Unemployment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is getting worse and worse, and so I end my contribution by saying you have no qualms but having to agree with me that this Kamla Persad administration—

Mr. Partap: Member for Siparia. What is wrong with you?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am being interrupted again. Mr. Deputy Speaker, from my deliberations I have shown without a doubt that there is great concern and we are of the firm opinion that there is a lack of confidence in Kamla Persad-Bissessar by the population—the majority of the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to say that the smile of the Prime Minister is not a prerequisite—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time has expired, hon. Member. Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

The Minister of the People and Social Development (Hon. Dr. Glenn Ramadharsingh): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that the entire presentation of the Member for La Brea was in a mess, but I would have at least liked him to finish on a sound point, but that too was too much to ask for.

Having listened to some of the contributions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are very disappointed at the level of debate, the repetition of old issues, almost in a sing-song manner and the lack of proper material to support the Motion that they have brought here today. In fact, I think that they are clearly giving the Government an opportunity to demonstrate the kind of confidence we have in our beloved Prime Minister, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Contribution after contribution—you would have heard the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development describe the work that he has been quietly at in terms of protecting the workers of this country; the legislation with the Maternity Protection Act that they failed to do, to protect women in the workplace; the strides that he is making with HIV in the workplace; the minimum wage that we settled and gave workers in this country dignity. You would have heard the whole vision for getting people into business.

In fact, he describes the India model, where small businesses contribute up to 22 per cent of the GDP of that country, and that is very significant for a nation like ours, where we have become highly dependent on oil and gas and we must look at the diversification of the economy and empowerment of people, which I will come back to.

The contribution of the Member for Diego Martin Central was all over the place. I cannot really find much to respond to in that contribution because there were no pointed questions. There was just a lot of emotional material and pleas, but I will take up some of the points of the Member for La Brea.

When you listen to the Member for La Brea, it is the cry and the rant of a madman; a man who you would swear was never part of a Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Nothing for La Brea; everybody unemployed; things bad. He will not tell you that he was the junior Minister of Tertiary Education and Training, and ask him what was his legacy for the people of La Brea. What did he do while he was there? What did he do? He did not get houses for the people through the HDC; he did not get employment; he says that he puts—or on that side, they put country first and not party.

They may be right because they would have attracted people like the now deceased Pundit Guya Persad-Maharaj, utilised them for political purposes and after they would have been left alone to fend for themselves while they were in Government. They may be right about putting country first, but when the Minister of Housing and the Environment mentioned the contracts given out by the HDC, it appeared to me as if they were party members who were given out those contracts, whether it be BOLT or whether it be the one with the Khan family. It would seem to me that that was putting party first.

So that statement is in direct contradiction to the information supplied to the House today by the Minister of Housing and the Environment. The facts demonstrate a different picture. It demonstrates that the PNM is for the PNM, and when they are in Government and they have access to the State resources, those resources are for the friends and family of the PNM.

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You would have remembered, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we looked at the CEPEP contracts that were given out by the former administration, the PNM administration, you would recall that the list of contractors was a virtual roll call of Balisier House—councillors, aldermen, people who were connected to the executive—and now you have Members on that side who see—sure, the scholarships were given by notes, “Please handle this quietly. Please ensure that this person is assisted.” And that is the way things went.

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Now they come, as the Member for La Brea has put it so well, with sanctimonious hypocrisy and almost like a political Rip Van Winkle who gets up after 15 years and realizes that things have changed and seemed to have been in a daze or a daydream.

You know, the Member is very unfair to people on this side. The hon. Jack Warner went down to La Brea on many occasions, walked with him, paved roads. He writes him a card, “Thank you very much. You are one of the greatest Ministers in the Partnership Government. You are so wonderful to the people of La Brea. Thank you,” and you come in the Parliament and you say, “Nothing for La Brea. The Government gave nothing to La Brea.” I mean, that is really, really being hypocritical; it is being unfair, and unappreciative.

And, you know, it does not only end with the hon. Jack Warner. I went down to La Brea on a Direct Impact campaign and a Direct Effect campaign. Not only that, but I went down to the St. Helena Charles Home for the Aged, Senior Citizens’ Home, and I gave the Member a cheque for \$1.5 million to complete that facility for the elderly people of La Brea, in Point D’or, La Brea. I want him to say—I will give him an opportunity to stand and deny that. He cannot stand and deny it. I mean, but really and truly, when you listen to him, nothing, he has gotten nothing in La Brea and it seems as if the Partnership is discriminating against La Brea, when it is totally untrue.

What in fact happened is that the PNM has controlled La Brea for so long, they have kept it in a state of dependency, and whereas it is an area that was ripe for development, where you have asphalt coming out of the ground, you have oil coming from that community, you have a port in Brighton, but they have done nothing for the people of La Brea. And what is happening in La Brea is a 40-year-old problem and not a two-year-old problem because of the People’s Partnership.

Dismissing a manifesto of the quality of the People's Partnership manifesto that talks about prosperity for all—this is what 450,000 people, in excess of that, voted for. They voted for change because there was a Government that was caught up in building high-rise buildings in the capital city, palatial mansions, and trying to get invoices all over the world to see which is the best private jet. Using State resources to build a private church for themselves, and the people saw that there was a Government that lost connection with the people.

In fact, the Member for Diego Martin West spoke at length about the disconnect that the then Government had with the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And while people in rural Trinidad and Tobago did not have water to drink, were not able to access the services of Government for roads and drains, and people were living in squalor because of the extent of the poverty, the Social Development Ministry, as it was, was a stationary Ministry, a Ministry that was Port of Spain-centric in view. Locked away in the cabinets of the Ministry were great programmes and policies, but the people of those programmes and policies were absent.

Two Ministers sat in that Ministry, and when you asked them how many outreach exercises they did—one. Once in that two-year period when they were there they went out to meet the people. Instead they depended on the social welfare offices, which over a long period of time developed a terrible reputation for customer service delivery. In fact, people only ventured into the social welfare offices if they had to, if they needed a funeral grant, almost knowing that they will not get service.

The Prime Minister went throughout the length and breadth of the country listening to the cries of the people. She is a leader that listens before she leads. Having gone to all the parts of the country, the people began to complain about little things that were not being done—roads and drains and telephones and water and, you know, they said, “Where do we go, because when we go to this Ministry they tell us we have to go to Public Utilities to get that. You have to go back to Social Development.” Then they go to Works, and she said that if she wins the election, she will create a Ministry of the People. The vision from the manifesto being that it will be a Ministry that will give the citizens a voice, and so bring them into the governance structure of the country.

And that—and the mover of the Motion, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, says that if he wins the election and becomes Prime Minister, I suppose, which is the nightmare that was conjured by the hon. Minister of Housing and the Environment, that he will dismantle the Ministry of the People and create a

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Ministry of Rural Development. That is almost an admission that the PNM has discounted and disregarded the people who live in rural areas for a very long period of time, for as long as they have governed the country.

They created the Rural Development Company, RUDECOTT. That is the Ministry of Rural Development; that is the agency to deal with rural development. You do not solve the problems of rural communities by admitting that they are ignored, and that they are disempowered from the governance structure. You build a Ministry of the People where all people are treated with equanimity and equality, where there are provisions that are put in place to make up for geographical distances.

Therefore, the vision of the Ministry of the People is to create governance centres at the extremities of the country, where you will have smart offices, not necessarily large offices, but smart offices in Icacos, a smart office in Guayaguayare, a smart office in the constituency of Dr. Griffith, in Toco, where a fisherman could jump out of a boat and walk barefoot and go to a governance centre and fill out an application for a house through the HDC, fill out an application for a birth certificate, and fill out an application for a food card because he may be unemployed or his company may not be doing that good and he wants to engage himself in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago. He wants to be part of the system, and that smart office will have the electronic capability of communicating with every single office in Port of Spain where there are services of the Government.

It is right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Ministry of the People convenes a meeting of every single Ministry in the Government that is a delivery agency at the beginning of the week, and that is the interministerial People's Issues Resolution Unit. This committee has been meeting for the last 18 months, building the capacity to provide the capability for what was the vision of the Prime Minister, a Ministry of the People. The agencies that are represented on this committee include the HDC, WASA and T&TEC, the 14 municipalities and the four Regional Health Authorities, and it is at this meeting that—when people write us emails, Facebook, text or BBM the Ministry of the People—we send these issues through that committee, and so we track, through monitoring and evaluating how well we are doing. Tracking even requests that come to the Ministry of the People and Social Development, that is pension, public assistance, the delivery of food cards and other things done by the Ministry itself.

The Ministry of the People and Social Development is being policed by the People's Issues Resolution Unit. And I described that to you to show that it is not

only talk because, when you hear the Members of the other side glibly talk, “they are not doing nothing”—he, in fact, said that we were not following the manifesto, and that the Member of Parliament for La Brea has a particular peeve with the smelter. As you know, he tried to—he was caught in a getaway vehicle in the strikes of the smelter, and what they did was to create the facade of consultation, to make it look like if the people wanted a smelter.

They talk about people—nobody bussed anybody to come and support the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Those people were swelling at the meetings demanding that they get the opportunity to come and show support for the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. There was a pure and genuine outflowing of love and support for this Prime Minister from all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. She is the Prime Minister for the women, she is the Prime Minister for the children, she is the Prime Minister for the elderly, she is the Prime Minister for the sick and the weak and the dispossessed, because she believes and knows that a chain is as strong as its weakest link, and she is the Prime Minister for the weak.

Look at what was the first act on coming into office. The first thing that was done in this Parliament was to increase the pension for the elderly to \$3,000. The very first act of a Prime Minister; that is an act of kindness to the senior citizens of our country who have lived their whole life to build Trinidad and Tobago; the first parliamentary act. Then the first act of Cabinet was, in fact, to set up the Children’s Life Fund, and it was thereafter when the legislation was worked on that it came back to the Parliament to support young children who by accident of birth have some—require life-saving surgery.

You know, I remember buying these barbecue tickets and “curry-que” tickets from people and you would take three and five and you would say, “Well, how you all going? Well, we have to raise \$480,000. But, so far we have raised \$15,000, and we have three more curry-que to go,” knowing full well that they will not be able to raise the money, but they will not give up because they are poor and humble and determined to save the life of the child. They would do without an extra meal, they would not purchase a new vehicle, they would fix their home instead of buying or selling. They would sell their animals that they are rearing to save that child because in their conscience they want to know that they made every effort to give that child a chance.

The former Government stoically and arrogantly dismissed all appeals to raise the medical fund grant from \$60,000. The then Minister of Health, John Rahael said, “take that or nothing”. That was the level of insensitivity that—Jerry Narace,

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sorry. “Take that \$60,000 and go. We do not care if it is \$600,000 or \$1.2 million, that is all. There is no flexibility in the system.” The Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago gave 10 per cent of her salary, 5 per cent comes from all the Ministers to create the Children’s Life Fund, where every child would have an equal chance. Whether the father is a “wacker man” in Icacos, a taxi driver or unemployed in Carenage, they will have a chance at life for the children of Trinidad and Tobago. Such an act of kindness may never have been seen before in the political history of Trinidad and Tobago. She will go down in history as the Prime Minister who sought to protect the weakest in society in one of her first acts.

We, on this side, in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, believe in treating people with dignity. We believe that all our people can strive for excellence, that we can set an example in this part of the world as to how our people can rise. It is said that there is no force in this world like someone—a human being who wants to rise—and therefore, we believe in the intrinsic capability of our people to be empowered and independent.

What we would have done is, initially, because of the neglect, the woeful neglect that had gone on before, we had to go throughout the country and give ambulatory support in the form of food support and other social services support. Because people were so left out of the process of governance, they were so ignored, we had to do a lot of ambulatory work and, therefore, we have engaged ourselves in outreach programmes as never before.

In one particular month, we visited 13 communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. This translates into interacting with 30,000 persons, and when you compare this, the Ministry of Social Development in the six months preceding the six months that we were in power only saw 3,000 persons. So that is to show the difference in how we conducted our affairs.

We recognized that we were receiving an inordinate number of requests from certain communities as opposed to others and, surely, this was because of the needs of those communities. Having looked at that, and checked it back we would have seen that those were, in fact, at-risk and vulnerable communities, where you have disengaged youths, high levels of unemployment and many problems with single mothers and families that were living with the father or the mother, and in many instances persons who did not have families at all and were living with their grandparents. And so, we recognized that in these communities you did not need

to go in a school or a community centre, but go directly house to house and there you would engage the persons on a one-to-one basis, and we call this the Direct Effect. *[Interruption]*

You will have your chance to speak, ma'am, and I am sure that it is the same speech for the last six sessions of Parliament, and some of us know it by heart.

The Direct Effect walkabouts were extremely successful. Therefore, they helped us to go directly into the homes of persons and engage them directly to deal with a plethora of issues that would help that family to become stable, the youths to become involved in employment and get whatever social support they needed on their way to empowering their lives. We call this outreach, we go in depth, we engage the family, and find out the challenges that exist for these persons to become independent and take ownership. They take ownership of their lives because there are enough programmes that are available in the Government service for them to take advantage of.

The Ministry of the People is about strengthening the capacity of the MP's office. The office of the Member of Parliament is the place where the ordinary citizen feels that they have to go to get services from the Government. Therefore, we see this as an important tenet in the development of our people, and that is to strengthen the capacity. We have had several programmes, the first of which the Member for Diego Martin West did not want to take advantage of: that was the first year we gave 100 hampers to every Member of Parliament, so that they could give to the 100 most vulnerable and needy in their constituency. This continued this year.

Dr. Rowley: You brought it to the constituency.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Well, you participated this year. But that was the first, that was the pilot project, so that the mechanics of doing it were worked out better this time. But you participated and I thank you very much for engaging in that exercise where you would have been—

Dr. Rowley: You brought it to the constituency.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—able to give the people some food support for the Christmas season.

We also introduced the Bridge of Hope, the People's Bridge of Hope, and every Member of Parliament here, whether they be COP, whether they be MSJ, whether they be NJAC, or whether they be PNM or UNC would tell the Parliament that they received five wheelchairs, they received 15 hampers other than health

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hampers. The Member for La Brea got all of that and he continues to say he got nothing. Yes, he got all of that. I think the Member for La Brea is criticizing his own leadership of the constituency because that level of hopelessness cannot come from a man being in Opposition just 18 months.

Of course, none of these resources came from the Government. They were acquired through the private sector because we feel that the Government cannot do it alone. I heard the term, “giveaways”. This is not about the Government just trying to shell out goods and services. It is about engaging the entire society in an exercise of transformation, and we went to the NLCB—citizens would use the NLCB’s services and they would generate funds. That money should go back into developing our people, and so they gave us contributions. The National Gas Company, the National Energy Corporation, the First Citizens Bank, they were able to give 200 wheelchairs—not with the resources of the Ministry of the People and Social Development—and 15 health hampers per MP throughout Trinidad and Tobago. We are now engaging the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs to assist in delivering this quarterly.

The point is that Trinidad and Tobago—there is a strange phenomenon, where there is a cruel and twisted irony that where you have the extractive industries and you have oil and gas coming out of mother earth, there you have the highest levels of poverty. The experience in Mayaro—we are funnelling gas through Mayaro, we have large amounts of gas, the gas leaves there and is piped to other parts of Trinidad and Tobago, whether it be Atlantic LNG or the Point Lisas Estate, and right there in Mayaro high levels of unemployment and poverty exist. Some would put the figure as much as 28 per cent, and even higher than that, and that is where we have the resources coming out of the country.

La Brea is the same thing with asphalt: asphalt and oil coming out of that area. You have the Atlantic LNG Plant not far, and you have high levels of unemployment. We have said we earn a lot of our revenue from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and, therefore, we are asking the assistance of the energy industries and the Government agencies in the petrochemical and gas sector to assist us in helping the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The People’s Bridge of Hope is one such project that strengthens the capacity of the MP’s office.

We brought out a product in the Ministry to help people who are in need, who are in crisis, persons whose homes are burnt down or they lost their job—and that was through the Food Card Programme. We recognized that the bureaucracy sometimes in acquiring a food card because of the regulations of the public

service were enormous, and the difficulties ensued and the levels of people that we were treating with were very high. Therefore, we brought out a temporary food card. This is not a UNC food card or a COP, or a PNM, this is a temporary food card for every Member of Parliament. The first of its kind in any part of the world, it was an innovation in social technology that had never been seen before in this part of the world, and it is derived from the mantra that we hold dearly to, that you cannot postpone hunger.

A man comes to you in your office, or he meets you in the road and he says, “I do not have any food. I am hungry,” you do not tell them, “Well, hear what, check me back in three weeks' time and I will see if I can get something for you.” That man is hungry, that woman is hungry, the family is hungry. They need that intervention immediately, and we created and constructed that product to suit that need that exists in this society. The training has taken place where every Member of Parliament sent their representatives and we are working out the dynamics to put safes in the MPs' offices, because these cards have to be guarded with the strictest [*Interruption*]*—*equal, 50, you would get 50 in a three-month period, equal with everyone else. Because you are the representatives of the people—listen, it is a pilot project, the dynamics of which we are still working out. The point is, it is to strengthen the capacity of the MP's office. We must show respect for the representatives of the people; that is the whole idea of the Ministry of the People and Social Development. Therefore, we would not stop there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would not stop there.

There are programmes that the Member for Arouca/Maloney and the Member for Diego Martin Central kept hidden from the population of Trinidad and Tobago, and we would expose those programmes to the people of Trinidad and Tobago now.

There is a programme called the Micro-Enterprise Grant, which is where a person who is interested in getting into a business can get up to \$5,000 to start a business. This is not a loan as Minister Errol Mc Leod articulated. The Small Business and NEDCO, that is a loan. This product in the Ministry of the People and Social Development is a one-off grant of \$5,000. How they delivered that? They delivered that, it seems, through social and political networks. We are now unmasking that programme and we are going to bring it under the Rise-Up part of the People's Card Programme. The Rise-Up—and listen carefully so you will learn—the Rights of the Individual to Social and Economic security, Universal Protection for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Food Card Programme, as you know, or the People's Card Programme has about 30,000 clients in it. From that number where we expose the services to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, I am proud to tell you today that more than 3,000 persons who did not belong have been removed from the programme. So, those who drive SUVs and swipe cards are no longer in the programme; they have been removed through a systematic audit review.

Miss Hospedales: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have been very patient with you. I know you will have your time to speak. Write down what you want to reply to the Minister, and please do so at your speaking time. But do allow the Member to speak in silence, please.

11.30 p.m.

Hon. G. Ramadharsingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think, when she hears me talk about social development she gets very excited because she did not get a chance and opportunity to work before. She was put in an office to the back of a building way down one of the streets, far removed from the—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramadhar: Nobody knew where she was.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, if you are desirous of having dinner upstairs please do so, but allow the Member to speak in silence.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: I must admit she is right. Nobody really knew where she was. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: Where are you now?

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: I was saying that 526 persons cut their cards and gave them back to us. They said give it to someone who deserves more. Because there is a part of the programme that we are building, "the Rise-up", where counselling, psychosocial support is given and to tell them that they are worth more than this—to receive \$400 and \$700 from the Government, that they can get a job, they can reskill and retrain.

Do you know what we did, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We went to the same supermarkets, and we said, "listen, you have a lot of business here from the Ministry. You are getting \$400–\$700 per person and you might have 5,000 or 2,000 clients. Therefore, you owe a duty to the Ministry to assist us." And those major supermarkets took on food card clients in the groceries and hired them to work, and so many of them have given up their card because they now have a job.

Mr. Sharma: Alicia could get a job?

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Send a resume and fill out the necessary application form.

Mr. Volney: Xtra Foods.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Well I do not want to call the names of the groceries, but we have partnered with them and said; “look you are getting business from these cards and therefore, you need to help us”. And 526 persons gave up their cards. Five of these persons are now working in the Ministry of the People and Social Development giving cards to other people.

One gentleman, who I am very proud of—this is under our term here—a food card client, a man who came and beg for a food card did a certificate in social work and he is now doing a degree in social work and one day would be a supervisor in the Ministry of the People and Social Development. That is what we want to see, empowerment, ownership, independence of our people. We will walk the road with them to ensure that that takes place. Thirty-two thousand households are benefiting from the cash transfer. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that translates to 100,000 persons enjoying food security because of the work that we have done. So when you look at the scorecard: PNM handouts for supporters versus People’s Partnership hand-ups to people; promoting self-reliance rather than dependence. As I said—as we had the training programme for the temporary food card for MPs and their staff—we aim, within the next couple of weeks, to have education programmes for all MPs and members of their staff, to learn how to access products from the poverty reduction programme; that is, the Micro-Enterprise and Training Development Grant for \$5,000. You can use this money to start a business or do training, go to a course and be trained. The Regional Micro-Project Fund is where you have community-based projects aimed at poverty reduction, so you can get into the greenhouses; you could do it as a community, you could do aquaculture.

We are going to train the staff at MPs’ offices in a training seminar. The first half of the day will be the poverty reduction programme, and the second half of the day will be to educate you as to how to receive subventions for your NGOs in your communities. We are going to open up the Ministry because we do not feel that we could use any Ministry for political development; the Ministry is for social development. And it is to serve all the people. Therefore, even where there are UNC or COP operatives they would have to work in tandem with the MPs’ offices through their own NGOs.

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Therefore, this programme is one that we are very excited about because finally all the people in Trinidad and Tobago will begin to know of these programmes that were inactive, almost hibernating and just before an election, six months before, you suddenly see them spring to life—and people have “fridge and stove”, or in communities you have suddenly disbursed large sums of moneys for community. Those days have come to an end and the resources of the people must be given to those who need it the most, irrespective of their political affiliation, their geographic assignment and whatever their culture and background is.

The Ministry will continue its telecentre programme, the multi-purpose community-based telecentre project. We have already had centres in San Juan, Laventille, Piparo, Tunapuna, Couva, Princes Town, Tobago and Penal; the last one was opened in Penal.

We go to the Member of Parliament for Siparia’s constituency in just about a month’s time to launch a very exciting project where we will be training 12 young persons in videography. It will be a two-year programme where we will access funds from the community-based fund in the Ministry of Community Development, and they would be training for two years where they can become videographers, and get jobs in the media, marketing or in private companies that are involved in advertising.

This People’s Partnership Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you would know, not only increased the reach of every single grant by having the Direct Impact programmes throughout the country, but also increased the value of those grants because we believed that you should treat people with dignity and respect. You cannot give a paltry sum of money and tell people that you are helping them. [Crosstalk] You know when it is your time to talk you will just repeat yourself over and over.

The housing grant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000. The household item grant which is to purchase furniture and appliances was increased—the Member for Arouca/Maloney would have given people \$4,500, we now give them \$6,000—

Miss Hospedales: We do not give people money boy.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—because the \$4,500 is not enough to even buy a stove. So we increased the figures to a more respectable level. The funerals grant \$3,450 is what you got under the PNM. Sometimes that was not enough to bury someone.

Mr. Sharma: That grant gone up. You will be okay.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: This figure has now been increased to \$7,000. The pharmaceutical grant is where persons would be given moneys to buy medication, anti-cancer drugs and things that are not covered by CDAP. Under the PNM you would have received \$900 for a three-month supply. One month, Mr. Deputy Speaker, cost persons \$600. Under the Partnership you now receive \$2,500 for the pharmaceutical grant.

The house rent grant which is a grant where people who are single mothers or single fathers and their expenses have been increased, they now can receive \$7,500 whereas before only \$4,500 was available; you could now get 7,500 because that is the price of renting a decent place. We believe in treating people like people, so the Partnership Government increased the reach and the amount of support for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Caroni Central has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have laid the platform of the work we have done, and given you an idea of the vision. Let me now try to summarize. The People's Partnership Government promised to bring back the differently-abled as equal partners in the society. That is a big promise. The Minister of Finance stated in the budget where all differently-abled persons—as soon as we have a seminar and a consultation to define differently-abled because we do not want people to abuse the system—they will get an automatic food card, free bus passes and \$5,000 to empower themselves and do any course that can make them a candidate for sustainable livelihood, and we look forward to that. For the first time, I visited the Princess Elizabeth Home with the Prince and Princess and the Minister of Health. Those institutions that we have are colonial remnants. They are not the work of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

For the first time we will have a centre for the differently-abled in Carlsen Field; \$11.5 million, next to the hospital for children. So that is the love and care of our Prime Minister for our children and the differently-abled. But, we cannot do the work alone. For the Christmas season, with "Vision on a Mission" and

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seven organizations, we picked up 33 street dwellers. The first time—and I have Mr. Lee Sing working with me on that project very arduously and feverishly and we are gaining a lot of results.

We continue to try to develop the lives of our people, but we cannot do it without the vision of our Prime Minister. Our Prime Minister says: “serve the people, serve the people, serve the people”. Not UNC people, not COP people, not NJAC, not MSJ, not blue, not red, not yellow, not dashiki; all the people of Trinidad and Tobago under the greatest Prime Minister ever, the fullest confidence we have in her—the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. I thank you very much.

11.45 p.m.

Miss Donna Cox (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise in support of this Motion which is, indeed, a No Confidence Motion against the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Member of Parliament for Siparia.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not sure if I should even respond to the Member for Caroni Central because I think that before he started, he needed to start with, once upon a time—“nancy stories”.

The Member has been talking about food cards. Since they have been in office in May 2010, I have not received one food card. No one in my constituency has received food cards. This Member for Caroni Central, I have written to him many times, and I was not even afforded the courtesy of an acknowledgement of the letter, and now the Member stands here and talks about Direct Effect, food card and what has been happening, and you all have been in office for 22 months. I want to know that if you now know that you are supposed to be serving the people. This is supposed to be happening. If you are elected into office then you are supposed to serve all the people.

I have been checking the newspapers. I have all the clippings of food cards being distributed in constituencies: UNC constituencies and COP constituencies. It has not been happening in PNM constituencies, and you are supposed to be serving all the people. [*Desk thumping*] So when you come here and stand and talk, please, that is once upon a time; that is a “nancy story”, and I would move on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during their election campaign, the Prime Minister made many promises to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. As we can now see, there is a deafening silence concerning some of them. They promised to solve crime, and

crime was supposed to be a thing of the past. What is the situation now? Crime continues to escalate. As a matter of fact, the murder toll is 62.

Under the watch of the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security continues to tell the citizenry that crime is on the decline. As a matter of fact, what they have decided to do now is to just itemize crime—“serious crimes” are on the decline. Where is that taking place, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Is it in Trinidad and Tobago? This Government has failed the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in the area of crime. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister on the election campaign also spoke about inclusiveness—we want everybody to get together. There is a speech called “take my hand” and so on.

Dr. Rowley: Take my hand and fly.

Miss D. Cox: This Government has been discriminating against certain sectors of this society and it is very, very, clear and I have the evidence to show that. We must remember that when an individual becomes the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, that person must be committed to serving all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. As we know, our leader of the PNM will do that in the not-too-distant future. [*Desk thumping*]

The office of the Prime Minister must not be used to encourage discrimination nor to protect corruption or promote corruption. [*Desk thumping*] This Prime Minister has provided no leadership in the fight against corruption. She has failed as a leader in the fight against crime and on issues of good governance. [*Desk thumping*] This Prime Minister is not committed to transparency and accountability. [*Desk thumping*] She has no respect for the fundamental rights of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago as enshrined in our Constitution. [*Desk thumping*] In support of what I am going to say, I am going to touch on three areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister has not acted in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago with regard to crime in this country, and crime continues to escalate. They continue to play politics and engage in propaganda and play a numbers game with regard to this year, last year and how much crime; they just continue to play a numbers game, and they are trying to score cheap political points while the people of Trinidad and Tobago are being slaughtered on a daily basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the *Guardian* Newspaper dated Wednesday, February 29, 2012 there is an article which quotes the International Narcotics Control

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Board Annual Report, 2011 which was launched on Tuesday, this week, February 28, 2012 in Vienna. According to the report and I quote:

“...Central America and the Caribbean continue to be used as a major transit area for the trafficking of drugs from South America to North America. Drug trafficking organisations have increased their operations in the region, posing a serious threat to the security of the region...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not have to wait for the launch of that report to know that. As the people will say, “We done know!”

That is the reason the PNM administration contracted the OPVs, the three offshore patrol vessels, which have assisted greatly in stemming the flow of drugs and guns in our country and in our region. By cancelling the contract, the Prime Minister shows an unwillingness to act on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago as stated in the Motion. [*Desk thumping*] The Prime Minister has destroyed our drug interdiction capabilities, and that is our ability to intercept drugs shipments on the high seas. I cannot have any confidence in a Prime Minister who—as head of the National Security Council—will do that.

With respect to the SIA, who cannot forget about Resmi Ramnarine? I would not go into it because the Leader of the Opposition spoke about it. You wonder what really took place there.

I would move on because I want to talk about the toy plane that was leased for 12 weeks at a cost of just under \$1 million which nobody seems to know about besides Mr. Gibbs, Mr. Ewatski and Mr. Gary Griffith, advisor to the Prime Minister, better known as “Mr. Ra-ra”.

What has been done so far concerning reports that the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Jack Ewatski, was fraternizing with persons who had an interest in leasing the planes to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I have the emails. I could furnish them with the emails, but I would like to know what has been done in this circumstance.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear from the Minister of National Security because the Prime Minister is, indeed, encouraging wrongdoing in the conduct of the national affairs of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Ewatski’s response concerning the reason for flying does not make any sense at all, because Mr. Ewatski’s licence is a Canadian licence. The plane is a US-licensed plane, and the instructor is a US-licensed instructor and, therefore, his flying time cannot count.

Hon. Member: What?

Miss D. Cox: Mr. Speaker, I would like to get an update on that lego plane because after all, taxpayers' money was used for that pilot project.

The Government declared a state of emergency and hundreds were arrested under the anti-gang legislation, and were released because they had no evidence. Why were they arrested in the first place? Many persons who look like me, according to Minister of National Security, were unlawfully rounded up and charged by the police. Some were kept over a month in jail before they were discharged. Is this acting in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago?

What about the rights of many of my constituents who were unfairly charged? It is clear, again, that was just to play a numbers game to say that crime is down. Mr. Speaker, the state of emergency was a total failure, not a big fish was caught; not a big fish. Can we have confidence in the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago after this?

Up to the present time, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago cannot get a proper response as to why Brig. Peter Joseph was fired from SAUTT. We would like to get a response. Why are they now trying to muzzle him? Why can he not talk? If there was a problem, and if he did something wrong, then let us know. Why was he paid off and then told not to talk? We need to know about that. We need to know why Brig. Peter Joseph was fired. Why afterwards they have to come and pay "a set of money" and then try to muzzle him and tell him about do not talk? Oh, please, why is the arrangement secret?

Mr. Speaker, they came in a huff and puff and made many bad decisions where national security is concerned. They have closed down SAUTT, which seriously assisted in the fight against crime; they have closed down the gang units in the police service; the Repeat Offenders Programme; and they have closed down the homicide investigative unit, and they are now trying to recruit UNC people in the intelligence agency. Is this the work of a Prime Minister that one should have confidence in? The answer is no.

The Prime Minister is flying all over the country in helicopters which were bought for national security purposes. Mr. Speaker, is she acting in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago? No, she is acting in her interest, as far as I am concerned. Like Ewatski, it seems like she likes to fly too. The cost of

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the operation of these helicopters is between \$1,000—\$6,000 per flight, and taxpayers' money is jumping up again to accommodate our frequent flyer, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Trinidad.

Mr. Speaker, the advisor to the Prime Minister, Mr. Gary Griffith, seems to have all the answers to the national security problems—all the answers to questions; all the answers to problems. Up to now, his explanation as to why the Prime Minister uses the helicopter makes no sense. He spoke about security risk, what security risk? Is it the so-called assassination plot? Do you all remember that?

Miss McDonald: Yes, I remember.

Miss D. Cox: The Prime Minister needs to let her advisor know that he was appointed to advise her, because he dips his mouth into everything. Is the Minister of National Security aware that this advisor to the Prime Minister calls heads of departments in the Ministry of National Security and protective services and gives them instructions, and reads them the riot act and also would promise to take them to the Prime Minister? This is what is happening in the Ministry of National Security and the protective services. They may not tell you, Minister of National Security because, of course, people are afraid of victimization. I saw him recently driving, and I saw an MP sticker in his car.

Hon. Member: What? Who, Gary? [*Crosstalk*]

Miss D. Cox: I would like to know what is going on. Why is this happening? Why is Gary Griffith being allowed to run the Ministry of National Security when there is a substantive Minister of National Security? [*Crosstalk*] So, I must agree with this Motion, that there is an absence of the effective management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister.

Miss McDonald: That is new politics. That is COP!

Miss D. Cox: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Gary Griffith hauled the prison officials over the coals stating—he is the one—that prison officers came to my home to clean my lawn and my hedge. Mr. Speaker, I do not even have a lawn or a hedge. What I would like to tell this honourable House—for those who made these comments without knowledge—is that this is part of prison service where hard labour is concerned where they send people out to the communities, and if any citizen wants assistance in some way then the prison service will send them to assist, so there was no special favour done. Mr. Griffith hauled them over the coals and came spreading that to persons who repeated it.

I would like the Minister of National Security to let the Attorney General know that they did come. They came to my house, and they came to cut a tree, and if I could have used a goat, I would have used a goat instead, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Rowley: And shut Griffith up!

Miss D. Cox: What I would like to say too, because of this discrimination that is taking place, I am a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and I am entitled to any service that is available to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago regardless of party affiliation. [*Desk thumping*] Anyone in this House—when they were in Opposition—no one can say that they came to me for assistance when they were in Opposition and I did not help them, because I know when I am elected and I am in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I am there to serve everyone regardless of political affiliation. [*Desk thumping*] So I am not going to come to the House and throw these foolish words to persons in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that presently members of the defence force, prison and fire service have not received their \$1,000 allowance. I still want to say again, why were the Special Reserve Police officers and municipal police left out of this \$1,000 allowance? Does this sound like a Prime Minister who acts in the best interest of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? No, Mr. Speaker. The record will show that special reserve officers perform the same duties and, in most instances, they work side by side with police officers. Why were they not given this \$1,000 allowance? This is definitely unfair.

The Ministry of National Security is renting a property at a cost of \$850,000 as a prison facility, and then spent \$60 million on the said property which is only contracted for six months. That makes no sense at all. I think that if they were dipping into their pockets, they would not have done that—to spend that amount of money on a property for six months; taxpayers' dollars and paying \$850,000 rent, just under \$1 million per month. Mr. Speaker, right now there are no prisoners in the facility, but we are paying \$850,000 a month for that facility in Santa Rosa.

12.00 midnight

Miss McDonald: Who owns it?

Miss D. Cox: A company called Wala Wala Limited; and they must be laughing all the way to the bank, but that is “waylay-waylay”, clearly.

Mr. Speaker, I am still awaiting information from the Minister of National Security about the whereabouts of the newly designed uniforms, bought by the Commissioner of Police, which cost over \$8 million, I understand.

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When the Minister of National Security could tell the Member of Parliament to ask the accounting officer—the Commissioner of Police—about it, something has to be wrong. The Minister of National Security is the one who is ultimately responsible for any corruption or anything taking place in the Ministry, and ultimately, the Prime Minister is responsible. I am not asking the Commissioner of Police about anything that I want to know. The Minister of National Security is the one who is supposed to have that information to present to this honourable House. [*Desk thumping*]

Why were the uniforms bought without proper authorization? That is gross incompetence on the part of the Minister of National Security and, ultimately, the Prime Minister, but I am sure if I ask Gary Griffith about it, he would know. [*Desk thumping*]

Where is the transparency and accountability that they speak about, Mr. Speaker? I would like the Minister to explain to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, who may see a police station or a police post and run there for sanctuary and realize that the Commissioner of Police, Dwayne Gibbs, closed it down as part of the 21st Century Policing Initiative. This has happened recently in Longdenville.

Mr. Speaker, a family who lives close to the Longdenville Police Post was attacked by bandits. They sought refuge at the police post and were followed to the post by bandits. Their vehicle was destroyed outside the station. Imagine, the bandits, who probably knew there was no police officer on duty in the police post, ran into the police post and encountered a woman police officer who, herself, started to scream for help. This is 21st Century policing, Dwayne Gibbs style; Minister of National Security style; and, ultimately, the style of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. So, when they are advertising 21st Century policing in a big way, and spending taxpayers' money in a big way, we would like to see results.

It is important to note that the Morvant, Tunapuna and Arouca police stations—which are still operating under the PNM's Model Station Initiative and have not yet adopted the 21st Century policing—came out on top in terms of effectiveness, crime solving and detection rates. What confidence can I have in the Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker, I have, in my possession, some invoices from a company called Building Made Easy Construction Services. This company was contracted to do work for the Ministry of National Security. I have some invoices here and I know

that they were paid because I have a copy of a cheque here for \$61,745 and more. I will give you an example of some information: In this quotation—where this person was contracted to do work in one of the protective services—the person quoted 25 bags of cement at \$70 per bag. Everybody in Trinidad and Tobago knows that a bag of cement costs between \$45 and \$50. Two gallons of sanding sealant at \$400. One gallon of sanding sealant costs \$103. Three gallons of high-gloss clear varnish at \$400; one gallon of that varnish is around \$150. I just do not have the time to go on, but I have a few invoices here, grossly overpriced; and they are being paid for this. No one seems to be checking it.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this has been happening, not just in the Ministry of National Security, but in many Ministries where contractors are overpricing and being paid. In this instance, one person who discovered the over-invoicing taking place was removed and called an obstructionist. Many of them are being harassed, transferred or fired if they speak up. Can we have confidence in a Prime Minister who presides over all of this? No, Mr. Speaker, no way.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister must know that she has to earn our trust, and to do this, she must be a woman of her word. On the election campaign trail many promises were made to the electorate in order to get their votes. One such promise was the introduction of a universal \$2 million prize for all major music competitions such as Calypso, Soca Monarch, Chutney Soca Monarch competitions.

At the rally of the UNC on May 22, at Aranguez Savannah, the Prime Minister, after saying that she was a lover of good music, pledged, and I quote:

The first prize will be \$2 million for every one of those competitions. That is how we will rise.

Where in this statement did the Prime Minister say that the \$2 million payment for all categories of competitions was for one year only?

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Prime Minister knows she said it, yet, the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism continues to rise to her defence to say what she said, what she did not say and what she meant. The entertainers of this country were deceived by the Prime Minister because they believed that they would have received \$2 million first prize, across the board, every year. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, that promise was made to them in order to get their votes.

The Member for Oroupoche East, the PNM does not make promises for votes. When we say something, we mean it and we do it. [*Desk thumping*] Remember

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the promise made to our senior citizens who are 60 years and over, for the \$3,000 pension which was callously abandoned after the inducement served its purpose of garnering the senior citizens' votes? Are you serving the people?

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, in that same address, asked for a chance for five years, but, she had to be talking about Lotto, Play Whe or lottery because all who gave them that, lost already. Citizens of this country cannot afford another three years of this divisive, corrupt Government that continues to mislead people.
[Desk thumping]

The Prime Minister, in trying to clear the air later on—when there were a lot of commentaries about the situation and the \$2 million first prize—stated that when this pledge was made, I quote:

We did not have full knowledge of the state of the Treasury that we would inherit.

How irresponsible. They make a promise and they did not know what was happening in the Treasury and made such a serious, expensive promise? Clearly, that was another attempt to fool the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

This year the calypsonians had to threaten to boycott the Dimanche Gras because their prize money was \$500,000. Their determination forced the Government to cave in and the Minister's protestations notwithstanding, we all know they cannot be trusted. When you talk about calypso, all these other areas are spin-offs of calypso, and I feel that the calypsonians should have been treated better than that.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister speaks about consultation and the first two lines of the UNC's Manifesto, which speaks about Tobago, say:

"The people of Tobago will have a major role in determining their present and future development...in matters which particularly affect Tobago, the Government will partner with the Tobago House of Assembly."

The Tobago House of Assembly is of the view that Tobago does not need another carnival. Why is the Government trying to force another carnival on Tobago?

Mr. Speaker, many festivals are held in Tobago annually. There is the goat race, heritage festival, blue food, fisherman's festival, Sunday school in Buccoo; there is kite flying and every village has a festival; "dey harvest every month". The Government needs to respect the view of the Tobago House of Assembly and seek to use the money to be spent on yet another carnival in Tobago, in a more

meaningful way. I am sure they would be provided with better avenues in Tobago for such expenditure. The Prime Minister must put a stop to the bullying practices of her Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

I am glad the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism is here. The people of Trinidad and Tobago are still awaiting the cost of production of the People's Band last year. I understand the cost exceeded \$2 million and the number of revellers did not exceed 50. Fortunately, a few Ministers made their appearance in one of the bands, but there were music trucks in standstill positions all over the country, but no revellers. This would mean that the Government would have established a record per capita cost per masquerade. That was a total waste of taxpayers' money and could have been better spent; even spent towards paying the calypsonians their promised \$2 million.

Mr. Speaker, we are yet to receive a comprehensive update on the Grand Stand which, I understand, cost \$55 million and no tendering process took place.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Miss D. Cox: Fifty-five million dollars of taxpayers' money. What does the Prime Minister have to say about that? I guess their response would be, of course, as normal, to talk about the PNM; but, at least we have buildings to show because this is one of the buildings we are in, that they were talking about. [*Desk thumping*] What does the Government have to show? A cowshed known as the Grand Stand which cost \$55 million.

Mr. Speaker: It is 12.12 a.m. and I know, to keep the temperature and to keep eyes open, people are going to get into crosstalk, but allow the Member for Laventille East/Morvant to speak and you all should pay attention. Thank you very much.

Miss D. Cox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the Grand Stand and I would like to say that six months after Carnival, last year, after spending \$55 million on the Grand Stand, there were many problems: improper drainage, problems with the plumbing systems and electric panels. As a matter of fact, there was flooding of the electrical panels; there was a problem with the sewer system. Everyone in Trinidad and Tobago knows that the person who was awarded the contract to build the Grand Stand is someone who is a supplier of chairs, tents and tables, better known as the Tent Man—another UNC financier laughing all the way to the bank at the expense of the hard-working people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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What was the additional cost incurred to fix the Grand Stand after spending \$55 million? The people of Trinidad and Tobago would like to know. That is art and “mult-millionarism”, under the watchful eye of the Prime Minister. The Attorney General expressed concern over expenditure for Carnival this year; maybe he knows something we do not. He also stressed the need for accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move on to another area. In recognition of the high cost involved in preparing athletes for competition at the highest level, I move to sport. In recognition of the high cost involved in preparing athletes for competition at the highest level, the PNM government established an elite-athlete programme. This was set up under the authority of Cabinet Note No. 2820 of November 02, 2006. This Note sets out the criteria for funding high-performance athletes. Let me emphasize the criteria for assessing this fund. Mr. Speaker, permit me to quote from the Cabinet Note:

Through a cumulative process with the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee, parent associations of the co-opted interests and the Ministry of Sport, it has been determined that the policy would be specific to athletes who are world ranked in individual sports. Those sports which are included in the Olympic events and programme, and athletes who received medals at the Olympic Games, world championships, Commonwealth Games and the Central American and Caribbean Games.

Mr. Speaker, in the Note, among other things:

Cabinet agreed that the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs will disburse grants to successful applicants in accordance with the policy criteria, recommendations from national sporting organizations and participation by the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee.

The Ministry would be the final arbitrator in the application to approval process prior to the direct disbursement of funds to the successful athlete. Mr. Speaker, I was informed that this present Minister of Sport, under the leadership of this Prime Minister, has been granting financial assistance to athletes who he selects, without consulting with the relevant sporting bodies.

A Note to the Permanent Secretary dated December 02, 2010 contained a list of athletes for funding under the programme in the sum of \$2,175,000 for some 17 athletes. In this Note to the Permanent Secretary it states:

In adherence to policy prescriptions, the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee has reviewed certain applications for funding and endorses the

recommendation of the parent association, the NAAATT, and other sporting associations.

Mr. Speaker, many sporting bodies are up in arms about this development because many were not consulted by the Ministry of Sport. As a matter of fact, some claim that they are being bullied to sign recommendations in respect of athletes who do not meet the policy criteria.

I have the names of some of these athletes, but out of deference for these young persons I will not call their names because they are not to blame. The blame must rest with the Minister and the Prime Minister, who continues to keep her unsuitable selection in office.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister allows this Minister to violate the prescribed policy governing elite athletes to suit his whims and fancies. In choosing, as he does, he is using sports as a tool for division rather than for unity and cohesion.

I would like the Prime Minister to inform us of what was the need for the Minister of Sport to host the Spirit of Sport Award, better known as SOSA. There is a First Citizens Sports Foundation which hosts the prestigious Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year Award, annually—this is really for high achievers. This takes place annually and is sponsored by the First Citizens Bank. Most sporting organizations also host their awards annually.

I would like the Prime Minister to account for the elaborate awards ceremony, held by the Minister of Sport called the SOSA. The citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would like to know about this expenditure because this was very extravagant, expensive and, of course, we know that it is taxpayers' money that was spent, which was earmarked for something else, I am sure. It seems as though this was just a propaganda gesture on behalf of the Minister of Sport.

I think the Minister feels that, after making confusion and bacchanal with various sporting bodies, he could now come and host an extravagant awards ceremony at taxpayers' expense to appease a sporting fraternity angered by the crudity of his divisive interventions. Why did he not take this money and give it to the various sporting bodies which are in need of funds?

I was informed that the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee almost could not send a team to the Pan Am Games, last September, because of lack of funds. My understanding is that many sporting bodies are being attacked or alienated by the Minister of Sport. In many instances they cannot even present a case to him in terms of their needs; many are afraid to speak out because of fear of victimization. This is what the Prime Minister is condoning. [*Desk thumping*]

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Mr. Speaker, I observed that the annual children sports camp was not held last year. Many parents cannot afford to send their children to summer camps so they look forward to this camp from the Ministry of Sport. I can speak for my constituency; many persons in the constituency of Laventille East/Morvant look forward to going to this sports camp held by the Ministry because of the fact that they do not have to pay and they cannot afford to pay for some of the expensive camps. It is well known that some areas of my constituency are high-risk areas and any positive social activity is more than welcome.

In its stead, I understand the Ministry of Sport hosted a national residential sports school at El Dorado Youth Facility from July 26 to August 06. This is particularly for sporting hopefuls—boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 25 years. They were invited to harness their skills under top national coaches at that camp. Parents agreed to send their children; some were spending time away from their families or from their parents for the first time, because we are talking about 12-year-olds. They were assured by officials of the Ministry that this camp is a training ground for athletes going on national tours. They were promised that they would be separated in dorms and secured by personnel of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. Sunday morning worship was guaranteed for those who needed to worship on Sunday.

Well, at the end of it all, Ministry officials were busy sweeping the dust under the carpet to cover up yet another scandal in the Ministry of Sport. Parents have been fuming mad after hearing what has happened at the camp. I would like the Minister of Sport and the Prime Minister to investigate this.

Mr. Speaker, some of the facts that took place included: The Assistant Director, Miss Ruth Marchan, approved three nights of partying for the campers without any prior knowledge of the parents and other camp officials; and graphic pictures were placed on Facebook. I have some of the photos, which I will not display because the children's faces—you are seeing these little children with these big men wining down. It is very graphic. I will not show them because their faces are in the pictures. It is terrible. I am sure many of the parents would not have known that this was happening in the camp.

Mr. Speaker, lectures which were planned on the programme were cancelled, and a DJ was hired for three nights; so they had three nights of partying until three o'clock in the morning. Of course, the Sunday morning worship was cancelled; boys and girls were discovered, after the party, sharing rooms, or locked arm in arm in compromising positions. The feedback from the campers, of course, was that the meals were not good so they spent their money at the cafeteria on site. I

was also reliably informed that the caterer was a relative of Mr. Ashwin Creed, Permanent Secretary of the said Ministry, who secured the contract for thousands of dollars for the food for that camp. It is alleged that male coaches were often seen flirting with teenage campers.

Mr. Speaker, some of the youths on that camp, of course, would have come from at-risk communities; and, of course, you take them from an at-risk community and place them in an at-risk camp; totally irresponsible; but then, again, what can we expect from this Government? The Prime Minister must hold her Ministers responsible for this action. They are failing the youths of our nation.

Everyone is afraid, of course, to talk about what took place at the camp—the scandalous behaviour which occurred at the camp. I feel that the Prime Minister needs to look at that and be held responsible. *[Interruption]* The picture? *[Miss Cox passes document to Dr. Moonilal]* That is the picture, but we cannot show it because they are young children.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister speaks about equality for all and states that she is serious about crime, yet they have now refocused the indoor youth facilities which were to be built in Bagatelle, Diego Martin, Malabar, Arima and Sangre Grande to Charlieville, Couva and Fyzabad—all “cool spots”. What do they have against the people of the East/West Corridor? I would like to know. Are they serious about crime?

Mr. Speaker, what is the situation with the continuation of existing community recreation facilities that were in the process of being upgraded under the People’s National Movement, particularly our at-risk youths. There were 32 such grounds that they met under construction; to name a few: Yolande Pompey in Princes Town; Brian Lara, Santa Cruz; the Marabella Recreation Ground; the Northern Recreation Ground in Diego Martin and many more throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Many recreation grounds are in dire need of upgrading. Many grounds in certain communities are in need of proper sporting facilities.

With respect to my constituency, the Morvant Recreation Ground, Coconut Drive, Malick Recreation Ground, are all in need of repairs. Nothing has been done with these grounds and yet we talk about being serious about crime and all these recreation grounds in the at-risk areas need to be fixed. What greater way to occupy the time of the youths than through sports? Sport in this country is suffering because of their politics.

Mr. Speaker, I have another very serious concern with regard to the Hasely Crawford tracks, the running tracks. The tender for the tracks was a selective bid

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process. Some suppliers were given between two to 14 days to submit their tenders; some were given two days; five days; 10 days; 14 days for the same project. The provision of a tender for such a project as the tracks for the stadium involves a lot of preparations, particularly where such a project involves Government expenditure costing about \$9.7 million.

Many of those selected were asked to bid at short notice, and of course they complained. Actually, I heard the representative of Mundo on the airwaves complaining bitterly about the short time they had to bid for this track.

Suppliers were given little time to prepare and present a bid of substance but, of course, the ones that would have been more prepared were able to submit their bid. The contract was eventually awarded to Mr. Trevor Hewitt of Advanced Performance Technologies. I would like to read from an email from Mr. Trevor Hewitt to Mr. Vern Gambetta, an international technical representative—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Miss D. Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to read from this email to Mr. Vern Gambetta, an international technical representative, dated August 12, 2010, from Mr. Trevor Hewitt who got the contract. I quote:

Hi Vern, please let me know the name and contact info of the guy with the track. Also, let him know as diplomatic as possible, that his track only gets sold in Trinidad through our company, Advanced Performance Technologies. Let him know that all track and field equipment sold for major games in Trinidad and Tobago comes through us. The bottom line is that the Ministry is only going to purchase through a local reputable company.

/s/ Trevor Hewitt.

We are talking about bids that went out to foreign bidders like Mundo and Beynon and so on. This is the email that was sent from Mr. Hewitt to Vern Gambetta.

Mr. Speaker, in other words, he is saying if you want this job you must come through me. That is what he is saying to anyone who was coming in with the tracks, "If you want this job"—and he was right, clearly, because he got the contract.

The company he was referring to in this email is known as Beynon, a foreign supplier of tracks, and this company has no experience in supplying tracks for the stadium because this is a highly technical process. He is a known UNC financier; he is a friend of the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Ashwin Creed, again; he is a coach in Rebirth Athletic Club along with the Permanent Secretary, Ashwin Creed.

12.30 a.m.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the project which was estimated to cost around \$9 million has now reached \$13.5 million and climbing because it is a failed project. I understand Mr. Hewitt's company used poor plastic surface from Germany; technical assistance was sought from Venezuela; and to correct the mess that was created, they then solicited technical assistance from Czechoslovakia. That is the reason why it keeps going up.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has found it necessary to permit cultural Carnival events on the tracks without adequately protecting the surface. I just want to say that when the Minister engages in expenditure of that nature, the proper and necessary pre-planning must take place. Would you believe NAAATT, which is the governing body where athletics is concerned, was never consulted about the tracks and the type of tracks that may be the most suitable to be used at the Hasely Crawford Stadium? Mr. Speaker, the track used at this stadium cannot get Class 1 certification given the conditions and the problems that exist. So who is going to suffer in all of this? The athletes of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I was reliably informed that instructions were given to the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago to select the company headed by Mr. Hewitt to supply the tracks. What is really startling about all of this is that the persons who tendered, while they were being told that their contracts were being evaluated, the contractor was on site working at the stadium already. While they were being told by the Ministry that they are evaluating their bids, their tenders, one person decided to drive by the stadium and realized that the contractor, Trevor Hewitt and his company, was already on site working.

Now we understand why it did not matter whether the suppliers got one day, two days, three days, four days, because who the awardee would have been was clearly a foregone conclusion, Mr. Speaker. Other suppliers, including Mundo and Fitness Centre, publicly stated that they could have supplied the track even at a much cheaper rate. Something here smells of fish, something does not sound

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right, does not smell right. This is indeed a sad day in Trinidad and Tobago and the Prime Minister presides over this mismanagement of taxpayers' money, flawed procurement process and corrupt practices by the Ministry of Sport.

Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, I just want to speak about something that I found out today where athletes, who were training for the Carifta Games—as a matter of fact, the stadium track has been off-limits for the past six weeks to the athletes because of the Carnival season. Today and Sunday are trials for the Carifta Games. Anybody who is involved in sports will know how important the Carifta Games are to a sportsman because that is where the scouts see you, that is where you get scholarships, and so on. If your family cannot afford, that is where you get the scholarships to pursue whatever sporting arrangement you are involved in. And Mr. Speaker, they have not been able to train on that track in the stadium because it has been off-limits.

Yesterday they went to train because, of course, today and tomorrow are trials so you need to get at least some training time in. The coach, Mr. Skinner, who is an Olympic medalist, was manhandled at the stadium yesterday by security guards, and the athletes were not allowed to train and they have the Carifta Games. I mean, are we serious about sports?

Hon. Member: Athletes were driven to tears.

Miss D. Cox: The athletes were driven to tears yesterday at the stadium. Are we serious about sports? Are we really serious? Because it seems like the stadium—it is more important to have fetes in the stadium and it was built for athletes. It is more important to have fetes in the stadium than for the athletes to train. So they are debarred from training, Mr. Speaker.

I turn to boxing. With regard to boxing in Trinidad and Tobago, I would like the hon. Prime Minister to tell Members of this House what is really happening.

Dr. Moonilal: In boxing.

Miss D. Cox: In boxing. *[Interruption]* I am coming to Buxo Potts. Mr. Speaker, four members of the Trinidad and Tobago Boxing Board were dismissed recently. How did the Minister of Sport arrive at that decision, I do not know. We would like to know because, clearly, something serious must have happened to dismiss four members of a board at the same time. We are still waiting on answers, Mr. Speaker.

The advisor to the board is Mr. Buxo Potts. The people of Trinidad and Tobago know Mr. Potts as a boxing promoter. He is known in Trinidad and

Tobago as a boxing promoter. His son is known as a promoter also. So how can a promoter of boxing be named advisor to a national boxing board? That is a serious conflict of interest. Mr. Speaker, imagine Mr. Buxo Potts was appointed to the board as a director. Imagine an advisor is appointed to a board and the board did not ask for the advisor but they were given an advisor, and that advisor was Buxo Potts. Imagine the board was not involved in the drafting of the contract or knew the contents therein of that contract but they had an advisor, who was given to them.

Mr. Speaker, the salary of this special advisor to the board is as follows: retainer fee, \$15,000 per month; automobile allowance, \$3,000; house allowance, \$5,000; phone allowance, \$1,500. In addition to this, the board, I quote:

shall pay all expenses incurred in relation to foreign travel, accommodation, meals and per diem when representing the board at regional and international events. The costs of local workshops will also be borne by the board.

Mr. Speaker, the controversy surrounding the boxing board has been in the public domain for a while now and I understand the Integrity Commission is indeed investigating serious allegations with regard to the Minister of Sport and the Trinidad and Tobago Boxing Board. And what has this esteemed Prime Minister done this far? Nothing, Mr. Speaker.

It is my understanding that Mr. Potts was receiving two automobile allowances, one in his contract and the other in the form of a rented SUV that the board was paying for. Mr. Speaker, a perusal of the board minutes of July 07, 2011 will show that the Acting Chairman of the board inquired about the contract. So that is how we know that the board members knew nothing about the contract of this advisor to the board. The Board members had no knowledge of the contents of that contract.

Mr. Speaker, I was informed that three relatives of the Permanent Secretary, Ashwin Creed, again, are also employed at the boxing board. Not sure if they are still there now because I know that this was raised in the public domain recently so I am not sure if they are still there—but three members. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of nepotism being allowed to take place in the Ministry of Sport and, of course, the Prime Minister must be held accountable.

In Chap. 21:52, of the Boxing Control Act, section 3(1) and (2):

“No member of the Board shall be interested in the administration or executive of any promoting body of professional boxing.

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No member of the Board shall be interested in any promoter or receive payment of any kind from such promoter or promoting bodies.”

What the Minister has done to circumvent this law is to make Buxo Potts advisor to the board instead of a member because he could not be on the board when, in fact, he attends board meetings and makes pertinent contributions as the representative of the Minister on this board. How scandalous, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I would like to say, you know, because when you travel abroad and you say you are from Trinidad and Tobago, nobody cares about what party you belong to, and so on. When you talk about sport, the first thing they want to talk about—the people they want to talk about are Brian Lara, Dwight Yorke, Stern John, Daren Ganga, Russel Latapy, Stephen Ames, so the Prime Minister should embrace sports as one of the means of uniting our diverse country. Instead, sport is being used as an instrument of division, consistent with the UNC way of doing things.

This brings me to another area of concern presided over by the Minister. The Ministry of Sport is now a promoter; first it was the Nicki Minaj concert and we all know of the vulgarity which attended it and which remains a stain on the veracity of the Minister.

Let me now address a very serious matter. I was reliably informed, Mr. Speaker, that the Ministry also promoted the Hampton Games. The Minister chose to ignore the existence of the established committee and set up a parallel committee which comprised two well-known COP activists, Wendell Eversley and Sammy Sankar. Mr. Speaker, the funding for the games was passed through this committee and the custom is that the NAAATT would be given the funds to manage the games. What I would like to know and what this honourable House needs to know and the people of Trinidad and Tobago need to know is, why was this done? Why was the NAAATT left out? They are accustomed to handling the funds; the funds are supposed to go through them. Why was a parallel committee set up, made up of known COP activists? That is new politics, Mr. Speaker, new politics. Was there a particular reason for that? I would like to know.

Mr. Speaker, since when a Ministry sets up a parallel group of persons to handle an established organization’s sports meeting? Since when? After a perusal of the accounts by the original executive management committee of the Hampton Games, it was discovered that \$83,600 was received in the name of the Hampton Games and was deposited in another account at First Citizens Bank. I have a copy of that statement from First Citizens Bank. Mr. Speaker, this money was

deposited in another account under the direction and names of W. Eversley, Karim and Sankar as authorized signatory members. By the end of July, the bank account was depleted. The minutes of the meeting of the committee—the Hampton Games regular committee—shows that the money was not expended on games expenses known to the committee. What a thing.

Mr. Speaker, there are persons right now calling around with respect to moneys owed to them by Hampton Games, so I would like to ask the question, “where the money gone?” One such person who came in the country to take part in the games, Natasha Hastings, has not been paid, and there are many others who have been getting a runaround because they came and they took part in the games, and they cannot be paid.

The First Citizens account, which bears the names of the COP activists, the parallel committee, shows where the money went in and where the money came out and none of this money went towards payment for the Hampton Games. What does the Minister have to say about this, Mr. Speaker? What does he have to say about that? I understand that the Fraud Squad is investigating this matter. I believe that there is something more in the mortar than the pestle. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to get a grip on this Minister because she is ultimately responsible for his actions.

In conclusion, this Motion today is indeed an important one to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, contrary to what the Government might say. Mr. Speaker, the Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has failed us with regard to crime. Their crime plan was a state of emergency. The Government has failed to turn around the economy, which is in a worse position since May 2010, contrary to what they are telling the population.

The Government has discriminated against certain sectors of the society. Many of the Ministers have concentrated on the UNC-led coalition constituencies and have neglected the other constituencies and that is a fact. I stand here as living proof of that and I have the evidence to show, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they have failed the sporting community. They have failed the entertainment fraternity—well, maybe except Machel. This Government, led by Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, cannot run this country, and their answers to all the questions posed to them is to blame the PNM or to insult MPs on this side or to attack us personally. How long will you continue with that?

The people voted you in, you are in charge, you are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and all the expectations of this country lie in your hands. So

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continue to say “the PNM” and “the PNM” and we will see how long you will continue to talk about the PNM because of your inefficiencies. Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support this Motion of No Confidence in the Prime Minister because she is the head of this dysfunctional, corrupt, divisive Government.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by spelling out this—what no confidence here means to me this morning. N is for no confidence in the Prime Minister. O, operation Gibbs is a total failure. C, cannot seem to control and manage her officers. O, the OPP contracts cancelled, our borders open for guns and drugs to come in. N, no economic development and growth in the economy. F, frequent flier Prime Minister says she puts God first. I, investors are waiting to see if the Prime Minister is serious about tackling crime and corruption. D, we have dismantled all the security, national security assets that were really assisting in the fight against crime. E, every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago must reject this corrupt, incompetent, dysfunctional Government. N, they have no ideas. C, their crime plan is a state of emergency. E, enough is enough.

We had enough of you all. And, Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy): Thank you very kindly, Mr. Speaker, at 0048 on this Saturday morning. Before I delve into my contribution, I wish to respond to some of the remarks made by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

She spoke about the state of emergency, and we used it to diminish crime. But, you see, Mr. Speaker, they on that side blow hot and cold because the same people said to us that there was no need for a state of emergency—in an effort to fight crime—because at the time crime was down. So they blow cold in one area and then they blow hot in the other area, but we will come to that a little later.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant again spoke about people who look like me with respect to what was happening. [*Interruption*] Yes, it was, it was. It was disheartening to hear her say that but I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what the facts are, and I will use their period, 2006 to 2010. Of a total of 2,307 murder victims, 1,668 were of African descent, 72.3 per cent. Yes she laughs, she laughs, it is a joke, you know. With respect to the inmate population, 2006, of African descent, 1,532 out of 2,678, 57 per cent. That was the trend up to 2011. Out of 5,888 inmates, 3,202 were of African descent, 56 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the Member spoke also about SAUTT and the cost. I will deal with that a little later when we are talking about costs. The \$900,000, about the trial aircraft for the police, I will compare it with the cost of the blimp and we will see what we are talking when we are talking costs. You know, Mr. Speaker, well I would not deal with the MP sticker, I would not go into that because I think it is fairly obvious who that car belongs to and it is an MP in this Parliament as well. And there was the pronunciation of goats, words to the effect—I did not get that clearly, but I do not know if she meant that the prison officers and the inmates that came to assist her were ghosts. I am not saying that she said that, I did not get it clearly but words to that effect.

Miss Cox: Mr. Speaker, could the Member—

Hon. Members: No, no, no.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: You had your chance, sit down. Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Members: Let the man talk.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Mr. Speaker, the Member referred to “serving all”. There is no Member on that side who can say that they called this Minister for anything and I did not go out of my way to assist them. I go out of my way to assist them.

Speaking as well about the prison, and remember as junior Minister in the Ministry of National Security, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant was primarily responsible for prisons. I will come to that a little later as well. As junior Minister in the Ministry of National Security, crime escalated under her watch. She should be ashamed to come here and talk about crime. She has no moral authority to talk about crime; under her watch crime escalated with the blimp and SAUTT and everything. About over-invoicing—well, we will deal with that because as we speak, Mr. Speaker, the National Security agencies between 2006 and 2009, under her watch again, are being audited as we speak. So we will find out in due course.

Mr. Speaker, in her constituency, the Ministry of National Security is there all the time. With respect to the dismantling of assets, the blimp and SAUTT were in attendance under the watch of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and, under that watch, criminal activity and crime, particularly in her constituency, escalated.

Miss Cox: Who is “her”? Who is “her”?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: The Member for Laventille East/Morvant, but that is what we dealing with, it went up under your watch. In due course you will get the figures down the road.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to look at the Motion brought by the Member for Diego Martin West with respect to the stewardship of the Member for Siparia, our Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. Mr. Speaker, I will not go into her record, her political record having defeated two stalwarts in the realm of Trinidad and Tobago politics. It is fairly evident that a similar action will happen during this debate and sometime tomorrow morning—

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, a point of order, I look at 33(6).

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Yes, I am very familiar because I have seen a practice develop here. So you can continue.

Hon. Member: She read the whole thing. Good, “dat is wha ah tell all yuh”.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because of the record of the Member for Siparia, all of us on this side have utmost confidence in her leadership and stewardship. They spoke about the consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, we would recall on the day of the inauguration of the hon. Prime Minister, shortly thereafter she donned her tall boots—rubber boots—and went into the field, into the flooded areas to serve her people in Trinidad and Tobago. It did not end there. Later on, just a few months ago in their constituencies—the constituency of Diego Martin West, the constituency of Diego Martin North/East—the hon. Prime Minister ventured into those constituencies again to assist in the flooding. In Laventille, a few months ago—

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, we have to allow the hon. Minister to speak in silence, please. Continue, hon. Minister.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your protection.

Only a few months ago, in the Laventille area, with the fire, she was there again among her people to lend some support to them. This is why, because of the leadership that has been demonstrated by our Prime Minister and the Member for Siparia, we, on this side, continue to have and maintain that confidence. As a leader, she has the characteristics of integrity and honesty and other leadership traits. She listens, she listens and then she makes her decision, unlike the previous

Prime Minister who never listened; he never listened to any of them. He never listened to any of them and that is the reason why they are there today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you would appreciate that the ethnic diversity and multidimensional activity that exist in Trinidad and Tobago allow for that development of trust, not only in our Prime Minister but in all Members on this side. This is why—apart from being the one-man show that existed across there—we are a team unlike the PNM coalition.

1.00 a.m.

But, you see, and this is it, Mr. Speaker, anytime you refer to what they did over the eight years—remember we are here not even two years yet—that they were there, anytime you refer to anything, “doh go back there, doh go back there.” But, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Member for Laventille West, you have not spoken as yet, you will speak. You cannot be shouting across the floor whilst the Member is on his legs and asking him, “What are you doing?” You will get your chance, just take notes, but if you are tired and you want to sleep, I advise you to retire, but do not disturb the hon. Minister, please. Continue.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When they were there, they did nothing. Mr. Speaker, just a brief historical perspective that allows us to look at where we came from. We are in the process of preparing to celebrate 50 years of political independence, and we need to look, albeit briefly, at some of the areas that have put us in this predicament today. The education system: the period 1968 to 1983, 21 junior secondary schools were built to accommodate 12,960 students leaving the primary school system.

Mr. Speaker, but what that did for us, because of that shift system that they engineered, we ended up in a situation of young people being at home unattended. This is the price we are paying for that today. Quite apart from unwanted teenage pregnancies, we had young men roaming the streets without any kind of parental guidance, or being in their homes with no parental guidance, and there is where we lost that contact with our children.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*] yes, it is a joke, it is a joke for them. The other area of concern, quite apart from our youngsters roaming the areas, we ended up in a situation where our technical and vocational schools were removed from us. And I am sure all of us will recall, at some time in school there

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would be somebody sitting next to you, they are not interested in maths, they are not interested in English, but they will be fixing a watch or they will be drawing.

There is a good friend of mine in California; he was in class in Belmont; all he is doing is drawing, top technical drawing, now doing architecture in California because that is his gift from God. But what they did: they closed down the technical and vocational schools and those people with that kind of talent we lost it, and as well it was not developed and this is why those people went into areas of criminal activity that we have to suffer for today. [*Interruption*]

Yes, and we are suffering from that today. Mr. Speaker, social programmes—that is where we started with the DEWD and other programmes like that. It was done in the 1960s with the urban gang warfare. Well in those days, Mr. Speaker, we are not talking like now where there are guns—in those days there were knives and bottles and stones and cutlasses. Today there is a finality to the gang warfare that exists.

But at that time, to curb the steel band gang warfare, they came up with these special works programmes, with the DEWD and so on. That is what was allowed to escalate—those special works programmes, and the heads of these gangs; when we got into the drugs in the 60s and 70s, those were the people who became the drug lords and took over, and that is what they nurtured. This is what developed over the years and this is the history of all gang warfare and violence in Trinidad and Tobago.

The oil boom in 1973 when we should have used the money then to train our youngsters, that did not happen. Those DEWD people were not trained, they were just given—and here is where the work ethic was lost—jobs and they called them tasks, and they would go on the job from 7.00 to 9.00 a.m. and after that they are home. So, there was where our work ethic deteriorated. So later on, when we are trying now to get our young people to work, no, no.

Another area that suffered was our farming because when you are in a situation where you can go and get DEWD for 7.00 to 9.00 a.m. and make \$100, and when you got to work in the fields, cocoa or cane fields and so on, you do not want to do that. So, you find our agricultural sector suffered as a result and our work ethic deteriorated considerably.

Mr. Speaker, at that time, we were just a young nation trying to build. Had we trained our youngsters to develop their skills at that time when we had the money, we would not be suffering what we are suffering today. But what they did, they

engendered a culture of poor work ethics among our youngsters and there was no skill development, no training; and when people were brought in here to do jobs, there was no technological transfer.

Even in our second oil boom, when they at that time were at the helm, at no time did we ever get that technological transfer to our young people who today could have been masons and plumbers and carpenters and so on. That did not happen. So they went into the same concept of DEWD and they went into the URP and the CEPEP. There was no training, no technological transfer and our youngsters suffered.

Mr. Speaker, as a youngster growing up, we used to go to the savannah to play football with a good friend of ours and he would always say, “you know, my father built that Hilton”, at that time we talked about the “upside-down hotel”. I did not understand the concept at the time but we were youngsters; they had just built the Hilton hotel and he was speaking about every time his father worked on that hotel.

It would have been so good for youngsters today to be walking around Port of Spain and look at some of our buildings and say, “I worked on that”, or, “my father worked on that building”. But because there was not the technological transfer, because there was not that skill set development in Trinidad and Tobago with our youngsters, we had to use expertise from outside.

Now, if when we used that expertise from outside, we had married it with some of our youngsters today, they would have been skilled, they would have learned, but that did not happen. So, we have lost another opportunity to develop the skill set of our young people, Mr. Speaker, and this is one of the areas of concern because we have a number of young idle hands around with nothing to do. When we are not trained and are not skilled and the work ethic is not what we want it to be, then, not only our young people suffer but Trinidad and Tobago suffers accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look now at some of our—because, you know, they always speak about we do not have a plan, but you know what their plans were? Anaconda and Weedeater, that was their plan, but we do not have a plan. Every time—and they try to say it often enough so that they themselves can believe it. But, you know, they took office in 2001, Mr. Speaker, and it is amazing, serious crimes stood at 16,610. By 2009, it escalated to 20,621, a detection rate of 14.9. This is after they spent the \$70 million on Mastrofski and things like that, and this is what we have inherited.

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So after their eight years with nothing and an escalation in crime, they want us now, in less than two years to eradicate crime; this is what they are saying. So, we are here for two years and we should get it done. I cannot begin to understand why [*Interruption*] yes, but not in two years, it did not happen overnight, criminal activity did not happen overnight, Mr. Speaker; it did not escalate overnight. We do not expect it to diminish overnight.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we are here to ensure that we eradicate that sense of helplessness that exists in Trinidad and Tobago because of the deteriorating crime problem that they themselves, when they were in office, argued, and as we said on the last occasion the former Minister—and I will refer to that in a while. The former Minister said there is nothing they can do, but I will come to this. I do not want to misquote him. We are talking about wastage—the blimp, Mr. Speaker, the blimp. The blimp activity started in 2004 and they are talking about wastage. The first blimp, \$28 million; second blimp, \$30 million; and in the interim, sometime in 2006, they rented the blimp for a five-month period for \$24 million.

Later on—and I am being conservative—when they got the final blimp—I am saying just a three-year period, it is more than that, but I am just using a three-year period. A three-year period at \$1.4 million per month, \$1.4 million per month to operate the blimp, and that is by 36 months. So, I am just using months and I am being conservative—36 months, I am being conservative. That, Mr. Speaker, turns out to be \$133 million for that blimp over that period. But what were the results? But they are talking about wastage, what were the results?

Mr. Speaker, that has nothing to do with the 20 persons, including the pilots, required to launch that blimp and for that blimp to come down. As I said at the other place, when that blimp is being launched, those guide ropes, the guys running along with the guide ropes. In bad weather, you know, there is no—

Mr. Speaker: I am hearing talk here Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara and Member for Laventille East /Morvant, please.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To launch the blimp, apart from the pilots—these guide ropes, you have to run along with it for it to land similar. So, if for some reason there is a requirement for an emergency, for the blimp to become airborne, impossible, it cannot happen. So, imagine these guys are being paid every day to run with the guide ropes; they go and they relax, they come back, they run with the guide ropes for the blimp to come down; and they are talking about wastage. That is what that blimp did for Trinidad and Tobago.

The former Minister of National Security: Friday, January 4th in the *Trinidad Guardian*, Joseph said, and this is by Karla Ramoo: crime-fighting measures fail—that is when they had the blimp and they had SAUTT—Government reviewing options, homicides gang-related; National Security Minister Martin Joseph said anti-crime initiatives which were implemented failed to work—under the watch also of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

So, Mr. Speaker, to come here now and blame us, this establishes—for we have just been here 21 months and to expect us to solve everything, I mean, is asking too much.

Mr. Speaker, we came into Government, met crime as the main factor, the main concern of Trinidad and Tobago. Unlike them, we came up with a different idea, a different plan to deal with this. We decided that we were going to look at the suppression, which is necessary, but we put some effort as well into the implementation and prevention because as far as I am concerned if you do not prevent that conduit that leads into criminal activity, then all is lost because then you would skim off the top and then it would do nothing because that continuity will remain. As a result of that, we came up with programmes to assist our respective communities in getting out of the mindset of criminal activity, developing social programmes to assist our representative communities.

But, Mr. Speaker, as indicated earlier, our main aim was to change the whole thinking of people involved in criminal activity, trying to get into the communities, get the communities to work with the police officers to ensure that—because there is no way police officers can solve crime on their own. They need the assistance of the people in the community to guide in such a way that the youngsters would then conform, because as we recognize, Mr. Speaker, in most of the areas' criminal activities, young people are involved. As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, we came up with viable alternatives to crime. As I said, we looked at the suppression, the intervention, we looked at the prevention and the rehabilitation and we began our onslaught on crime from those perspectives.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we recognized when we went into the suppression aspect of it—and it has been the complaint of most of our citizens—is that they are not seeing the police officers. As a result, we came up with the concept that police officers must be in the communities. We are talking about patrols, and patrols with vehicles, you know. They go through areas with their windows wound down and so on. We say "no, no, no," you need to interact with

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the community and build a partnership, so that when something happens, they know police officers to whom—if they call the police station, they know who they are talking to.

And, they develop a sense of trust because, without that, there is no way the criminal activity is going to be reported. We have heard instances where people say that there is no use going to the police station to report anything because—with that absence of trust—they are going to tell the perpetrators and they are going to come and, you know, affect your peaceful life.

We need to look as well at some of the areas that when we went into the police, and looked at the police, we saw that there was an absence of career path development. We saw that there was an absence of proper training at the senior level because what was happening was that recruits were being trained but there was no developmental training. There was no path that was planned for our police officers.

I always make—I am sure I have made the reference here before in this honourable House, Mr. Speaker. You see a soldier with a stripe, you know he has done a course. You see one with two stripes, he has done two courses. You see three, similarly, with the officer rank and officer badge of rank. But, in the police service that was not so, so we started developmental training at different ranks, managerial training. So, our police officers could be guided accordingly and develop that sense of professionalism that, if in a situation where the leadership aspects are required, they can perform professionally. This is what we have been doing.

We also, Mr. Speaker, looked at what we referred to as the “private security network” where we engaged private security officers from reputable companies to join with the police to lend additional eyes and ears to the solving of crime and the detection of crime. We were not asking that these private security officers be paid by the State. All we were saying is that they are on duty at a certain point in their own private capacity and they see something, there is a specific network with which they can contact the police and, therefore, share the information.

Similarly, something happens in an area and the police could be looking for a certain vehicle or a certain perpetrator in a certain outfit or whatever and they give that information to the private security and okay, you on your duty here but your eyes and ears are open and you are looking around. That has been working quite comfortably, worked for us over the Carnival season here, Mr. Speaker. The thrust behind that is to ensure that there is a better development of cooperation between private security and our civil police.

Mr. Speaker, our surveillance bays are in the process, they are already down. All we are waiting on now is to put up our cameras and they will be operational. This is what we have designed to ensure that there is less traffic on the road. You know these wild people drive up and down, and particularly on the Uriah Butler Highway. So, we would look at the traffic flow quite apart from which it is used as a crime-fighting tool as well. Remember, in those ways the police vehicles can move right or left, so they can respond quicker to any activity, criminal activity, along the way.

Mr. Speaker, we have looked as well at the rationalization of the whole national security architecture and we are talking about looking at all illegal activity in every sphere. You know, Mr. Speaker, what has been happening to us over the years and what has been allowed to encroach upon us is that we look at the trivialities of lawbreaking and say, “Well, okay, he just throw a can out a car”, and things like that, and we did not arrest that and we allowed it to escalate. So, now that we are trying to arrest it, you find they say, “What they playing, we accustom doing that.” So, we need to get out of that realm and move on.

Mr. Speaker, we looked at the law aspect of it, the legislation aspect of it. We looked at the Interception of Communications Act. Mr. Speaker, with respect to that, you know, it is amazing. *Daily Express*, Monday, November 29, Anna Ramdass:

Former Prime Minister Patrick Manning said on Friday he intended to bring legislation to deal with wiretapping after the People’s National Movement won the general election on May 24 this year. Our plan was that as soon as the elections on May 20 were over, we were going to approach the Opposition at a time if we had won the elections and to see whether we can have a meeting of the minds. We did not expect it, and it turned out, they became the Government. Said Manning, what happened today, she made—she, referring to the Member for Siparia—she made the statement that nobody is above the law but there was no law, absolutely correct, and since there was no law, then wiretapping was not illegal.

This is a Prime Minister saying to the country that wiretapping was not illegal.

Mr. Speaker, our thrust as well was to develop and maintain morale in the police service as well as in the defence force, and I must at this time herald the dedication and hard work of our police officers and our members of the defence force. I have been privileged to be out there working with them on their roadblocks and things like that and I have seen their dedication. I have seen the patriotism that exists and we have good police officers in Trinidad and Tobago.

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I will tell you why. I will elaborate on that. When the previous Government formed SAUTT, they paid these SAUTT officers \$5,000 in excess. We had police officers, hard-working police officers going out there day after day, night after night, bullets flying at them and they continued working relentlessly. In the face of that, I want to commend our police officers for that.

As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, and I have said this here before. With respect to their enhancement package as far as compensation is concerned, if I had the money, I would pay them whatever they asked for. Regardless of whatever they ask for, you can never pay someone to put his life on the line for his country. One of the noblest professions is the Profession of Arms where you put your life on the line for your country. This is what our police officers have been doing, and doing so professionally.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about enhanced police visibility and this is what we are attempting to achieve so that there will be an elimination of the fear of crime and that is very important. There were days when people would say that because I do not want to be exposed to criminal activity, I will stay at home. That no longer exists. Bandits are coming into your homes while you are there. This is something that we need to eradicate so that that fear of crime will diminish. When that fear of crime diminishes, and then the interaction with the police and our citizens, then you would find an elevation of living standards in Trinidad and Tobago. This is what we are trying to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, there was talk about the dismantling of the OPVs and so on. I do not want to go too much into that because of where it is now. I would have left that for the AG who knows the law, but I would simply like to add that as we speak, we are making efforts to increase our naval assets and we are looking at a three-tier element of maritime safety or maritime, as we say, the "border picture". In that respect, we are looking at our coastline and ensuring that we establish what we refer to as "maritime moorings".

At present, Mr. Speaker, if something happens off Toco, it is either the vessel from Tobago or the vessel from Staubles or the vessel from Galeota, and it takes about an hour at least to get to there. We are saying that we need to establish, and we are establishing, those 12 maritime moorings around Trinidad and Tobago. So, the least time for a deployment would be half an hour of naval assets. In so doing, Mr. Speaker, we will ensure that our naval assets could respond to any activity.

With that as well, we are coordinating with our energy sector. We have the energy sector security initiative that was launched on November 15, 2010, where

we marry our assets with those of the energy sector to ensure that we protect our energy assets. As a result of that, or in pursuit of that, our hon. Prime Minister has established an interministerial committee, of which the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Public Utilities are members, because of her interest in ensuring that our energy assets are protected, and this is the kind of Prime Minister that we have confidence in.

Mr. Speaker, of those 12 strategically identified maritime moorings, four of them are already established and in the not-too-distant future the others will be. You must recognize as such that some of them are on the east coast and as a result we have to ensure that we have coves so that they would be safe when they moor.

Mr. Speaker, also, looking at the legislative agenda, we have completed the Interception of Communications Act; the Firearms (Amdt.) Act; the Anti-Gang Act, 2011; the Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2011; the Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011; the Terrorism (Amdt.) Act, 2011.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there was talk earlier on about the prisons and security in the prisons. You know, integral to the development of all our plans was the head of the National Security Council, our hon. Prime Minister, who we are showing this evening that we have an abundance of confidence in. But, Mr. Speaker, quite apart from the maritime moorings, we have our baggage scanners that we are using to assist.

1.30 a.m.

We have our 360-degree radar system that we met; we could give them some kudos for that. [*Interruption*] It works off and on. But we have looked to our prisons as well, the prisons that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant had responsibility for when she was Junior Minister in the Ministry of National Security. We have looked at introducing scanners in the prisons to ensure that all persons coming in and out are searched, and this goes from the Commissioner of Prisons right down. Remember some years ago they were saying that officers ought not to be searched. We say that from Commissioner of Prisons down should be searched. When the commissioner subjects himself to searching, no junior officer could say that he will not be searched. They are all being searched. We have installed the scanners to ensure that when someone goes into the prison, he is very well searched.

Mr. Speaker, other key projects that have been initiated include: construction of the emergency response unit headquarters; construction of a prison bakery; construction of a nursery at the women's prison; construction of senior officers' mess and quarters.

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It brings us now to the Eastern Correctional Rehabilitation Centre. In 2008 the Human Rights Report for Trinidad and Tobago from the Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights and Labour, here is what they had to say—and you see, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant who at the time had responsibility for the prison is not here. I would have liked her to hear this. This is the report, and I quote:

“Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Conditions in the prison system’s”—this is 2008—“eight facilities were somewhat upgraded but continued to be harsh. According to the prison service commissioner, the Port of Spain prison, originally designed to accommodate 250 inmates, held 528 prisoners,”—originally designed to accommodate 250 inmates, held 528 prisoners—“compared with 599 in 2007. At peak levels, the maximum number of prisoners in a 10- by 10-foot cell increased from eight to 10.”

Could you imagine that, Mr. Speaker, 10 prisoners in a 10 by 10 cell?
[*Interruption*]

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Speaker. I continue to quote:

“On October 3,”—which is in 2008—“a High Court judge ruled in favor of convicted murderer, Colin Edghill’s complaint that the conditions at the Port of Spain prison were debasing and dehumanizing to both prisoners and to prison officers. In the ruling, the judge cited concerns about air, light, sanitation, hygiene, exercise, and food.”

Mr. Speaker, this is the situation that we found our prisons in when we took over office in 2010.

Having regard to what we established at the Eastern Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre, we made efforts and looked at the women’s prison in Arouca, the capacity was 50; the Golden Grove Prison in Arouca, 200; the Immigration Detention Centre in Aripo, 40; National Fisheries, Chaguaramas, 60

and Amalgamated Security Services, 300. As a result we looked at the old Neal & Massy plant on the highway in Arima. It was not a situation where we just looked at a facility and decided to take it. We looked at other facilities before doing so.

I now quickly turn to other initiatives, and I will try to run through these as quickly as possible. Our anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing: since 2005 a mutual evaluation was carried out, and this country met with members of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force. However, very little was done in this respect, because at that time when we took over we found that there were 15 out of the 16 key and core recommendations of the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF), we were non-compliant with at that time. Trinidad and Tobago was found to be partially compliant and non-compliant on 26 other recommendations. So we were really compliant with one.

When we made several efforts to ensure that we lifted Trinidad and Tobago out of where we were, we were greeted with a certain kind of greeting, so we asked ourselves, “Why are they treating Trinidad and Tobago like this?” Only to find out that Trinidad and Tobago, before our Government’s presence, was referred to as being arrogant and could not care less. That is what we had to fight for.

What had happened was that members of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force came down to Trinidad and Tobago and met with the Minister of National Security. They asked to meet with the then head of the National Security Council and he refused. When they returned, we had just taken over office, and we explained to our hon. Prime Minister what the situation was, she said, “No, I have to meet with them.” She met with them. [*Desk thumping*] That is the kind of leadership that we on this side have confidence in. She met with them and discussed the issues.

We went to Paris and met with the FATF. I had the opportunity to address them, and we gradually eased ourselves out of the situation that we were in. Had we not done that—we went to the Cayman Islands as well to sort of bring back Trinidad and Tobago into the CFATF fold, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force. We have been working assiduously since then to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago meets all the requirements.

As it stands now, the review of the amendment of the last meeting in Paris in February 2012—our technocrats attended the FATF plenary in Paris—instead of standing at the cusp of bad listing, we now stand with only two remaining

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deficiencies to get us totally out of the morass we were in. All of that is because of the leadership of our Prime Minister, who we have utmost confidence in. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, international cooperation: the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and UNLIREC, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean—they are assisting us now in the area of firearms stockpiling, management and destruction. We could all remember just about three months ago, the hon. Prime Minister at the police academy participated in a symbolic destruction of firearms. This is what we are attempting to do.

This is why we say that she is there neck and neck with us, because our hon. Prime Minister is the person who came and ensured that she was part of that exercise, to show Trinidad and Tobago that she is interested in the destruction of the stockpiling of weapons. That is why we have that kind of confidence in her. Even with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism, CICTE, she is as well involved in that, because remember she is also head of national security in Caricom.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Organization for Migration are now discussing the development of border security and law enforcement activity for our borders, with respect to human trafficking of vulnerable migrants and things like that.

I want to briefly step to the state of emergency. Our hon. Prime Minister, with the courage and conviction that others did not have, felt it necessary at the time to save lives in Trinidad and Tobago, to recommend to His Excellency the President that a state of public emergency be established. The state of emergency proved to be a resounding success. Almost \$2 billion worth of illicit drugs, street value, were confiscated, including marijuana seedlings and seeds.

Mr. Speaker, 1,417 persons were arrested for narcotic offences. Quite apart from that, 190 illegal firearms were seized, and over 13,000 rounds of assorted ammunition and 39 magazines. Moreover, during the state of emergency, there was a notable decrease in serious crimes in all nine police divisions. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that some of those same persons involved in criminal activities were the lives we were saving, because subsequent to the state of emergency, four of them so far have been killed. We were trying to save their lives, and to get their relatives, their families, to nurture them out of a way of crime, so that we could save their lives. [*Crosstalk*]

There was also fuel bunkering. Maybe the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs would deal with that a little more. But there was almost \$100 million in savings, 83,000 gallons per day less in diesel, and this was happening all along and it was not detected.

In 2001, the Chief of Defence Staff had proposed to this Government that we develop a national security policy. It had been launched earlier, personnel were in place, and all that was required was to run with it. It was placed on a shelf somewhere. So we have come now into a situation where the previous administration had no national security policy. We are now in the process of finalizing that national security policy, which will be communicated in due course. But the point I am making here is for all that period they operated, with all the plans they had with Anaconda and Weedeater and things like that, without a national security policy. In other words, they were doing things “*vaille-que-vaille*”. [*Crosstalk*] We intend to do things in the proper way, and this is why we are establishing that policy and from there we will press on with all that we need to do to save this country of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Our intervention and preventive programmes—primarily we are targeting our youths, our young people, young males in particular. Two days ago—well, three days ago, this is Saturday morning—on Wednesday, I went to the Nelson Street area, where a young steel band, Sun Valley, some youngsters were playing pan. It is amazing to see the type of discipline these youngsters are portraying.

I know the Member for Port of Spain South is aware, because I was told that she has been there as well. Let me say that I appreciate her support. She was not there on this occasion, but on the last occasion some of her colleagues came and said that they were sent by her. I must say the same for the Member for Laventille West. Whenever we go into his area and we invite him he comes, and, of course, as well the Members for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West and Arouca/Maloney.

1.45 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make here is that our young people, we are trying to harness them, and music is one of the areas that we are using. When we see these youngsters play—I refer to the young people on the Beetham; when we gave them some musical instruments last year, all they could have played was a syncopation, but you see the discipline and you see the effort they put into it, and you know this is the same effort that is put in by young people of all ages for eight minutes of glory on Carnival Saturday night in the savannah.

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That is something that people, if we could get that work ethic that is put into the practice sessions—when people stay to two or three o'clock in the morning, just to spend eight minutes on the stage in the savannah. If you could get that enthusiasm into our work ethic, no nation in the world would be better than Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] This is what we are trying to nurture in our youths.

The National Mentorship Programme: this is something that our hon. Prime Minister has pushed. She ensured that General Colin Powell came to do that launch for us, and she is with us all the way. As we stand now, we have 480 youths to be on the mentorship programme by August of this year. We have done mentorship camps with them; we have done the training with the mentors; we have done initial training with mentees; we have married them together and we are pushing on with that programme.

We are looking at the full leadership and guidance that we have been getting from our Prime Minister in this respect. It is highly commendable to the extent that we on this side can do nothing but say we have confidence in our Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

We also have the Positive Adolescent Network initiative, referred to as the Pan Yard Initiative, and we are talking here now of putting our youngsters together, not only have them play pan but have them play other instruments as well and have them learn music, and once they start hearing themselves you see the difference in the youngsters. They develop a sense of confidence and self-actualization and you feel that nothing else could get them out that pan yard and get involved in criminal activity.

We go on and on with other activities, and again, I want to make the appeal because, you see, what I have recognized going into the communities is that we have a number of absentee fathers, and we want fathers to come back to their sons, sons to know their fathers. As a “lil fella” growing up, as far as you are concerned, your father is it.” My father could beat your father and things like that because you have a feeling about your father that cannot be described at that age. What we want to do is to bring back fathers to their sons.

So, this year again we are going to have the father's fair on the Saturday before Father's Day, and I will invite my colleagues on the opposite side again to attend, and bring the fathers and sons and you will see the kind of bonding that exists, because you are asking not only those fathers who are not with their sons. We are asking those as well who have good relationships with their sons, so when they come the others who do not, would see how fathers—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Are you a father?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:—communicate with their sons. I always talk about going to Carapichaima to do a youth march for crime with some youngsters, and when I saw the parents and the fathers I said, “if I could export that all over Trinidad and Tobago...” You see fathers with their sons on their shoulders, and whenever I see that I feel that, okay, we are getting somewhere. Even over the Carnival period you see some fathers with their sons on their shoulder; they are taking their sons to play sport and things like that. This is what we want to nurture. So I am extending that invitation again to my good friends on the other side.

Mr. Sharma: You do not know that on Father’s Day you could get a father?

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: Well, I am sure that the Member for Laventille West would have heard me say this time and time again. One of the youth groups that I always have time for is the Cadets because that is where I came from, and that is where my discipline developed. I feel that once we can get, as we are aspiring to do, a Cadet Unit in every secondary school, that would lift the discipline standard in Trinidad and Tobago. In that respect our hon. Prime Minister is fully behind us as well, and she wants to get a Cadet Unit in every secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago, and that is a pledge that I have made under her guidance.

By the end of this year we are looking at Carapichaima West, Vishnu Boys Hindu School, Morvant/Laventille, among others. So far we have had Cadet Units established in Success/Laventille Secondary, Carapichaima East Secondary, the Preysal Government Secondary, St. James Secondary, Diego Martin North Secondary, Waterloo Secondary and Couva West Secondary. We feel that once we start spreading—because what we want to do is like in the old days I am sure he would remember, whereas cadets we would go to school in uniform, and the others see us in uniform, and they want to be like us, and that would spread, and the element of discipline would spread like wildfire through this country.

Mr. Speaker, the police youth clubs: it is amazing. Last November I went down to La Brea Police Youth Club. *[Interruption]* But he was there. *[Interruption]* If you see these youngsters. In December I went to Sangre Grande youth club, and what it does, because of the youngsters joining the youth club, their parents come along. We invite the mothers—because most times the mothers come with them—to bring the fathers as well, so that we can get that bonding; so we are developing that outlook.

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We look at what we refer to as the Concerts of Hope which is part of a Community Patriotism Initiative, which is where we are trying to get the communities together because, as I have said here some time ago, I went to a respective community in the east, and there is one building about a 150 metres away, and another building on this side, and people from this side cannot go into this building; we are talking about one community.

So quite apart from assisting in that Community Patriotism Initiative, we are using our CSP to assist in getting those communities together. How we are doing that: we have engaged the Mediation Board, and they have been partnering with the CSP and they have just started. The concept is quite simple: they are prepared to train people in respective communities in mediation. You would find sometimes that there is a dispute between neighbours, and it is a simple situation where the leaves from someone's tree is falling into the other's yard, and the next thing you know "is murder".

We are saying that if we can get the Mediation Board into those areas, and they are willing to do that and train respectable people in the communities, who will now be the mediation committees in those areas, and they now, with any dispute in the area, they would do the mediation. After a while, when they have entrenched themselves, we get the respective mediation committees from the respective communities to meet at some forum somewhere, a workshop and so on, spend a day somewhere, and following that, get the communities to get together.

We are hoping that could work, particularly with our challenged communities. So at present we are in the process now of marrying the Citizen Security Programme and the Mediation Board with a view to getting that off the ground.

Mr. Sharma: You are doing a lot of work.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: We looked at the rehabilitation aspect of crime fighting, and initially it resided with us. It now resides with the Ministry of Justice, and I know that the Minister is doing a lot of work in the rehabilitation area; I will not delve into his realm. All these areas are some of which we are looking to push forward with in the area of national security and crime fighting.

So we are not looking at the suppression aspect of it; we are looking at the social aspects of it; we are going into the areas. We have the Making Life Important initiative, which was launched by hon. Prime Minister in September in the Beetham, where we are going into the areas. We are looking at the schools to ensure that we nurture that sense of community from a younger age; we are trying to get the parents involved.

We are talking now with different Ministries—Community Development, the People and Social Development—so they are going in there to ensure that the people understand what is required of them, and to marry with them and partner with them. With all of that, we have the police, the defence force going in as well to share with them, and to partner with them and to build that confidence and trust. So that in the final analysis we can develop those communities into one that is police friendly, and it carries that element of trust, so that when something happens, they themselves would not want the intruders in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, as such, we on this side completely reject and dismiss the Motion of No Confidence in our Prime Minister, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Mr. Sharma: Well said.

Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy: We have full confidence in the Member for Siparia, and with my colleagues we will continue to make a positive difference in this country. I indicated a few reasons why the Ministry of National Security continues to have confidence in our Prime Minister, and we totally reject the Motion from the other side raised by the Member for Diego Martin West.

As our Prime Minister so frequently reminds us, put God in front and walk with Him, and with God in front and with His divine guidance, we on this side will continue to repose utmost confidence in our Prime Minister, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. I thank you.

Mr. Sharma: Well said.

Mr. Nileung Hypolite (*Laventille West*): Mr. Speaker, the performance of a Government is largely dependent on core competencies and abilities of its Prime Minister to provide inspirational leadership; to motivate all sectors of the society; to encourage investment; to communicate clearly and effectively; to manage the nation's resources with prudence; and to do so while maintaining trust and integrity.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Make sure that you pronounce other people's speech properly. [*Laughter*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, in the last 20 months, the population of Trinidad and Tobago has had to endure a Prime Minister who has demonstrated time and time again that she is grossly deficient and lacking in leadership and management skills.

Mr. Sharma: "That sounding flimsy."

Mr. N. Hypolite: We have seen a Prime Minister who changes directions depending upon the circumstance and which way the wind is blowing on that day. We have seen a Prime Minister who conveniently dissociates herself from actions and decisions taken by persons and agencies under her control. We have seen a Prime Minister who is indecisive in decision making and very unconvincing when she attempts to defend actions of her Government.

Mr. Sharma: Say that word again.

Mr. N. Hypolite: We have seen a Prime Minister who seems to have great difficulty in speaking clearly and truthfully so that all the population could hear the same thing. We have seen a Prime Minister who is prone to missteps, misinterpretations, being misunderstood and mismanaged, and that is why I also support—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh” have no choice.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—this Motion moved by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

2.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of months the People’s National Movement, under the leadership of the Member for Diego Martin West, has been going throughout this country, meeting with constituents and hearing their concerns, their issues and their problems. We have been to Toco/Sangre Grande, we have been to Chaguanas East, we have been to D’Abadie/O’Meara, we have been to Diego Martin, and we have been throughout a number of constituencies—to date, something like about 10 constituencies thus far—and we will continue to go to other constituencies. Reason being, the People’s National Movement has always been a caring—*[Interruption]*

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing a loud drone on that side down there. Standing Order 40.

Mr. Sharma: “Why you paying attention” down there?

Miss McDonald: That is not your business.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I would like to endorse that myself, so I would like Members to give complete attention to the Member for Laventille West. Continue Member.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. We have been going throughout this country meeting with people and hearing their issues and concerns because we have always—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please, Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—been a caring party and will continue to care for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to these individuals. We have listened to some of these talk shows; we have listened to individuals who would have come to our constituency offices; we would have read a number of articles; we would have looked at a number of blogs as well as a number of social—

Hon. Member: Networks.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—networks, thank you—and the description coming from those entities pertaining to this Government are words such as: incompetent, deceptive, worthless, hopeless, dysfunctional—[*Continuous desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: What, that is a big word.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—disrespectful, inept, delusional, deceitful—

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. N. Hypolite:—ineffective, maladroit—

Mr. Roberts: “Aah, yes.”

Mr. N. Hypolite:—vindictive, illogical—

Hon. Member: What! “Ooh goooooood.”

Mr. N. Hypolite:—unprincipled, dishonest—

Mr. Roberts: Keep going.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—unrighteous—

Mr. Roberts: Two more, two more.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Ungodly.

Mr. Roberts: One more.

Dr. Moonilal: Make a sentence now. [*Laughter*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: And the sentence that I would make, because the Member for Oropouche East requested a sentence, is that this Government is the worst Government that this country has ever seen in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Out of all those articles he used worst—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Not only would they have heard all these individuals speak—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please, less noise, please!

Mr. N. Hypolite:—about this Government in a very negative way, but there is also a non-governmental organization which would have posted a number of questions to be answered by this Government. I would like to just make mention of some of these questions because the Motion today was really and truly for the Government to speak to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and explain to the people of Trinidad and Tobago some of the measures that they are taking to carry this country forward.

What they would have come here today, well, yesterday into today, and have been doing, is just speaking about the PNM, the PNM and the Member for Diego Martin West, the Member for Diego Martin West. However, here are some questions posted by this non-governmental organization, in which I am hoping that some of these other speakers may answer. *[Interruption]*

Who was ultimately and directly responsible for the appointment of the vastly unqualified Resmi Ramnarine to director of an organization critical to the national security of Trinidad and Tobago? *[Interruption]* This is a non-governmental organization requesting answers. What was the transparent process used to appoint the new CEO of WASA? How does someone holding a position of director in a major financial institution at the time of its collapse become a Government Minister in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Speaker: May I ask, are you reading a letter?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Asking a question.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no; just sit. You are reading a letter that I myself have gotten, and I am saying you must be very forthright and share with the Parliament the name of this organization. You cannot just say an NGO. There is a name here. So, put on the record, if you are speaking on their behalf, the name of the organization, the date of the letter and then pose your questions. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, the name of the non-governmental organization is Fixin' T&T. *[Interruption]*

A letter written to all Members of this honourable House, and I will continue, with your permission, to ask question number four. Why was the painfully flawed process, inherited from the previous administration to select a commissioner and

deputy commissioner of police, continued? What was the process used by the Minister of Transport to engage the services of new legal counsel at the Port Authority? *[Interruption]* What were the criteria for appointments to state boards, management positions in state agencies and diplomatic posts? Can the résumé, qualifications of all persons occupying these positions be immediately made available online for public consumption? Those are just some of the questions that Fixin' T&T, a non-governmental organization, would like answered.

Mr. Imbert: Ask all.

Mr. N. Hypolite: You would like me to ask all?

Mr. Sharma: Ask all, he has nothing else to say.

Mr. N. Hypolite: I will continue. Why was Mr. Warner allowed to maintain his position at FIFA after being sworn in as a Government Minister? Why was Mr. Warner allowed to continue his ministerial role after leaving FIFA, amidst corruption allegations? Why has the Government not insisted that Mr. Warner obey an order by the—

Mr. Speaker: You see questions three and four, which I have before me as well, is a matter before the courts and it is sub judice, so, I do not want us to get into that. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. N. Hypolite: Very well, Mr. Speaker, I would go on to the others.

Mr. Sharma: Get that to your lawyer before you ask the others.

Dr. Moonilal: Give Sen. Al-Rawi that report.

Mr. Sharma: Or Sen. Hinds. You really came unprepared.

Mr. N. Hypolite: You want to speak? Go ahead and speak. *[Interruption]* What is the status of the Attorney General's investigation into the controversial NP contract involving the Gopauls? What, if any, are his findings? Why the rush to award mega projects like the Rapid Rail and Invaders Bay before the new procurement legislation is enacted? When can we expect the promised procurement legislation to be a reality? How many of the 91 recommendations of the Uff Commission of Enquiry have been implemented?

Mr. Sharma: Seventeen.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Security spoke a little while ago and he made mention of the state of emergency and, as such, there are some questions here for him also. *[Interruption]*

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Our Constitution dictates that our citizens be provided a specific reason for the declaration of a state of emergency; kindly take this opportunity to provide the same. Who provided the legal advice to the Government on the state of emergency? Was there meaningful consultation with the leaders of our protective services prior to the declaration of the state of emergency? If so, over what period? Who provided the legal advice to police on arresting and charging persons in the face of little or no evidence? Was there any attempt to verify the veracity of the information on the alleged plot to assassinate the Prime Minister and three Government Ministers before a decision was taken to go public? On what basis was 16 persons detained? [*Crosstalk*]

And the last—when will we collectively address, in earnest, our social ills of illiteracy, poverty, HIV/AIDS, health care, safety and security? When will constitutional reforms, inclusive of the prime ministerial term limits, referendum and recall become a reality? What will you do now as our representatives to ensure that our institutions—the police, DPP, Judiciary, EMA, media, BIR, et cetera—become strong, truly independent and free from political interference? When will we begin, in earnest, the process to realize economic diversification and food security? Mr. Speaker, these are some questions posted by Fixin' T&T, a non-governmental organization, which—I believe that all of these questions should be answered. [*Interruption*]

The Minister of National Security spoke about crime. He spoke about serious crimes, he spoke about the state of emergency and he boasted about a resounding success coming out from the state of emergency. But, on November 19, 2011, in the *Trinidad Guardian*, you see—whereby they called a state of emergency, being their crime plan for the reduction in crime, nonetheless—when you read the *Guardian* dated November 19, the headline: “Toll climbs as Laventille man murdered in St. Augustine, country’s 40th since the state of emergency”. What this indicates is that even under the state of emergency—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please!

Mr. N. Hypolite:—whereby they used the state of emergency as the measure to reduce crime, you still had murders taking place, 40, at least, within that period of time.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at this Motion of No Confidence in the Prime Minister, no confidence in the Member for Fyzabad, no confidence—[*Crosstalk*] No confidence—that is what I said—in this Government of today.

We also spoke about police being on the streets, more patrols and stuff like that. Question: why was the police post removed from Mango Rose, Canada, Stephenville, and even the intention of removing it from Fort Picton? *[Interruption]* While that is so, why was it removed from Brasso? While presently, the station is open from 9.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m., what happens if something takes place after 9.00 p.m.—taking into consideration that the nearest police station to that particular area is either Cunupia or that of Freeport? I am certain my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, may himself have some issues with the removal of that police post.

2.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister spoke about the reduction in crime. I want to place on record that crime and, more so, murders in Trinidad and Tobago started to go down under the People's National Movement. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Very good, very good. Keep it down.

Mr. N. Hypolite: In fact, in 2008, the murder rate was 544.

Hon. Members: “Oooh good!”

Mr. N. Hypolite: In 2009, it dropped to 509. In 2010, it dropped to 474.

Mr. Roberts: Thank you, we did that. Well done, hon. Brig. John Sandy.

Mr. N. Hypolite: In 2011, it dropped again, which means—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Well done. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. N. Hypolite:—which means, Mr. Speaker, that there would have been a natural drop in murders, and I am saying that even this year—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: You have confidence in us?

Mr. N. Hypolite:—without the present Government doing anything at all, the murder rate will drop. It is a natural flow; a natural flow that it will drop. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Members, I know it is 2.17 a.m. but at least, allow the hon. Member to speak. There is too much noise here, please, allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a natural flow. It will go down naturally; a natural flow downwards. Mr. Speaker, the People's National

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Movement would have put a foundation in place for this. [*Desk thumping*] And the Government of today dismantled most of the initiatives that we would have put in place.

Mr. Partap: And that is why it dropped?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Most of the initiatives. Crime in Trinidad and Tobago will continue to decline because of the initiatives laid down by the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] One of the things that the hon. Prime Minister— [*Interruption*]

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I have to rise again on Standing Order 40—the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What happened to him?

Mr. Roberts: But it is a natural flow.

Mr. Speaker: The Member has risen. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla your voice apparently is travelling. So keep it down. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: You are drooling.

Mr. Speaker: Continue Member for Laventille West.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister made a couple of statements throughout her campaign towards the 2010 elections. One such statement, Mr. Speaker, would have been that of no new taxes. They all on that side made mention of no new taxes. They went to the polls with that same song, no new taxes. What they did not tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago is that they have no new name for the tax system, but rather they will increase taxes as they go along. One such tax—and I wish to make mention of Cabinet Note No. 2003, of August 04, 2011—revision of certain terms and conditions of standard agricultural land leases. It states that Cabinet agreed to a reduction in the term of standard agricultural leases from a 30-year period to:

- (1) A five-year period, renewable at five-year intervals up to a maximum of 30 years for short-term crop production; and
- (2) A 10-year period renewable at 10-year intervals up to a maximum of 30 years for tree crops and livestock cultivation.
 - (B) That the parcel of land be non-transferable in the first five years of the lease being granted.
 - (C) To reduction in the minimum parcel size for state agricultural leases from five acres to three acres.

That Cabinet Note continues, Mr. Speaker, with:

- (D) To a change in the use of the open market value approach in determining annual lease rental values for state agricultural leases to that of a price of parcel farming activities approach as follows.

They said no new taxes. They never said that they would be increasing the taxes. In the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Affairs you have:

- (1) Short-term crop production under one year, \$400 per acre.
- (2) Livestock production, \$400 per acre.
- (3) Medium to long-term crop production, \$200 per acre.
- (4) Commercial leases, \$500 per acre.

It means therefore, that whereby they indicated no new taxes, we have here an increase in the taxes. We also have—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: I think that is a bombshell.

Mr. N. Hypolite: We also have, Mr. Speaker, whereby farmers—more so sheep and goat farmers—having to move from \$6 to \$500 per year for one-acre plots of land. So you have another increase taking place with this particular Government. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the people outside there would have lost confidence in the People’s Partnership Government led by the UNC, with the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar as the leader.

Mr. Speaker, the more interesting thing is what they call land and building taxes. You will remember that in 2009, the present Government of the day had a campaign against property tax. They said that should they come into office they would repeal the Property Tax Act and they would bring forward once again the Lands and Building Taxes Bill, and after two years the people of Trinidad and Tobago are still waiting on the Lands and Buildings Taxes Bill.

Hon. Member: What part of the Motion “you dealing with”?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Let us examine the Land and Buildings Taxes Bill and the Property Tax Act. When we look at the Lands and Buildings Taxes Bill it states that:

“...on every building the annual taxable value of which exceeds twenty-four dollars, an annual tax of seven and one-half per cent of such taxable value...” would be the rate.

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So therefore, under the Lands and Buildings Taxes Bill, the rate to be charged would have been 7½ per cent.

What, Mr. Speaker, is the annual taxable value? The annual taxable value means the gross annual rental value, subject only to—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Rambachan: I am trying to understand the point.

Mr. Sharma: He is not making any point.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Trying to understand the point?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Mr. N. Hypolite: You all said, through you, Mr. Speaker, that there would be no new taxes, that you would repeal the property tax and bring forth once again the land and building taxes. I am just trying to share with you that the rate to be charged for the land and building taxes is 7½ per cent of the taxable value. And this, Mr. Speaker, was a Bill that was laid in this House. Comparing that to the property tax whereby the rate would have been 3 per cent of the taxable value.

What that means, Mr. Speaker, is simply this. If someone has a property and that property has a monthly rental value of let us say, \$1,500, under the PNM's property tax system, the annual taxable value would have been \$16,200 and the annual property tax to be paid would have been \$486. If on the other hand, that same property—the annual taxable value being the same \$16,200—under the land and building tax system, the dollar value to be paid over would have been \$1,215.

2.30 a.m.

If the annual taxable value of the property, let us say, is \$43,200, meaning that the monthly rental value is \$4,000, then the annual property tax would have been \$1,296 versus that of the land and building taxes which this present Government laid in this Parliament, whereby they would have paid some \$3,240.

Let me just, for those who do not understand, repeat it. The People's National Movement had a property tax system of 3 per cent. The UNC-led Government brought forward and laid in this Parliament, after indicating to the people of Trinidad and Tobago—

Hon. Member: “Doh go so fast.” Slow down.

Miss Cox: “Take yuh time.” *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. N. Hypolite: Let us go again. Mr. Speaker, the People's National Movement had a property tax system whereby the rate would have been 3 per

cent. The Government of today, in 2009, said no new taxes. That is what they said: no new taxes.

Hon. Member: They said no to the PNM.

Mr. N. Hypolite: They said that should they come into office they will repeal the property tax of 3 per cent and they will go right back to the land and building tax system, but what they did not tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago then—which means that they would have deceived the people of Trinidad and Tobago—was that they would have increased the tax to 7½ per cent.

Therefore, you all laid the Bill in Parliament and if it was not for the Member for Diego Martin West it would have been debated and passed in this House, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Interruption*] Yes, we have to say thanks to the Member for Diego Martin West. The people of Trinidad and Tobago whose annual taxable value would have been \$16,200 would have been paying \$1,215 under the land and building tax system, rather than \$486 under the property tax system. And if their annual taxable value was \$32,400, they would have been paying \$2,430 under the land and building tax system, rather than \$972 under the property tax system.

Mr. Sharma: “If yuh living Moruga, how much you pay?”

Mr. N. Hypolite: If they were living Moruga, they would have paid \$810 under the property tax rather than \$2,025 under the land and building tax of this particular Government.

Mr. Warner: “If they living Cuchawan Trace”, how much they pay?

Mr. N. Hypolite: “If they living Cuchawan Trace?” So this Government continues to deceive the people. They continue to be dishonest to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is why the people of Trinidad and Tobago have lost confidence in this particular Government. Just last month we debated to increase the water rates down in Point Lisas, and we are still waiting on answers as to the owners of the desalination plant, who are receiving taxpayers’ moneys from that increase. We are still waiting on that.

Let us look at unemployment. The unemployment rate in 2009 was as low as 5 per cent.

Mr. Sharma: How much is it now?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Tell me. In 2009: 5 per cent. To date, I am certain it is heading well into double figures, and the sad thing about it is that Members on that side cannot tell this country what is the present unemployment rate.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, on a point of clarification—information, sorry. Could the Member say where he is quoting his figures from? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: No, no, no.

Mr. Roberts: “But yuh gave way already.”

Mr. Speaker: Now, that is the problem. The moment you sat, you would have given way to the hon.—

Miss Cox: He said, “Mr. Speaker”.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, he said, “Mr. Speaker”. But, listen, he does not want to give way. Continue, Member for Laventille West.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Rambachan: It is not double digit at all.

Hon. Member: “Doh listen tuh him.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: In 2009, the fourth quarter was 5.1 per cent; the third quarter, 5.8 per cent; second quarter, 5.1 per cent, and the first quarter, 5 per cent, and to date the Government still cannot tell us what is the unemployment rate.

Dr. Rambachan: The Central Bank forecast 5 per cent for 2012.

Mr. N. Hypolite: As far as I am aware, and as far as the CIA World Fact Book has quoted a figure of 7.5 per cent and it continues to increase because of the number of persons who continue to lose their jobs on a daily basis.

The Prime Minister once indicated: “No job loss.” You saw, “Contract workers cry discrimination”. “50 PNM litter wardens get the axe, sacked!” “Fired CEPEP workers cry political bias”. “Rowley: Hundreds in CEPEP to lose jobs”.

Mr. Sharma: Rowley know you have yours?

Mr. N. Hypolite: You also read things like: “Contract CEPEP and URP workers crying political victimization”. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss McDonald: “You gimme a CEPEP contract, Sir? You know I have a CEPEP contract? What you telling me in this House? Mr. Speaker, no, I doh like this. They serious. De next thing dis thing get outta hand that I have CEPEP contract.”

Mr. Speaker: Members, please. Allow the Member for Laventille West—and forget the crosstalk. Member for Laventille West, continue, please.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, the Members on that side—this is a joke for them, you know. Everything is a joke for them. [*Crosstalk*] They sit across there and they are shouting across the floor that the hon. Member for Port of Spain South has a CEPEP contract and the Member for Laventille West has a CEPEP contract.

Hon. Member: No, we never said that! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Let me say that while the Members, such as the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara will sit there and say things like that, and the Member for Chaguanas West can sit there and say the same thing, maybe the Member for Chaguanas West can tell us who is Doreen Warner-Brown—

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of clarification because I think this is rather serious, and what might have started as a joke is now in the public domain because people are looking at us. Mr. Speaker, I want to put on *Hansard* and I want the national community to know, I have no CEPEP contract. Absolutely none! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: “Laventille West”, do the same now.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, Nileung Hypolite does not have any CEPEP contract.

Mr. Sharma: You have two.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Let me also say that while they on that side sit there and make a big joke of all of these things, maybe they can tell us who is Doreen Warner-Brown.

Mr. Warner: “Why yuh didn’t ask her?”

Mr. Speaker: Before you go to Doreen, the Member’s speaking time has expired.

Motion made: That the Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Warner: Who is Doreen Warner-Brown?

Mr. N. Hypolite: “I doh know.” Maybe you can tell us who is that, and who is Rabindra Moonan? Maybe you could tell us who are those persons. There are a lot more.

Mr. Sharma: You have nothing else to say. Tell them you have two CEPEP contracts.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, there are also a lot of friends and family members related to Members on that side—

Dr. Rowley: And Senators.

Mr. N. Hypolite: “Rabindra Moonan is a Senator?”

Dr. Rowley: A UNC Senator.

Mr. N. Hypolite: As well as even police officers—

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). The Member is saying that Members opposite have friends and family and so on as CEPEP contractors.

Hon. Member: That is not true?

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Rabindra Moonan is not a CEPEP contractor.

Mr. Speaker: Member, if you want to elaborate on the matter that you have raised you are free to do that because we have a substantive Motion—

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Member saying that the CEPEP contractors, absolutely none of them are friends and/or family?

Mr. Sharma: “What foolishness yuh talking?”

Mr. N. Hypolite: The Member for Fyzabad is disturbing me, Mr. Speaker. He has nothing to say.

2.45 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: He has not spoken, so we do not know if he has anything to say. But, I take your point and appeal to the Member for Fyzabad to allow the Member for Laventille West to speak in silence please. Hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He continues to chat and chat on that side. Maybe he can tell us who is the person responsible for the sporting equipment for all of those various fields outside there?

Mr. Sharma: I can tell you—

Mr. N. Hypolite: Maybe he can tell us who is responsible for outfitting the Chaguanas administrative building. Maybe he can tell us what is the relationship between his brother and the contracts being granted outside there? Maybe he can tell us—

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker 36(5), he is imputing improper motives to a Member of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Again, he is asking questions. And, I am saying that we are dealing with a substantive Motion; the Member for Fyzabad would take note.

Mr. Sharma: Can I answer it now?

Mr. Speaker: No, if he gives way.

Mr. Sharma: Are you giving way?

Mr. Speaker: But, certainly you would have a chance to rebut. Hon. Member, do you want to give way?

Mr. N. Hypolite: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, well, then continue.

Mr. Sharma: “How much CEPEP contracts you have?”

Mr. Speaker: Member for Fyzabad, please.

Mr. N. Hypolite: The house in Canada, it got firebombed?

Mr. Speaker: Member, address me please.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to know, I just heard something about a fight in the Hilton, I wanted to know if everything was okay with his—[*Interruption*] [*Inaudible*] I am only trying to find out. Who is the contractor responsible for the recreation grounds and the supplying of the equipment for the recreation grounds throughout the regional corporations? I would like to know—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: All or any specific ones?

Mr. N. Hypolite:—who is responsible.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Seeing that the Minister of Local Government, the Member for Fyzabad, has so much to say—which is absolutely nothing—he probably needs to go down to San Fernando and solve the infighting that is taking place down there.

Mr. Sharma: Which part?

Mr. N. Hypolite: In the city corporation. He needs to go into Diego Martin corporation and solve the issues down there instead of coming into this House and just chattering.

Mr. Sharma: One Louis Lee Sing.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Yes, he needs to go and talk to Louis Lee Sing and build a relationship with Louis Lee Sing, so that you all would stop fighting in the public domain. He needs to go into Tunapuna and solve the infighting up there. Those are things that he needs to do rather than come inside here and make these kinds of unnecessary and disturbing remarks.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Fyzabad, please.

Mr. N. Hypolite: He needs to treat with the East Port of Spain Development Company and probably give to the East Port of Spain Development Company the money that they have been asking for, for the past year-and-a-half to start developing the East Port of Spain area. He needs to answer the question or the questions pertaining to the Arima Dial.

Mr. Sharma: What about it?

Mr. N. Hypolite: What the Member for Fyzabad needs to do is what the Member for Chaguanas does.

Mr. Sharma: Which is?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Work. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Thank you.

Mr. N. Hypolite: That is what you need to do. Work.

Mr. Cadiz: Which Chaguanas?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Not you. The Member for Chaguanas West, not you.

Mr. Cadiz: Just wanted to make sure.

Mr. N. Hypolite: We walked through your community, your constituency, and they made it quite clear, they do not want you back there.

Hon. Member: Why, “because he white”? [*Laughter*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: And, that is one reason for this Motion—because the people outside there just do not want some of the Members that they have representing them at this point in time.

Hon. Member: Louis Lee Sing “do not want you.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: And, I do not want Louis Lee Sing either.

Hon. Members: Oooh! [*Laughter*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, Laventille West is in need. We are in need of a number of things—roads, drains, community centres. This is a Government that indicated that they are for all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am once again, on behalf of the people of Laventille, putting forward a plea to the Members on that side, that the people in Laventille are people also. And, to the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, the Member for Chaguanas West, we need roads in Laventille fixed also. So, there is no need to spend 96 per cent of your budget in Siparia, Barrackpore and Oropouche alone. Remember there is Laventille, there is Diego Martin and there is Port of Spain. We need also.

To the Member for Naparima, there are community centres. There is the Beetham Community Centre. Do you know where the Beetham Community Centre is? There is the Pelican Extension Community Centre. We need to get those community centres fixed. For the Member for Fyzabad—

Mr. Sharma: “Whey yuh want?”

Mr. N. Hypolite: When he starts to work like the Member for Chaguanas West, remember we have a lot of recreation grounds in Laventille. [*Interruption*] You know where Trinidad is?

Mr. Sharma: No.

Mr. N. Hypolite: “You sure right.” A lot of recreation grounds.

For the Member for Oropouche East, in terms of houses, Mr. Speaker, in terms of houses—I have a letter in my possession and with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave the individual’s name out, if possible.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Date, address and name.

Mr. Sharma: You have their permission?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Yes. A. Joseph. Apartment 306, Building C, Charford Court, Charlotte St. Dear. Sir/Madam—

Dr. Moonilal: Date. What is the date?

Mr. N. Hypolite: November 23, 2007. This is a letter that indicates that Mr. Joseph has been given an apartment on a rental basis and he is to pay \$1,000 a month rent.

Dr. Moonilal: How long is he there?

Mr. N. Hypolite: This letter is dated 2007.

Dr. Moonilal: Do you know how long he is there? Fourteen years. I know the story.

Mr. N. Hypolite: This is not only on his behalf but on many others'. The second letter is dated February 08, 2012.

Mr. Warner: Where is the first letter?

Mr. N. Hypolite: The mere fact that he is renting at a value of \$1,000—renting. The second letter deals with the purchase of property. The letter reads as follows:

“RE: OFFER TO PURCHASE PROPERTY SITUATE AT MENDEZ DRIVE. The Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation (‘the Corporation’) wishes to regularize your tenancy, we are therefore pleased to provide you with the offer to purchase the unit situate at Unit 1-3 Almanzor Building Mendez Drive. Please be advised that the cost of the unit is Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$250,000.00).

You are hereby required to visit the Corporation on Friday 16, March 2012 at 8.30 am to commence the administrative process of your purchase transaction.”

Mr. Sharma: What is the problem?

Mr. N. Hypolite: The problem with this, Mr. Speaker, and it is to the Minister of Housing and the Environment, there are a number of these letters outside there to a number of individuals. What is happening is that these people, as much as they are paying \$800 and \$1,000 in rent, they find it very hard. Some of them cannot afford to purchase. What makes it even worse is that they are given 90 days, and a very key part of the letter is:

“It is imperative to note your failure to accept our offer will jeopardize your tenancy and consequently your occupation of the captioned unit.”

What will happen there is that these people are crying that the possibility of them being put out from where they are and not have anywhere to stay is a great possibility, if they do not pay the \$250,000.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, hon. Member, for giving way. I am aware of the letter. In fact, I am aware of the exact case of Mr. Joseph. Very briefly, what has happened over the years is that the Housing Development Corporation formerly the NHA, has under its mandate several dozens of very small orphan communities—very small settlements with two or three houses on a street

and so on. And, because they are rental, the HDC maintains them; they pay a lot of maintenance on small homes throughout—in San Fernando, Point Fortin and the East-West Corridor. The policy is that we would offer persons who have been renting for many years the opportunity to buy it. So, they can purchase by mortgage the home and then they undertake the maintenance themselves.

However, if persons for one reason or the other—and I believe Mr. Joseph is an elderly person a pensioner, I think—if they cannot, the HDC is in a position where we would offer a similar rental arrangement elsewhere, in an estate, where we maintain the estate as a whole, as opposed to maintaining very small settlements of five houses and six houses scattered throughout Trinidad and Tobago, which is a serious cost to the HDC as well. So, they have an option.

No one that we have written to—and letters like that have gone to several people—would be put out, I assure you. No one would be on the street. But, we would like to work with those people to offer them alternative rental, for any reason they cannot purchase.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, I move on. The Prime Minister also said that she was going to create a Ministry called the Ministry of the People and Social Development, and, after that Ministry is formed, gone are the days of protest and the burning of tyres and all those different things. Mr. Speaker, I am almost to the end, but I cannot leave without making mention of January 08, 2011.

3.00 a.m.

A young lady 103 years old, celebrating her birthday, sent an invitation to the Minister of the People and Social Development, and the Minister accepted the invitation and he was there. He enjoyed himself; he hugged her up; he kissed her up; he had the cameras all over her—cameras all over. And that lady, Mr. Speaker, has a house that is falling apart and he promised that 103-year-old lady that he will assist her. That was in 2011.

On January 08, 2012, on her 104th birthday, invitation sent again, he did not go. He did not go. Mr. Speaker, I intervened and I said to him, “My friend, what happen? You got the invitation, why did you not show?” He said to me, “Boy, I didn’t fulfil my obligation in trying to fix the woman house and as such I decided not to attend. Nonetheless, thanks, thanks, thanks for not going to the media with it.”

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of representation that the people are getting and the fooling that is taking place outside here. As I close off with that, Mr. Speaker,

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you have things like “Highway protesters picket PM’s home”, “TSTT workers protest for better medical plan”, “Parents at Febeau School in no man’s land”, and as such they are protesting. You have, “Missing in action”, “A fiery protest at Penal Rock Road”. That is the Prime Minister’s constituency. You have even a headline in one of the newspapers, you know, “Hindus not pleased with the PM’s calf skin sneakers”.

Mr. Speaker, the public which has put trust in the democratic process expects nothing less than justice. They are looking on and listening. As I join with the people of Trinidad and Tobago, what do we seek? Mr. Speaker, we seek nothing less than honesty and truth in Government reports and answers; nothing less than equity, inclusion and equal share of this country’s resources; nothing less than quality governance by Government about the nation’s business. Governance in Trinidad and Tobago must at all times focus on the development of the people, the nation, the future of our children, the security of the elders to live in dignity, a fair wage for workers, justice and opportunities for all.

Mr. Speaker, let us do right for Trinidad and Tobago. Let every creed and race find an equal place and may God bless our nation. I close, with a quote from Aristotle: “The price of justice is eternal publicity. It is in justice that the ordering of society is centred.” I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Dr. Delmon Baker):
Mr. Speaker, let me thank you for the opportunity to join this debate. Indeed it is the wee hours of Saturday morning, 3.04, the typical period during which I am observing my Sabbath resting, but because of the importance of the Motion brought before the House, we on the Government side, in unanimous support of the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, came in response to the Motion and to let the people of Trinidad and Tobago know of the tremendous work that this Government has done over the last two years, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, in aid of the last statement made by the hon. Member for Laventille West, let me indicate—well, much to the pleasure of the elderly female, 104 years old—that the Minister of the People and Social Development has indicated that he had spoken to her MP with regard to the elderly lady, of assisting her in completing the renovation works at the house, which would cost more than the current housing grant of \$15,000.

In fact, the Minister had indicated to her MP that he wanted to use the services of the URP Social to bring that work to completion. Because of the processes

involved in Government systems, which the member for Diego Martin Central should be aware of, sometimes these things take a little longer than we plan or like. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Lies.

Mr. Speaker: Member, withdraw that.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, continue.

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In giving my gratitude for the privilege of standing here to represent the people of Tobago West, we took the time to make a few brief notes as to some of the statements being made in the House either yesterday or earlier this morning.

Mr. Speaker, what is remarkable is that at this point in time, we have perhaps one of the most serious debates occurring on the question of confidence, brought by perhaps the most unpopular leader of the PNM on the minority side, against one of the most popular Prime Ministers of Trinidad and Tobago. That was evidenced when I looked out of my window at the office this morning and this afternoon. I saw the huge crowd in yellow—Trinidadians and Tobagonians in white, in yellow, in green coming to the Parliament, even though one leader, afraid of seeing the numbers that were perhaps wearing another color, perhaps red, told them to stay home because there was no space.

Mr. Speaker, the people who prided themselves in constructing the Complex and the Waterfront forgot that there was more than enough space to accommodate over 1,000 people around the fountain on the outside, and those people that came, came in support of the Prime Minister and the Government which she leads.

Mr. Speaker, this happened without the insistence that was normally attending those from the other side, where they told CEPEP workers if they did not come out to their rallies, and so on, they will use their jobs. I have a very good example of that. At the opening of the Tobago Technology Centre just last year, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, in addition to other members of her Government, came to that gala event and in attendance was the hon. Orville London, Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Outside that opening, a most unusual occurrence was in place, where CEPEP workers were told if they did not turn out to the event to raise placards against the

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Prime Minister, they would lose their jobs immediately and they were ordered to come out in the hot sun to wave placards against a Prime Minister who they actually did like. Now, I spoke to some of them on the street at the time.

That is not the approach of this Government, and as you would have noticed over the past three days, supporters came on their own to demonstrate confidence in a Government that is seeking after the interests of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. In that regard, why do these people have so much confidence in this Government? What are the changes occurring in let us say, Tobago West, Tobago East, Caroni East or in Diego Martin North/East? I saw a wonderful crowd in Diamond Vale. The only person that may have been troubled that evening was the one gentleman in red in the cage, for which some comments were made in this honourable House, Mr. Speaker.

If I am to look at my own constituency, that of Tobago West, then I can understand in part and in whole why there is so much support for this Government. When we came into office in 2010, we met a fragmented society that was in the grips of a Government that was in confusion. You did not know who the leader was, and I must, Mr. Speaker, at the outset warn the political party that sits in opposition, because if you regarded there to be a mistake in the missteps made by the previous leader of the PNM, they must be warned soundly that the missteps are being made by the current leader of the PNM and that they are also following him blindly. And if the people dismissed that former leader once, they will also dismiss your current leader.

So, if Louis or the Member for Diego Martin Central or the Member for Diego Martin North/East understands what is going on, there is a vacancy in the position of leader of the PNM and I ask you to begin your campaigns.

Look at what is happening in Tobago: we now have flying between both islands two ATRs—brand new for the people of Tobago—and that has increased the capacity from 50 seaters to now 75 seaters. In addition, this Government has brought a refurbishment of both the lights on the runway and the runway itself. That is a Government that is working for its people. When the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, the hon. Member for Chaguanas West, visited Tobago to see the runway, I was there with him, and we saw the deterioration on the runway—cracks—and we understood what the consequences would have been if there was an adverse event on the runway at that time with one plane.

Tobago was already reeling from a crisis that was occasioned by the fall in arrivals to the island by some 68 to 71 per cent over the last five or six years.

Therefore, one more adverse event would have caused a catastrophe from which we could not have recovered easily. The Minister of Works and Infrastructure at the time acted quickly and responsibly to fix or to remedy the problem.

What did the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly do at that time? He attacked the hon. Minister for caring and for working in the interest of the people of Tobago, and that is disgraceful. That is why you now have two members of the coalition Government from the Tobago Organisation of the People. That is confidence, Mr. Speaker.

I can continue. In addition to new airplanes, we now have an airport that is open 24 hours. This was the first year, Mr. Speaker, that I as the MP for Tobago West—and I sure the Member for Tobago East can support me—was the first year that we did not receive calls from groups trying to travel to Tobago that could not get on to a flight, because there were flights going to Tobago 24 hours a day. The airport was open for the first time for business.

In fact, there is a 2.30 flight which just probably left. So MPs now can leave the Parliament Chamber at 12.00 in the night and still catch a flight to get back to their constituents in Tobago. That is service.

Mr. Speaker, the airport is now renamed the ANR Robinson International Airport, in recognition of the sterling work done by that former Prime Minister, a good Prime Minister then, and now we have an even greater Prime Minister in office.

I can go on and we can take my constituency village by village and show all of the good work that has brought the people in support of the TOP and of its membership in this Government of Trinidad and Tobago. If you look at what is happening in Signal Hill, and I must congratulate, under the leadership of the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the work of the Minister of Health in Tobago.

For as long as I knew myself, we were accustomed to seeking medical attention in what could only be described as “Fourth World”—you cannot call it Third World—conditions that were so unbelievable that patients in our waiting area had to endure even the weather—rain in the waiting area to get into the hospital; no x-ray machines that were functioning; no ultrasound machine or technician on the island.

We had an old facility that served as a fort and an administration that came into office on the ideals that Tobago would get what Tobago wanted. And after \$20 billion, Mr. Speaker, and 12 years in office, the people of Tobago languished

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for First World health care. In fact, if you were one of those who had a broken ankle, leg, foot, arm, you were flown by chopper to Trinidad if the service was available. If it was not, you had to wait in Tobago until a doctor came from Trinidad into Tobago, sometimes months later.

I am pleased to advise this honourable House that, by the commitment of the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, the hospital for Tobago at Signal Hill will be commissioned soon after Easter this year. Mr. Speaker, there is more. If you look at what has happened in Lowlands/Canaan, and I must say even the Chief Secretary is smiling. So, Member for Diego Martin Central, some of the same concerns you shared here this evening, we shared with you, we understood and we are now seeing positive changes for those.

Central to the recovery of the Tobago tourism sector was the plan that you had to increase room stock on the island. In fact, the proposal was to increase the room stock by 1,500 rooms to make it a marketable destination for international arrivals to come back into the island. The centerpiece of this proposal was the hotel that was called Magdalena Grand, and I am pleased with the work of the hon. Member for Chaguanas East, the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, who came through the “burgesses” of e TecK to the aid of the Tobago tourism sector to bolster the numbers of first-class rooms on the island.

We had lost that capacity for some five years, because at the same time the hotel was closed, Tobago had begun to see the effects of the economic slowdown and the tragedy that came with September 11. The idea was you had to have these first-class rooms to attract the first half of your flights coming into Tobago, international arrivals, in which case you can pay for the rest of the plane and you bring those people who can spend money at the destination.

With the investment of over \$100 million for the refurbishment of this hotel, we have seen in December the hotel was opened and is now available for business. In fact, bookings for Easter show that the hotel will be completely full around that time, and for this the people of Tobago West are excited and grateful. Business is coming back into Tobago, and if I am to observe the trends that are happening in January and in February, even arrival numbers are up slightly and we hope that that trend will continue, Mr. Speaker.

In Scarborough—Scarborough was known as the “shanty town” in Trinidad and Tobago. When you looked around, we were in a phase of construction of buildings that were never completed. The Scarborough library—I was telling the current contractor that this is the only library that you can see in the world that is

in pictures, in the movies. Year after year, for almost an entire decade, you saw a picture posted on one of the walls and you saw below, “Coming soon, the Scarborough Regional Library”. And the movie got updated from 2-D to 3-D, because we found out that in the construction of the library, not enough augering was done. The building became too heavy, and instead of the library, we were importing into Tobago the second Leaning Tower of Pisa.

The engineering solution was to break down the walls inside the library and redesign the building to include the glass, which—if they had listened to the minority side of the Tobago House of Assembly—would have been the first step that they would have taken in the design of the building.

We have an administration in Tobago that is plagued with the same evil that the current PNM is plagued with—arrogance. They seem to be suffering from the same disease year in, year out, and if they do not have the services of a medical practitioner that sits with them, then I fear that they will never recover from that disease, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at Scarborough, we have a port that I am pleased to say—with the assistance of the Minister of Transport—we will begin renovation works before December. That should be completed before December this year, in addition to which, discussions have already begun at the Ministry of Finance to include in Scarborough for the first time some duty-free shopping. So as our visitors come, they can take advantage of these new stores being placed in Scarborough and of course at the Crown Point International Airport there.

This is a Government that is working on behalf of the people of Trinidad, as well as the people of Tobago, and we will not stop there. Despite the complaints of the side in Government in Tobago, the people have been asking for services that we at the central Government will ensure are provided for them.

In southwest—now they had this complaint that Baker called the Buccoo Integrated Facility a “goat pen”. Remember we had mentioned that in the last discussion that I had with the budget of 2010, and I indicated then that the reason why I went to pains to describe the facility as it was, is because of the damage it caused to the natural drainage area on the western end of the island.

By raising the land area by some four feet, what you did was create a pond and allowed water to collect just behind the integrated facility’s compound, all through the land area, that is now formed into a bowl, preventing the natural flow of water off Tobago West. That has caused some ecological problems, and if you

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understand where that area is placed—it is just off the Buccoo Reef—and with the loss of that natural flow, we are seeing some environmental degradation of the area called Buccoo Reef, which is one of Tobago’s wonders.

Mr. Speaker, if we do nothing in the short term to protect the Buccoo Reef, then I fear that a generation that is to come will not have the same benefit that you and I have when we go to the reef and relax in that space. What has this caring Government done?

Mr. Sharma: Will this affect the “pacro water”?

Hon. Dr. D. Baker: It will. I am pleased to advise that with the signing of the IDB loan in South America that occurred a month ago, that the Water and Sewerage Authority now has access to funding of upwards of \$50 million to complete the sewerage treatment plant for that area. That sewerage treatment plant has been on the books of the THA for the last 12 years, and it took the caring of the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar to ensure that Tobago truly gets the environmental protection that will keep the island’s mantra, “clean, green, safe and serene”, something that we can all be proud about.

Mr. Speaker, change has come to Trinidad and I assure you change will also come to the people of Tobago. I am sad, though, because we were expecting bombshells, new information, something that was substantial from the son of our soil—a Tobagonian, a member of my own family, for whom I must keep that now a secret because I am so disappointed, Mr. Speaker. Instead of bombs, we got eggs, but unfortunately the eggs did not land on this side. They landed on the few remaining soldiers that are on that side.

I end with a warning. If you notice what happened in your past, you must learn from those mistakes and make sure that they do not inhibit your future progress. Change will come to Laventille West, Diego Martin Central, St. Ann’s East, Arouca/Maloney and Point Fortin. It will come because you will sit and do nothing when your leader makes his mistakes. I urge you as you meet in council to make the one move that may save your reputation: change him or else.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Joanne Thomas (*St. Ann’s East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, we wanted to take a little half an hour break and when we return, you will begin afresh. So we will take a break at this time and we shall return at 4.00. Okay? So this sitting is now suspended until 4.00 a.m.

3.28 a.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

4.00 a.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mrs. J. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let me first say good morning to my constituents and the citizens who would have stayed up all night to watch this debate.

Mr. Sharma: Say good morning to us.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Good morning to my colleagues. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened to the hon. Member for Tobago West, and I want to first ask him: do his constituents have confidence in him? Because I heard him speak about the hotel and the occupancy rate, and that it is supposed to be increased. His constituents have some concerns as regards when the expansion work on the airport should begin.

It was targeted to begin August 2011, as well as they are still waiting on the first-class lounge; that work is supposed to commence as well as the runway. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they too have some concerns as regards Tobago being one of our main sources of tourism. When would work begin on the airport as well as the runway? So, I want to ask the hon. Member—this is something that his constituents are waiting on and this needs to be addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this morning, I just want to take a look at the Ministry of Trade and Industry. I want to first take a look at the current holder of the office of Minister in that Ministry. [*Interruption*] As we know, this hon. Minister first came into public life through his social activism in mid-2005, and following the death of his employee Keith Noel, he formed the Keith Noel 136 Committee. Of course, it is no secret of the activities of this committee with one of the more prominent activities being the famous Death March against crime.

Of course, it was not long after that he entered the political ring. I sometimes reflect and I say maybe this was his objective all along, [*Desk thumping*] and he just used this committee as a stepping stone to where he really wanted to go. I would not delve too much into the committee's activities, but I want to ask the Minister a question—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Cadiz: “You want me to answer one time?”

Mrs. J. Thomas: No, no. When last did he visit Keith Noel's family? [*Desk thumping*] Because that is how he came into public life, you know, he showed

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care and concern. I wonder now that he has reached where he was really aiming for, if the family is still of concern to him.

I want to focus a little on the Daniel Decree. Do you remember that story with little Daniel? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the hon. Prime Minister has a big heart, and, as a mother, she reaches out to assist especially when they relate to children. As regards Daniel, her response was immediate and she came up with the initiative of a committee which she asked two of her Ministers to head. I just want to quote from the *Newsday* article entitled “We failed you”, and it is dated March 02, 2011. She said committees led by Trade and Industry Minister Stephen Cadiz and People and Social Development Minister will be established to implement the Daniel Decree.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister had also explained that this was also an educational programme through which the public will target specific groups such as children to learn how to better secure and protect themselves and their environments. I want to ask the hon. Ministers: can they tell us something about this initiative? This was almost one year ago.

I want to ask the said hon. Minister of Trade and Industry: what has he done for the citizens of this country? What has he brought to the table that can lay a future for the next generation? I want to refer to an article in the *TnT Mirror* dated October 02, 2011. It reads:

“Companies owned by the family of Trade and Industry Minister Stephen Cadiz have seen a significant increase in Government contracts since the change in administration, but the Minister claims he has had nothing to do with this seeming good fortune.”

The *TnT Mirror* also cited:

“...that Cadiz’s company, The Power Outlet Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tropical Power Holdings Limited...has recently been awarded two substantial contracts to repair and upgrade schools. According to reports, the contracts were awarded by the Education Facilities Company Limited under Government’s Public Sector Investment Programme, amounting to \$1.445 million to repair Toco Secondary School, and \$184,600 to repair and upgrade Blanchisseuse Primary School.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on top of that:

“It was also learnt that the Cadiz family-owned businesses, which previously operated in the provision of stand-by generators and equipment and also tool

rentals, has secured lucrative contracts with state-owned Petrotrin for engineering jobs.”

It was also learnt:

“...that instead of putting his investment in a blind trust”—which is the normal—“Cadiz chose to transfer his shares to his”—family. So they—“now hold[s] 584,370 ordinary shares of the total issued capital of Tropical Power’s 734,370 ordinary shares.”

And, you know what is also so interesting? The hon. Minister confirmed that while the Power Outlet Limited mainly sold tools and construction equipment, over the years, the nature of the business has changed in that they are involved in construction and engineering. How convenient!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I refer to the *Hansard* document for the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2011, and I have a few questions that I would like to ask the hon. Minister. In the hon. Minister’s contribution, he mentioned that his Ministry’s work plan for fiscal 2011 would focus on the implementation of agreements already negotiated and he referred to the Canadian Caricom Trade and Development Agreement.

He further reiterated that conversations with their counterpart in Ontario had already taken place, and that he was committed to having this trade agreement completed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask the hon. Minister if he can let the population know what is the status of this agreement? I also wish to enquire about the Caricom-Cuba Bilateral Trade Agreement, and also the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between CARIFORUM and the European Union as well as the World Trade Organization Agreements.

Another matter that was of great interest to me is a statement that was made by the hon. Minister in the said budget contribution and I quote:

“The Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to represent the interests of local manufacturers and businesses of the trade complaints at the Council for Trade and Economic Development, that is COTED...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask: is this representing the local manufacturers’ interest?

Hon. Member: Absolutely not!

Mrs. J. Thomas: I spoke to the TTMA trade desk just yesterday and they confirmed that this council does, in fact, exist. But, who is aware of this council? I spoke to some key representatives in the manufacturing sector and they are none

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the wiser of this council. Let us say some of them who are aware do, in fact, make complaints. I ask the question: how are these complaints addressed?

4.15 a.m.

I ask this question, not just for my own information but for the citizens and, more so, the manufacturers. I leave these questions. Maybe when the Minister speaks, he will give me the answers. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: WASA water.

Mrs. J. Thomas: I see your colleague is drinking the WASA water. This is good.

Mr. Cadiz: Everybody on this side is drinking WASA water.

Mrs. J. Thomas: “So like is WASA must be approve for this to come here too.”

Mr. Roberts: No, that is the Speaker. You have to talk to him.

Mrs. J. Thomas: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to touch a bit on the tourism sector. When I went on—the Minister is not here now, but I wanted to tell him—the Parliament website to check some information I saw his profile and I reached down to some personal data. I want to tell him that he looks good for his age. I was really, really surprised. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnarine: Who is that?

Mrs. J. Thomas: The Minister of Tourism, not you. Do not get worried.

Mr. Sharma: When you say he looks good, what do you mean?

Mrs. J. Thomas: That is the question. One thing I want to tell the Minister is that he has good insight for choosing the right political party to embark on his political career, because now this Government is benefiting from the contributions that he has made, because of where he was schooled with regard to his political career—[*Interruption*] the People’s National Movement. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Minister is the Government Minister representing the area of Toco/Sangre Grande. I want to refer to an article which begins with the words:

“GRIFFITH, Griffith; fix we road; fix it, fix it,”

Mr. Sharma: Which newspaper?

Mr. Roberts: Griffith working for Coosal’s now.

Mrs. J. Thomas: The *TnT Mirror*. These words were the cries of scores of protestors from villagers from Toco to Matelot as they staged a second blockage of the roadway to highlight its appalling state of disrepair.

“The protestors vowed not to move until they saw Dr Griffith, who they criticised as a ‘waste of time’ and who was accused of ignoring the cries for his assistance to have the road repaired.

‘This a political grievance,’ declared protester Felix Charles, who broke the tension during the morning when he declared with a straight face that an alligator had been found living in a pothole on the Paria Main Road.”

And this is the area of a Government Minister. I put it to you, if this is a Government Minister and the people he represents are crying out like this, one can then imagine what has to become of the areas which we on this side represent.

There are a couple of questions that I would like to ask the Minister. One of them is: can the Minister tell us something about the Valencia Visitor Arrival Centre? We are aware that about \$1.2 million of taxpayers’ money was spent on the first phase of this centre. Of course, it was opened with much fanfare by the hon. Prime Minister. Information received indicated that the centre was touted as being open around the clock. But information from the community suggests that it closes on weekends and does not open at nights. I ask the Minister to tell us something about this centre.

I want to ask the Minister something. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Ask me something, please.

Mrs. J. Thomas: We all remember the whole Resmi hiring affair, the appointment of the CEO for WASA and the appointment of Miss Susan Francois. I want to go to the appointment of Mr. Ramsaran as the new TDC Sport Tourism Manager. Word on the ground is that the position was advertised, however no interviews were conducted but the appointment was effective. Is this how appointments are done at the TDC, under the leadership of the hon. Minister? I must let you know—this in no way questions Mr. Ramsaran’s credentials, but it seems that the recruitment process is a new system that is showing its head in all the various Ministries.

This hon. Minister was part of a delegation to India. It was noted that the Minister’s inclusion in the delegation was for the purpose of attracting investment and tourism for this country. I want to ask the Minister if he can give an account of what the country can expect from this trip because I doubt that he too went to check his roots. I doubt that.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I doubt that too.

Miss Hospedales: I doubt that as well.

Mr. Sharma: Why are you all implying racial things; check your roots? “Wah wrong wid dat? Whey yuh wah we check, yuh hair?”

Mrs. J. Thomas: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to remind the Minister a bit. I divert to my constituency and refer to one of the initiatives mentioned for his five-year tourism plan. In his budget debate contribution the Minister outlined a number of measures to improve tourism, including:

- (i) agro tourism;
- (ii) business tourism;
- (iii) domestic tourism;
- (iv) maximizing local festivals and developing community tourism by working with village councils, tourism action groups and regional corporations.

There were several projects in the north coast area, highlighted to the Minister. In his last budget contribution, he gave the assurance that these matters will be attended to. I again take this opportunity to remind the Minister of Fort Abercromby at Las Cuevas, Maracas Bay car park facilities, the sanitation issues highlighted by the bake and shark vendors, the Las Cuevas community-owned endangered golden frog, turtle and other species protection. The people are losing confidence in this Government.

Tourism in this country has gone nowhere. However, the Minister holding office has gone places. The citizens of this country are calling for accountability and I want to support my political leader and the Members on this side in the No Confidence Motion. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism (Hon. Winston Peters): Thank you very much Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a long night into morning and I have no intention of detaining us here any longer than I have to, which is not going to be very long. The Member for Diego Martin West’s contribution was so vacuous and annoyingly repetitious that he had to revert, at one point in time, to the price of tickets that Ministers paid to go to a party.

I view today’s exercise as a total abuse of parliamentary time brought about by the machinations of someone who is totally misled and ill-advised. A leader is elected by the people to lead. First, that leader is elected by the membership to

become the leader of the party and after that, that leader, he or she, whoever it may be, is elected by the masses to become either President or Prime Minister, depending on the system under which your country operates. In this case, it is our Prime Minister. It depends on the performance of that Prime Minister, or President, that the love for that Prime Minister either diminishes or grows. In this case, the love for our Prime Minister continues to grow. [*Desk thumping*]

At the same time, there will always be people who would not like you. Regardless of what you do and how good that may be, they still would not like you, especially when the people are perennially and diametrically opposed to you politically.

The Member for Diego Martin West has been listening to too many of these persons and brought to this Parliament this vacuous No Confidence Motion, which I am sure by now he is rueing the day he ever did that. I am sure by now, having had time to contemplate the ways that he has imposed on his—what is he to you all? Is he your leader—some of the people whom he leads on that side. I am not here this morning to really go into all the things and regurgitate a lot of what we have been hearing from yesterday afternoon into this morning.

Let me say, while some people find it fit to sit and criticize, without any solution as to how we should go forward as a country, there are those of us who continue to work. There are those of us whom the people have put here to represent them and we do that in a manner that the people who put us here to represent them feel proud of.

4.30 a.m.

The people who put us here to represent them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, continue to have confidence in our Prime Minister whom I can tell you is a hard taskmaster, and who ensures that her MPs and her Ministers whom she put there to do their jobs, do the job that they are put there to do. So while you will find some of my colleagues on the other side—“well, dey eh hah nothing else to do really”—just sit back there and criticize. Some of the things they are criticizing, they are criticizing themselves you know, because they are forgetting that it was only two years ago, after nine years in power, that this Government is here. Why they did not do the things that they are criticizing us for not doing now?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not here to say what they should do and what they should not do. I am here to tell you today that in almost two years that we have been in power, for my stewardship, I can give you a great account. I am doing this on behalf of my Prime Minister because she is the one who has me here.

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Let me tell you about the constituency that I represent and the proud people of Mayaro. I am talking about the constituency of Mayaro which was once so entangled, and so blinded by this PNM government, and I have helped them to remove the veil from their eyes and finally see what good representation is all about.

I know that they on the other side may have never heard about a place called Agostini Settlement No. 2. We have fixed all the infrastructural roads in there. There are about 16 or 20 of them—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Name dem. Name dem.”

Hon. W. Peters: Well, I do not want to—Mylan Road; Deep Ravine; Clearwater; Narvet Village; Charuma Village, we have Clearwater Trace, Tabaquite Road; Tabaquite Road; Guayaguayare Village after the sea wall. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go along with this and—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You should be ashamed.

Hon. W. Peters: We should be ashamed? My dear lady, all the places I am calling here are in my constituency. I am the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Mayaro. “Way yuh wah me to do it for, Point Fortin?” You are in Point Fortin and you were there two years ago, what have you done?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, permit me to continue, because I am proud of what this People’s Partnership Government under a Prime Minister—on whom the Member for Diego Martin West has brought a frivolous, No Confidence Motion.

Agriculture and agricultural access roads in the constituency of Mayaro have been ignored for years. I can tell you about all the access roads which we have fixed over the last two years, for which the people of Mayaro will tell you about and they are happy: Titus Trace; Rampaul Trace; Ablack Trace; Cemetery Trace; Upper Cuche Trace; Olive Trace; Rose Trace, Cuche Food Crop Project. Let me tell you about this Cuche Food Crop Project.

Mr. Sharma: What about Cuchawan Trace?

Hon. W. Peters: “Nah, I not from Cuchawan Trace.” When we were in Opposition, I went to a man named Mr. Piggott, who was the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, and asked him to come and help me fix this Cuche Food Crop Road. All I got were promises, and promises, and promises, until we came into power. When we got here, instead of begging anybody to fix it, I just had to ask the hon. Vasant Bharath, and all that I am telling you here—“and

I eh finish yuh know”—Rio Claro Food Crop Project; Mora Valley; Reid Trace; Mahabalsingh Trace and Mahabalsingh Extension 1; all these are places which for years we have been begging and begging, and they did absolutely nothing.

We know that you will hear people talking about the PURE project, but before it was suspended we did so much work in such a short time, I know they cannot even believe we did all this, but yes, let me call it for you. We had completion of the Guayaguayare Road, Rio Claro; Lazzari Road; we did Lazzari Road including the drainage—these are places where for years—I heard the PNM talking now and they on the other side are gloating now that we are in power and we are not doing anything in their constituencies.

These places which I am calling now are places that have been existing since 1956, and they left them exactly how they were, with all the money we have in the country. What are you quarrelling about? We went ahead and fixed them: Vesprey Extension Road, Guayaguayare; Ponderosa Settlement; Edgehill Road, Mayaro and Cuche Village Street.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the person whom they brought this vote of no confidence in could not have been the same Prime Minister I know, who made sure that all these things I am calling out here for you happened; because without her, none of it could have been possible. I am sure you heard about the Biche High School; that school is in my constituency. It was built to accommodate the children of the area, so they would not have to go 20 miles, 25 miles and get up two o'clock in the morning in order to catch a four o'clock or five o'clock bus to go to school.

But the wickedness of the others on that side, for years they refused to open it, but let me say to you not only did we refurbish it—because you all allowed it to run down. All we had to do was fix a wall and that was what—Mr. Deputy Speaker, they had a commission of enquiry into this school and because the commission of enquiry said there was nothing wrong with the school—but you had to build a wall—they never even released it to the public. Today, you will hear them talk about it. Well, the Biche School is open, and the Biche children are happy to be going to the Biche High School. [*Desk thumping*] Teachers are teaching right in that school there because they know their children.

Not only did we do that, but there is a school right under the Biche High School, the Presbyterian School. We refurbished that school as well, and today—a brand new school with a yard and everything so that our children could play because poor little children in the country are children too. These are the things we do.

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So when you want to stay here and complain—Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Mayaro RC School, for years—and I want to tell you something: these people I am talking about are all PNM supporters. They are persons whom I know, I was raised with them and they support PNM—at least they used to. The PNM will never see the face of Mayaro again in their life. You will never see Mayaro again.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Wait for three years again.

Hon. W. Peters: I will wait for 300 years. You better pray for me not to live that long because you will never see it. They refused to fix the Mayaro RC School, and as soon as we came into power, I asked Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, and in less than three months, we had the Mayaro RC School repaired, fixed with a brand new wing. We continue to do the necessary things.

I want to read an article for you in a while, when I am finished with this here—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “Not from de *Mirror* doh.”

Hon. W. Peters: We started construction on the Rio Claro Library; does it not sound like music to your ear? Since I was a child they were promising to build a library in Rio Claro. We have started construction and by July of this year the Rio Claro Library will be opened. We have started construction on the Mayaro Library, have you ever heard that? “Yuh hear how dat sound?” Mayaro Library, yes, and by July that too would also—and it is costing \$18 million; state-of-the-art with computer room and everything.

I am the Member of Parliament for Mayaro first and foremost; anything else you see me do, the people in Mayaro have me doing it. So whatever I do—and if you vex I am representing my people, then that is too bad for you. If you do not want to represent the people of St. Ann’s East, I am representing the people of Mayaro, and I am representing them well.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the library is going to be finished in July, we are going to have a brand new spanking library. We have refurbished the Navet Community Centre that they have been begging to be refurbished all this time, and the PNM would not do it. “You know what dey do?” The election before this in Narvet Village, they cut the road with a power saw and went ahead and told people that they will run pipes for them. The pipes were piled up higher than this building and as soon as the election was over, they came and picked up all the pipes. Well, let me say to you that that project is going to be started this week. I want to thank the hon. Minister of Public Utilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we built—they did not build it, we built in our first incarnation a health centre in Rio Claro. “Yuh know wen dem come instead ah having de thing for 24 hours, people cudda only go there for half a day, all kinda craziness; four o’clock in the evening it close.” Well, we have been opening it for 24 hours a day now, and we are going to be refurbishing the Mayaro Hospital—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Very good.

Hon. W. Peters: So it will be a full-fledged district hospital where you will get X-ray and MIRs and everything there. That is what we are spending the money to do; that is what we are doing. And we are doing all of this under the auspices of our dear Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Now, does that sound like somebody who you have no confidence in? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no doubt they would not have any confidence in persons who are doing progressive things because they have been there so long and did absolutely nothing. When they see progress, “if it lash dem in dey face, deh doh know what it is.” And just to prove my point, “it have a fella in Mayaro call Clifford Campbell, well ah beat him about 3 to 1. But having that political tabanca walking around with.”

You know, this *TnT Mirror* is the PNM-preferred newspaper. It is alleged that it is owned by one Louis Lee Sing. I do not know if it is true, or I hear he is a big shareholder in it. I do not know—and one Maxie Cuffie—but it is alleged that is what that is. It carries all their stories, so hear what it says here:

“Criticizing Gypsy last Friday was former chairman of the PNM Mayaro constituency, businessman Clifford Campbell, who pointed to the turning of the sod for the Mayaro library on Friday, September 28...”

Then it is so badly written, it goes back here to say “...a new Mayaro Library...” So they cannot even write properly, but that is okay, that is all right. It says:

“In fact, Campbell is querying exactly why Gypsy saw the need for a new \$18 million library on the Guayaguayare Road next to the Open Bible Church when the current”—listen to this man—“library in the old village hall”—in Mayaro.

The old village hall in Mayaro is where I sang my first calypso when I was four years old. You could hardly change your mind in it—because it is so small. But he does not see the need—but that is how PNM is. He cannot see the need to have a brand new library in Mayaro; that is why we would never have had one, if this Government had not come here under our Prime Minister.

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He went on:

“This current young generation is more into the internet...you have to force them to go back to books...”

Well, if we have to force them to go back to books we will, because in order to get on the Internet and read you have to get into the books first. So we would ensure that we force them.

Within that library, we have Internet, yes we have Wi-Fi so they could go in with their computers and their iPads and whatever else they have. Not for you to keep them in the dark ages because it is Mayaro. So this is Clifford Campbell who wants to run against me in Mayaro—“Ah want all yuh to put him back up again.” Hear what he says:

“‘We in Mayaro have been clamouring for our fire station, but all we hear from Gypsy is deafening silence’, said Campbell.”

Well, Mr. Campbell is probably living somewhere in la-la land and not Mayaro, because we have turned the sod to build the fire station in Mayaro which would be finished early next year. So Mayaro would have its fire station, and Mr. Campbell “yuh hah to eat yuh heart out,” because these are the things we are doing.

4.45 a.m.

Mr. Sharma: Is Campbell related to Franklyn Khan? They resemble.

Hon. W. Peters: I, myself, find they have a resemblance. They kind of look alike, but I have no time “in what they resemble”. What I do know is that I will continue to represent the people of Mayaro, and the wider population of Trinidad and Tobago, to the best of my ability as the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism. *[Interruption]*

You want to hear what I do for multiculturalism? First of all, I ensure that there is equitable distribution of the largesse of Trinidad and Tobago to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the first thing that I do; not to be biased to anybody—when you give one set of people a whole lot of everything and you give a next set of people nothing. That is the first thing that I do.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is what you are doing.

Hon. W. Peters: That is what we are doing? *[Interruption]* How we are doing that?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You give all the people of Mayaro everything and you give the other people nothing.

Hon. W. Peters: My dear, I spoke about what I did in Mayaro as the Member of Parliament for Mayaro. What have you done for Point Fortin other than live in the Government house for free after you are getting money to—? What have you done?

The Ministry that I represent, the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, has embarked on programmes to enlighten the minds of the cultural practitioners of Trinidad and Tobago. I am sure that you have witnessed the last two carnivals that I was responsible for, and it would be dishonest of you to say that they were not the best carnivals you have ever had—very dishonest of you. I do not expect you to say anything better than that. You had a bigger stage. You had a large expanse for the first time. Ask Pan Trinbago and they will tell you.

Hon. Member: Ask Machel.

Hon. W. Peters: You can ask Machel as well. How do you think Machel hones his art the way he is doing it? Machel flies the flag of Trinidad and Tobago as no other artiste. I am proud of him. I have known him since he was a child. *[Interruption]* And what is wrong with that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me get it on the record so that you will hear and know what I am saying. Machel was a young child, who I watched grow up in Trinidad and Tobago. He has blossomed into the only superstar soca artiste that we have in Trinidad and Tobago today—the largest one. I am saying to you: what is wrong if we encourage Machel Montano to go out there and bring people into Trinidad and Tobago? That is where you all failed.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You should encourage all.

Hon. W. Peters: I encourage all of them, but if you have 10 children and one is brighter than the others, would you not try to push that one more? That is what we do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some cultural projects carded for 2012 include the following: the tassa camp to be held in October *[Interruption]* and the music school in the pan yards. For years you all were in power. Have you all ever had any music school in any pan yard? You cannot conceptualize it because it is not in your DNA to do that. They do not know how to do it. *[Interruption]* Do not worry about that. We want to throw “she” out of the Government house she is living in for free. Forget about the road.

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Let me tell you something. We are having the music schools in the pan yards and that will be launched this month. The National Arts Festival is to be held in 2012 to celebrate our 50th anniversary. My Ministry will be celebrating a 50th anniversary that is befitting of a place that is so culturally charged as Trinidad and Tobago. You are going to witness the diversity of Trinidad and Tobago in all its elements and in all its facets. That is the 50th anniversary that you are going to be seeing because I am a “culture person”.

I do not want to continue to talk for the rest of the morning. *[Interruption]* I did not throw Tribe off the road. Tribe violated the law and for anybody who violates the law, there is a penalty for violating the law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Point Fortin, you will have your chance in a few minutes. Please take notes and do not continue interrupting the Member for Mayaro, so that he can wind up his contribution.

Hon. W. Peters: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your protection. As I was saying, I am not here to take up a whole lot of your time. Suffice it to say that the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism is in good hands and any questions my good friend on the other side would like to ask, we stand ready and willing to answer. *[Interruption]* We did not do Tribe anything. Tribe violated the law.

I want to just say once again that we must not lose sight of why we are here this morning. We are here because the Member for Diego Martin West brought a frivolous, vexatious, nonsensical vote of no confidence against a Prime Minister who has taken Trinidad and Tobago to higher heights than they left it. She has taken it to heights that they could never have imagined.

When I speak here this morning, I speak on behalf of all my colleagues and for the 400,000 persons who voted for the People’s Partnership. I say to you this morning that we have full and utmost confidence in our Prime Minister, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who will continue to take this country higher and higher.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this morning I want to go back to the Motion before us and, firstly, acknowledge the hat which the Member for Siparia wears in her capacity as Prime Minister. At the same time, I would like to hasten to recognize her ineffectiveness as head of Government.

This Government has been in office just short of two years and it is fast approaching midterm. I put it squarely on the table that the Member for Siparia

has not been an effective leader of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I will demonstrate very clearly, throughout my contribution, that the Member is not selflessly devoted to national interest and is instead in pursuit of party and private interest; that the [*Desk thumping*] Member is not a visionary; is not competent and perhaps not diligent; that, as Prime Minister, the Member has not been able to galvanize and mobilize the support of all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago; and that what we are seeing is the politics of divergence and not the politics of convergence which we expected to get under this PP Government.

I am saying to you that the Prime Minister of this country has not provided any direction and has not got the strategy and policymaking right. The Member—Madam Prime Minister—her overall executive responsibility is in question. You just do not seem to have what it takes to make it happen. Your governance, Madam, wherever you are, is in question.

Worse yet, there is no one on that pick-up side who could ever be seen as a leader of tomorrow. This Government has no hope. There is no one to whom this Prime Minister can pass on her torch. She generally has not been a picker of good men and under the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration, this Government is in poor shape. [*Desk thumping*]

There is an old Chinese proverb that says: “Not the cry, but the flight of the wild duck, leads the flock to fly and follow.” In other words, it is the duty of the Prime Minister to set the direction, set the pace and the way forward; but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, authority flows to the one who knows.

I am alluding to the fact that the Prime Minister ought not to be immersed in detail and so on, but at the very least, at first blush, it is expected that the Prime Minister would have the power of good first thought. I mean the ability to see things early; to sense things quickly; to identify the essentials in a complex picture—just simply to put two and two together—to appraise situations readily; to get the cue easily; and that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is called practical wisdom, which is sadly lacking in the Prime Minister of this country.

Authority flows to the one who knows. The Prime Minister lacks the wisdom and does not have the experience. It is a case of *hamaar janne, hamaar janne*. You know what that means? “I do not know”, in Hindi. The Prime Minister knows nothing. In most situations, it is, “Ask the Attorney General”; “ask the Minister of National Security”; “the Minister of Foreign Affairs will attend to that”.

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There is really an absence of intelligence and experience. By intelligence, I do not mean qualifications. My view is that intelligence is a person's all-round effectiveness and activity that depend on thought. It is not only about qualifications.

I think that the population has made a very serious mistake in supporting the Member for Siparia as leader. The Member simply should not have run for office and no one should assume a leadership role for which one's intelligence is not able to cope.

What we expect from a Prime Minister is someone who can speak very easily on familiar subjects and that does not happen. Even if it is outside your area of expertise, you are still capable of giving an excellent opinion and that does not happen.

We expect that someone can see—I am talking about prime ministerial behaviour and intelligence here. [*Interruption*] This is a vote of no confidence. It has nothing to do with 33:5 or whatever you are coming with. I am saying that you need to be able to see the wood from the trees or generally take a helicopter view of things. When I say a helicopter view, I am speaking metaphorically. I know that the Prime Minister loves to take helicopter views, but I am talking about having a trained, analytical eye and the confidence of a map maker; knowing where you are going. That is what I am talking about.

I am talking about common sense and I am saying that at least a Prime Minister should have above-average common sense and that is not there. It is evident because you see that the population is saddled with bad decisions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 36(5).

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Let me say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is not a personal attack. I am talking about characteristics of leadership. That is what it is about. I am saying that this population has been saddled [*Interruption*] Your protection, please.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please allow the Member to speak in silence.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am saying that this population has been saddled with very bad security decisions, strategic decisions that concern the welfare, safety and well-being of our citizens; the dismantling of the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago; the cancellation of the OPVs; the naming of an incompetent neophyte as head of our intelligence agency; the total bungling in the function as

head of the National Security Council. The Member has made a mess and has totally mucked up our security operations and put the men, women and children of this country at risk and in danger.

5.00 a.m.

So there have been countless bad strategic decisions resulting from a failure to guide this country with a very steady hand; and that is what it is. So that if you have a Prime Minister who, let us say you cannot direct the wind, the very least you should be able to do is to adjust the sails. [*Desk thumping*] That is the very least; you cannot direct the wind, but at least you can adjust the sails. That will take a combination of a couple of things, characteristics—their combination of discretion, of maturity in thinking and in action, a keenness of intellect, broad experience, extensive learning, profound thought and some exercise of the faculties of a moral nature. And I want to tell you that that is what we saw in the true father of this nation, Dr. Eric Williams. That is what we saw in him as the real pioneer of education in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

It is what we saw in the late George Chambers as well. He is the one who ran this country on \$9 a barrel; it was George Chambers. [*Desk thumping*] It is what we saw in Patrick Manning who took the decision to monetize gas. That is the reason why this country is where it is today. [*Desk thumping*] There are some of these attributes that you see in the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley, who in the fullness of time will take over the reins of this Government from this hapless and incapable Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh” saying that with your lips or your heart?

Dr. Moonilal: Your nose is getting longer.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: What I am saying is, I am talking about— [*Interruption*—excuse me, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Point Fortin, when we are sitting listening, and we behave in this manner and attack the Member or continually interrupt the Member on her legs this is how it feels. So Members take note. Let us be cognizant of the Member on his legs. And please do adhere to Standing Order 40, please.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I have been very quiet and I have not interrupted anyone. I was talking about the ability to think on your feet which Dr. Rowley is able to do, and we have seen very many successes in his capacity as Leader of Opposition. The fact that he is able to sift through

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their version of details and come up with solutions and to pick a problem very, very, early when normally there would be no resolutions to such issues, these things would have gone unnoticed. Dr. Rowley is able to do it. [*Desk thumping*]

He did it with regard to the promised pensions of \$3,000 to people aged 60 and over. He did it as well in the case of the Nizam Mohammed appointment as head of the Police Service Commission who has since been fired; he did it in the case of the Jack Warner's dual role of Cabinet Minister and FIFA Vice-President, and has since self-destructed; he did it in the case of Resmi Ramnarine—but I do not know if she resigned or was fired; [*Desk thumping*] he did it in the case of the appointment of the FIU director, much confusion with that; he did it in the case of the state of emergency which has failed; he did it in the case of the attempted assassination of the Prime Minister which was a hoax, and he did it again in the Prime Minister being wrongly adorned with Silk. That is what I call thinking on your feet, thinking ahead, identifying issues and bringing them to the fore to the public. That is what I am talking about.

Let me go to another area which I feel has not been dealt with very well, in a sound manner by the Prime Minister, and I am talking about the economy. Sure enough, that is the direct responsibility of the Minister of Finance and so it is, but ultimately the business of the economy is the responsibility of every sitting Prime Minister and the Cabinet as well. Ultimately the buck stops with the Prime Minister when you are dealing with things about the economy. Let us accept that there is a direct correlation between leadership and economic growth. It is the leader who is the catalyst for direction, for setting aside adversities, for fostering change and for identifying opportunities. It is the leader who would sign off on an economic model or a strategy, and a general approach for development and growth. Then you build your coalitions and institutions around it. That is the job of a Prime Minister and her Cabinet.

Where is the Prime Minister's voice on the economic realities of Trinidad and Tobago? It is just not there. I am saying so particularly with the circumstances as they are in the world today, with a very bleak global economy plagued with unprecedented uncertainty and ambiguity. And a Minister of Finance who continues to sing the blues—blue skies, blue skies—and how does the Prime Minister respond to that? She lip-synchs "I am alive". That is the best we can get from her. [*Crosstalk*]

You look back to the budget debate of October 2011, when there were some major concerns on the table: you are talking about a growing economic crisis of immense proportions and growing more; a very stagnant economy; a budget

deficit of \$7.6 billion; a Clico debacle to be dealt with; Government committing once again to job creation, investments, food security and so on. The very same thing they did the year before, but there was no implementation and no follow through, and “worse yet”, the Minister of Finance did not report on the Government’s fiscal performance for the previous fiscal year—unheard of—he did not report on the Government’s fiscal performance.

Then what do you think the Prime Minister had to say about that? You would think that when she got a chance to speak she would definitely address the matter of the economy and focus on anything that he would have left out on economic restructuring; on putting a halt to the welfare culture; and generally coming up with some fresh ideas and some perspectives for facilitating growth and for nurturing investor confidence and so on.

But what did the Prime Minister do? As usual she just completely missed the mark, and this was the national budget, and she used the occasion to announce pre-action protocol letters and other bombshells aimed at truly dodging the fact that it was a poor budget presentation. That was the contribution from the Prime Minister.

There have been a number of occasions subsequently when issues of finance have been raised in the public domain. And one would expect that at least the Prime Minister would respond because of the seriousness of the nature of the commentary from the economists and so on in Trinidad and Tobago, but there has been nothing.

Very recently, there was an article in the *Express*, I believe, February 22, 2012, by Dr. Ronald Ramkissoon. He was responding to the IMF’s report which appears to be favourable—but understandably so—and he was saying that while the short-term outlook for Trinidad and Tobago is relatively positive and stable, medium and long-term sustainability seems to be a challenge despite promises and plans by the Government. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was echoed by Indira Sagewan-Ali. So there you are—Ronald Ramkissoon, Indira Sagewan-Ali, noted economists.

They said—she, in fact, Mrs. Sagewan-Ali, went on and responded to the IMF report saying that it was not all that sunshine about the economy and that there is still an underlying note of uncertainty and foreboding if the Government does not act to implement its policies for economic transformation. That, we know, is the problem with this Government: implementation, that is their problem. It is precisely why we have not gotten anywhere. Generally, what the both of them

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were saying, was there is significant challenge for this Government in transitioning the economy over the medium and long term. Dr. Ramkissoon was very specific about the requirements for strategic economic transformation and movement. One of the requirements he said was good leadership, which really is not there.

It is not only the business of the Minister of Finance, it is also the business of the Prime Minister. And really, Madam Prime Minister, wherever you are, it falls to you to adopt the appropriate leadership strategies to achieve growth in this country.

On Christmas Day, in the *Guardian*—Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir, another noted economist, the headline was: We must diversify in 2012 or face seven years of hardship. He cited the problem in 2011 and he was very clear on it.

It is the Government that failed to implement—there is that word again—measures to stimulate the economy.

So it is very glaring in our faces that all of the well-known economists in Trinidad have very clearly said the Government is not able to stimulate the economy—[*Desk thumping*]*—that the Government is not able to transform the economy as well.*

How could you, therefore, have any sustainable employment? What does the Prime Minister have to say on these things. How does she respond to these articles? She just does not take it on, and is about her own business flying all over the place. That is where it is.

Even at the budget debate—the Minister of Energy is here to make a contribution, I am happy about that—there you have a Prime Minister, again, she spoke. She is head of the energy committee, a body which prevails upon our energy resources. In the context of declining oil production, no entry of foreign direct investments into Trinidad and Tobago, falling gas prices and acknowledging that the energy industry is the highest contributor to the GDP of Trinidad and Tobago, the Prime Minister, head of the energy committee, had nothing to say in the budget on energy matters as well. That is very, very disappointing. [*Crosstalk*] He did not say anything either, but the Prime Minister is—[*Interruption*]*—he did not in the Lower House—[Interruption]—I am moving on—The Prime Minister is head of the energy committee.*

Really, the few transactions I know that the Prime Minister has made as head of the energy committee is that she has gotten rid of some good sound minds in

the energy business. [*Desk thumping*] I am talking about Richard Calendar, Ken Allum, Andrew McIntosh and so on. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot retire these people. You cannot retire these people at all, these are sound minds.

I want to commit solutions, and the recommendation I have is that the Prime Minister should really go back to the school of public policy by Lee Kuan Yew and take a page out of Singapore's development story. We all know that the former Prime Minister of Singapore did a very, very good job in transforming that country. [*Crosstalk*] He was very pragmatic, he understood the need for strong policy and supporting measures, and that is the kind of image, that is the kind of strength that we want to see coming through in our Prime Minister, in our country. This is an energy country, and those are the kinds of things we want to see coming through.

I will tell you something about Singapore. You see that kind of divergent politics that you practise that threatens to divide people on racial and ideological grounds, that was not a feature of Singaporean politics under Lee Kuan Yew, and the Prime Minister needs to take note of that. [*Desk thumping*]

Also another noted factor in the transformation of that economy was the decision of the leadership to boost the country's defence capabilities, to boost the country's security. [*Crosstalk*] They were very firm on three things. They were pointed on three things for the development in that country, and that is, the economy, national security and social systems. The long and short of that is it makes your economy successful, it gives your people in your country confidence, and it also gives confidence to potential investors. So I really think that we need to send the Prime Minister back to the Lee Kuan Yew school of public policy where we could get some fresh ideas and perspectives coming through—some growth policies so that we could return Trinidad and Tobago to the very solid reputation which it had under the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

5.15 a.m.

This Government, as it is, is not a Government that is united in purpose. There is not an equitable stake for each and every one in this country, and that is the reason we are having this unending social conflict and social unrest in Trinidad and Tobago, and we expect that we will see more of it. I really want the Government to resist the policy where things are done for its own sake and for the benefit of its supporters.

It will be remiss of me if I did not address the question of foreign policy because that also is the domain of the Prime Minister. It is the Prime Minister and the Cabinet that sets a country's foreign policy—wake up Member for

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Tabaquite—and the Minister of Foreign Affairs is the one who administers and executes foreign policy, but it is the business, the domain, of the Prime Minister. Of course, he is able to bring recommendations and so on, but it is the Prime Minister's ultimate responsibility. That is the reason so many Prime Ministers have carried that portfolio as well.

For instance, Dr. Eric Williams, at times, carried the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also the Ministry of Finance as well. Dame Eugenia Charles also carried the Ministry of External Relations, just to give an example. I am going to tell you why I brought it up. There was an article in the *Newsday*, but I believe it was carried in the other newspapers as well, and it is described—I want to put this in a way that really expresses how I feel about it—as being done by Suruj Rambachan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, but they did not say “and Communications”, but that is his portfolio. The title of the article is, “Foreign policy direction”.

I was trying to discern what he wanted to say here, but it appears that there is one page of policy and another page of accomplishments, perhaps, whilst he was in office. I looked at the framework which he sought to put in here—

Dr. Rambachan: I am still in office.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am sorry. I am sorry, Member for Tabaquite. [Laughter] What I am seeing in it is really the same basic priorities that I had seen in the foreign policy which was left documented by our administration.

Dr. Rambachan: There is a shift.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I do not see the shift, and let me explain. Those priorities would be economic—“economic” being energy and trade—security, consular/political, focusing on image building and projecting Trinidad and Tobago, promoting the culture, et cetera and the whole question of effective governance in international fora—how we deal with multinational institutions. We also included the country's development agenda. We dealt with aspects of agriculture and technology and so on. All of that was in it. We dealt with Caribbean integration, but I will come back to Caribbean integration just know.

We dealt with the diaspora: the fact that we attended to our nationals abroad. I want to make the comment here that there seems to be some notion—it is coming through to us that when this Government services the diaspora abroad that they are not exactly acting in the nation's interest. In fact, they might be doing so more in the party's interest. There is a concern that it may not even be in the COP's

interest. I think they are doing it all in the interest of the UNC. [*Desk thumping*] When you meet with your nationals abroad, that is what you are looking after. Let us forget about this, and let us go on.

This report, as I said, Member for Tabaquite, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—policy really is the domain of the Prime Minister, and I want to know if you had the Prime Minister's approval to print this, and whether or not you had the Cabinet decision, because you really do not have the authority to put in place any framework of your own. [*Crosstalk*] You do not have the authority to do it. Very, very, clearly, what you are doing is, you are disowning the work which was done by the previous administration. [*Desk thumping*]

You know that in 2006, the Cabinet of that day had made a decision to appoint a committee chaired by Dr. Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner, a professor in international relations at the City University of New York. There was a group of eight persons as well, made up of technocrats, former ambassadors, current ambassadors and members of staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the mandate they were given was to arrive at a full articulation of the foreign policy and a strategic plan that ensures that we are in a position to properly conduct foreign policy for Trinidad and Tobago. It also took into account the research, that is, the role of interest groups, public opinion and other social influences in foreign policy.

Dr. Rambachan: I saw it.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You are saying that you saw it. The end result is that, there is, in fact, a foreign policy vision and a mission; an entire articulation of foreign policies for Trinidad and Tobago—the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the role of the missions abroad; how they should operate as well, and along with that a strategic plan; volumes, volumes, volumes—volumes of discussions by experts, academics and practitioners, not politicians. I think that might be the problem that you have with it—at great monetary and mental costs. You all have just avoided this.

You have ignored the intellectual work which was done on it, and in true profligate style, you have discounted the financial cost. Just compare these volumes [*Volumes in hand*] on the foreign policy of Trinidad and Tobago, and just look at the one-page document which the Minister has put out, and he calls that the foreign policy of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Volumes in hand*] This is under our administration; this is under your administration, and it really, really is unacceptable.

Dr. Rambachan: That is being disingenuous.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: That is the reason we are the talk of the international community, but I am not going to go into that now at all. This is why the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Communications is at a loss in terms of direction and they are very confused. The point about it is, you really should use the material that is there. It is very, very, very, valuable. It is a comprehensive document on the foreign policy of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to talk a little about this travel business because there seems to have been extensive travel by this Government and so on. The Prime Minister generally seems to have an affinity for the air. I am talking about inwardly and externally as well. So I am talking about, via helicopter on an almost day-to-day basis, going down to San Fernando at great cost to the Treasury.

The Prime Minister is really missing the beautiful views of this land, and also what she is missing is the fact that she needs to see that the URP, CEPEP and so on and the Ministry of Local Government has just not been doing their work and the country is, in fact, filthy and unkept.

One has to look really at the cost of this internal travel because it involves three sets of movements. When the Prime Minister could get into her car and get to San Fernando in a mere half an hour, it takes three movements—to have protocol, security and the car to get to the savannah or wherever it is—to get into the helicopter. Then it takes the helicopter, staff and another movement to San Fernando, and then when they land, it is another car with security, et cetera.

So, there are three sets of movements to go from Port of Spain to San Fernando. With blue lights and sirens, you could get there in 25 minutes. It is high maintenance for those helicopters and it is very, very, expensive. I mean, this is not Mexico. The Prime Minister is not the President of Mexico; not the President of India where there is vast land areas and so on, so it amounts to wanton spending on herself which is totally unacceptable. [*Desk thumping*]

I would tell you something. To me, since the Prime Minister has ascended to office, there has been that sort of glorification and so on of her; giving herself Silk and travelling by helicopter. It just comes across as though the Prime Minister is self-absorbed, and that I am telling you is inconsiderate.

For instance, that trip to India, two weeks at the beginning of the year, coming out of a failed state of emergency, what was that all about? That, to me, was nothing more than a private excursion. It was nothing more than a private

excursion. It was for the Prime Minister to collect a Pravasi award. That is what it was. I mean, it would have been beefed up, because it is a sitting Prime Minister and so on, but it is the same award that Basdeo Panday and Dr. Lenny Saith got and was offered to me as well. On top of that, she took along a whole contingent of people, including a private pundit to attend to her and to idolize her, and I suppose hero worship, et cetera, et cetera. You have to come to understand that this is not what modern-day leadership is about.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), the Member is imputing improper motives. The Prime Minister never took along a private pundit. What nonsense is that?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I do not know what a public pundit is either.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, be careful as to where we are stepping at this early hour in the morning, and try to stay within the realms of the Motion. Saying that the Prime Minister took along a private pundit on a trip, I would like you to withdraw that and expunge it from the record please.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I could withdraw that; that is fine. I am talking about modern-day leadership, the exaltation and the imaginary pedestal and so on. That is not what modern leadership is about. [*Desk thumping*] If it is a business trip, I am asking you, which heads of conglomerates did the Prime Minister meet? I know you all had 200 meetings and so on, but I am saying that if a Prime Minister went with you on a business trip, that Prime Minister has to add value. In other words, she would be able to meet with persons whom you normally would not have access to.

She would be officiating at very high-powered meetings, and we have not had any details of that. That is what I am talking about. It really seems as though it was a personal venture to find their roots and so on. I know my roots. I did not have to go to India to do that. My grandfather is from Calcutta, and I am not talking about Calcutta in Freeport. I am talking about Calcutta in India.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), the Prime Minister went on a business trip. What is this?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, the official records will show that the Prime Minister went on a business trip, and why are we going in the direction as to whether or not the Prime Minister is going for her roots? [*Crosstalk*] Let us stay away from that line. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Members, hon. Members— [*Crosstalk*]—Hon. Members, let us stay within the realms of the debate. Continue, Member. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, let us move on. Let everybody calm down, and let us move on. [*Crosstalk*] Can we move on? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to move on. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Diego Martin West, please do allow the Member to speak in silence.

Dr. Rowley: I am trying to understand the ruling, Sir.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I would try to be careful, Sir. I would be guided. Let us talk about the results of that trip. There are persons on that side who are already “owning” some of the successes of the trip. For instance, I understand that they have said that the fact that there are a number of Rituals cafes to be opened in India, that these are arrangements which came out of the trip to India. I want to categorically discount that because all of those arrangements took place before the Government embarked upon its trip to India. [*Desk thumping*] Mario Sabga-Aboud did not go to India with the Government or anything and, therefore, they cannot claim it as their success.

Only recently I read where the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs was saying that an expert in the red mite disease, which is a disease that affects the coconut trees in Icacos and Cedros said that on that trip they made those arrangements. I want to tell you, that is not so. That was finalized since 2010, and those discussions had been done even before that. So it is not as a result of that trip to India.

Mr. Jeffrey: Tell them man; tell them! [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am really waiting to hear the real results, but let us talk about Australia. Let us talk about the business to Australia. I can understand that we had to be there. We were the Chair in office and the Prime Minister had to be there, but that was a three-day meeting October 28—30, 2011. I think the Prime Minister left here—I could be corrected—on October 19, 2011 and never came home until November 05, 2011; 16 to 17 days to attend a three-day meeting. It is wrong. Stopping off in Hong Kong and London and so on; Ministers flying up to London to meet you and so on—that is wrong.

5.30 a.m.

When you travel for those extensive periods there is also a cost attached in terms of the per diem. Sometimes, for the length of time that the Prime Minister stays away from the country, her per diem is \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000. I am saying that is—[*Interruption*] I am telling you; US \$350 per day and counting. These are sizeable amounts and it is taxpayers’ money. It is a concern to us.

Then, you try to pull the wool over our eyes. This is the trip to Australia that was three days, but took 17 days and she stops off in London to collect—all of a sudden she is a messenger. The Member for Siparia is a messenger where she stops off, calls the BP president and collects a cheque for the Board of Inland Revenue. Whoever asked the Prime Minister to collect a cheque for the Board of Inland Revenue? “They paying their taxes, how many years now they doing business with us; you gone to collect a cheque.” I did not even know there was a big expanded cheque or so. I mean, really, this is outrageous; outrageous.

Let us talk about Brazil. Attendance was very commendable at the World Economic Forum; a very useful trip, but then that was another investment trip of, I think, about 60 persons. One businessman told me he reached the airport in Trinidad and he turned right back. That was in April, one year ago, and I am asking: what was the result of that business trip to Brazil? What are the results of that? Name them. What businesses did you all impact on in Brazil? What projects are on the table from Brazil? Impress upon us, tell us.

We still cannot get the full cost of these excursions to India, Brazil and Australia. We are not getting it. All we know is that millions of dollars, on one hand, and, on the other hand, no new investors. [*Desk thumping*] Stack it up, millions of dollars, no new investors. It does not make sense. A lot of hosting and toasting and “nothing coming out of it. Nothing coming out of it”. [*Desk thumping*]

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

London, Commonwealth Week, March 2011; that was another weightless trip, with the Prime Minister leading a soca train with Kernel Roberts, Machel Montano, Patrice Roberts, Denise Plummer, et cetera. That was a business trip as well; another 16 people went and, I think, there was supposed to be some engagement of some 100 business leaders as well. Minister of Trade and Industry, you were there; I want to know about that trip. What came out of it? I know it was about the launch; I want to find out about that as well.

Then, it was onward to Wales; onward to Wales where the Prime Minister delivered what is uniquely called a Special Keynote Address. Now, I understand what a keynote address is, but I have a feeling that a Special Keynote Address is when you invite yourself and because you are Prime Minister you have no choice but to call it something, so you call it a Special Keynote Address. So, the Prime Minister goes there—when, easily, the Minister of Local Government could have read that speech—to speak on Energizing Local Economies, Partnerships for

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Prosperous Communities. Well, I want the Prime Minister to know that charity begins at home and if ever you are thinking of partnering for prosperous communities, I want you to make La Brea prosperous or make Cedros prosperous.
[*Desk thumping*]

What moral authority does anybody have to address a topic like that when the only communities you have been making prosperous, since you have been in office, are the communities of Debe, Penal and Goocharan Trace? That is what you have been making prosperous. You go on a platform over the last few days, and what have you been talking about? A hospital on Clarke Road; a children's hospital somewhere else; UWI in Debe; airport in Chaguanas, and you are talking about prosperous communities? It is discriminatory and it is all to benefit particular persons. [*Desk thumping*]

All I want to say is that it is unacceptable and that we want—The Prime Minister, I feel, is capable, you know, but I want to see her in a more prime ministerial role. [*Desk thumping*] I think the Prime Minister would love to do two terms. In fact, she said that; I think it was at the launch of the United Nations Caribbean Human Index. Helen Clark, who is the former prime minister of New Zealand, was there. [*Interruption*] She was a three-time prime minister. You are right about that. The Prime Minister said—you were there—“Oh, I only want two terms.” It is impossible for the Prime Minister to wish two terms when halfway into the first term she is limping down the pitch; Dr. Rowley is at the bottom with the ball in his hand waiting to stump her out and she wants to get two terms. [*Desk thumping*] Highly impossible! She cannot get it. So, you look at people like Helen Clark; she is admirable—but she is not going to get it.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is another one who has done so well. Remember I was talking about that differentiation between intellect, qualifications and so on? I was very surprised to learn that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who had four terms, and was very impressive as a prime minister, was not actually qualified. She did not even have a degree. We were talking about intelligence, qualifications and so on, and there is a difference. [*Interruption*] Yes, you must check on it, it is interesting. She went to Oxford and left; if you check. I am saying you do not necessarily have to have degrees, but there is that intelligence that is required which has to do with deep thought, quick thinking and so on. That is what is necessary to be a prime minister. [*Interruption*] No, I am saying you do not have to have a degree.

I am talking now about another trip— the trip to Washington. I think that was the seven-day trip to Washington—very senseless. I think the Prime Minister met

with two think tanks: the Brookings Institution and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. I believe the Brookings Institution was to receive advice on public policy. What have we seen on public policy today? Absolutely nil return. Absolutely nil return. On that occasion, as well, the Prime Minister spoke at the Hemispheric Forum on Women's Leadership for a Citizens' Democracy. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, may I have your protection?

Mr. Speaker: Members, allow the Member for Point Fortin to speak in silence. As I am on my legs, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: that the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was speaking about that Washington trip and the Prime Minister did speak on Women's Leadership for a Citizens' Democracy. I was pointing out the significance of the Prime Minister going to Washington to speak on women's issues and not one head of Government was at that meeting. She was in Washington, not even President Obama was there. I do not believe Hillary Clinton may have been there. So, I think it was quite a wasteful trip; very improvident of the Prime Minister to take that trip, again.

Then there was the other wasteful one with the celebration of India's independence in New York, when, gladly, she could have celebrated India's independence right here in Trinidad and Tobago. The High Commissioner, Shri Malay Mishra, would have been happy to have her, but our Prime Minister chose to go to New York to share the anniversary of India with the people of New York and the movie stars, et cetera and that kind of thing. I find that very, very frivolous; and there is so much poverty here still in Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister speaks about poverty and attending to that, but here she is tripping around the globe—I understand there is China and South Africa next. Really, the population must speak to that.

When it comes to the Caricom trips, Mr. Speaker—very important meetings—there is sometimes non-attendance, partial attendance; party celebrations come first and so on, when, in fact, the jobs of the persons who work in the manufacturing sector are on the line. I do not think that the Prime Minister has been able to find that balance about where she should go and where she should not go and that kind of thing.

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The other business which we have a problem with is that when the Prime Minister and her retinue are away we do not have any Parliament and the law-making function in the Lower House seems to come to a halt. I have an issue with that as well. So, generally, I would like to see some prudence and providence in embarking on these trips.

I am concerned about my time and I want to speak to this question of Caribbean integration. *[Interruption]* I want to speak to the matter of Caribbean integration which does not seem to be a matter of importance for this Government. On February 12, 2012 there was a Rickey Singh article in the *Daily Express*—*[Interruption]* Not the *Mirror* I am talking about, it is the *Daily Express*. Rickey Singh quoted the prime minister of St. Vincent, the hon. Ralph Gonsalves. He was quoted as saying—this is with reference to Trinidad and Tobago—

...“in most recent times it does not evince a practical enthusiasm for a deeper Caricom union...”

He is speaking about Trinidad and Tobago; and that Trinidad and Tobago, he states:

...“has all but abandoned leadership responsibilities in ‘Project Caricom.’”

I cannot believe that he is speaking about Trinidad and Tobago.

Caricom had appointed a project management team to do two things: assess the functioning of Caricom, because we know that it is in ill health, and to assess the future of Caricom, especially with regard to the Caricom Single Market Economy and the commitment of countries to the transformation into the CSME. I think it was very brave and worthwhile of them to embark on that venture because it is a problem—this whole question of Caricom unity just has to be dealt with.

What the report revealed is that Caricom is in a crisis, but there are two things which have caused this crisis to become even worse: one is, the economic fridity of many of the islands within Caricom and, also, Trinidad and Tobago’s very fractured role in Caricom under the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration. *[Desk thumping]* *[Interruption]* No, I am putting it right on the table and the Member for Tabaquite may not be pleased, but I think you all have had a direct hand in almost “mashing up” Caricom. *[Desk thumping]* I believe you all have been contributors to “mashing up” Caricom.

You know that Trinidad and Tobago has always had a great commitment to regional integration and that predates our 1962 Independence. This regional policy has always been a constant imperative of ours and that is as a result of a

sense of kinship which exists between us, historical affinity and the very pragmatic reality of the practical and political benefits of unity within an increasingly complex global world.

We in the PNM would not, and we knew that we could not, effectively promote our own interest and achieve the level of development which we have, unless we were part of that Caribbean union, Caricom. We were always very supportive and in pursuit of Caribbean integration through Caricom. We acted in the roles of initiator, of supporter and of unifier—very, very important, because Trinidad and Tobago has provided a major market for goods produced all through the region, and also Trinidad and Tobago has found in the region its second largest export market.

I want to just quote the statistics for you—the kinds of exports we have had going to the Caribbean. I believe it is in the vicinity of about \$14 billion for the year 2010; that is the size of it. Thousands of people depend on jobs in the manufacturing sector: for 2010, \$12.4 billion of exports; for 2008, \$20.4 billion of exports. So, I want to tell you that the Caricom market is very important to us.

In addition to that, many immigrants from Caricom have enjoyed living in Trinidad and Tobago and have made a sterling contribution to our country and, by the same token, Trinidadians have also enjoyed living in other parts of the community and have made certain contributions there as well. Where possible, Trinidad and Tobago has provided financial assistance; even when it cannot, it provides technical assistance. It is absolutely necessary. The point about it is that successive PNM administrations have always supported regionalism.

What have you done since you came into office? Since you came into office there have been specific outward signs; there have been negative statements made by you and nuances about Caricom and its member states: the ATM radio story; the “what’s in it for me” story; the 10 scholarships which you all took from Grenada and gave them back; the absence and short attendances at Caricom meetings. All of this without acknowledging the fact that there are jobs at risk here at home in the manufacturing sector. [*Desk thumping*]

You have to accept, as well, that in this global environment, countries want to treat with us as a bloc. That last meeting we had here, the China/Caribbean meeting when we had a high level visitor from China, he did not come here because of Trinidad and Tobago, you know. We had approved that meeting. He came here because he came to the Caribbean; it was a Caribbean meeting; a Caricom meeting. [*Interruption*] By now, Member for Tabaquite, you know that

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you hold bilaterals on the margins of all meetings that you go to otherwise it would have been a waste of doing those trips. You know that it was a Caribbean meeting more than anything. People want to treat with us as a bloc. You are very well aware of that.

Essentially, what I am saying is that under the PNM, we were a very strong pillar in the region; and, under you, you have been pulling away from the region. [*Desk thumping*] It is because you are a Government of disunity; you are a Government of divergence when it comes to Caricom and you have neglected it. [*Desk thumping*]

At this time Caricom needs harmony; it needs community; we are all one family and I am urging you, when you go to the next Intersessional in Suriname, that you go there with humility and you embrace the leaders as the people of the Caribbean. [*Desk thumping*] That is what I expect you to do. [*Interruption*] Go and sing “Lean on Me”, that is the kind of song you should be singing, and take your Ministers with you when you are going to Caricom. Take the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, the Minister of Finance, et cetera, when you are going. Take the whole retinue of Ministers. That is where they should be going to their meetings, not flying to Europe and that kind of thing.

Mr. Speaker, there is a real reason why we need to consider—Mr. Speaker, may I have your attention? There is a real reason why we need to consider the operationalization of the foreign affairs committee in this Parliament so that we can keep some issues, for instance, about Caricom on the front burner. I really would like you to look at that. I think that the Government and the Opposition can really play a seminal role in Caricom and it will benefit the people of Trinidad and Tobago as well. So, I look forward to your recommendations on that as well.

I want, as well, the Member for Tabaquite and the Prime Minister to also recognize that while they were not looking, there have been some other activities going on in the region, and it hints to, again, a further disintegration of Caricom. That is, the mighty Chavez has been at work and he has now engaged three other countries in his integration initiative. Haiti now has permanent observer status; Suriname and St. Lucia have been made special guest members and that is your first step to being a full member. This is in ALBA—no need to go into all of ALBA now, but these countries have also indicated their intention to join Petrocaribe which is Venezuela’s preferential credit oil scheme. Then there is now Ecocaribe as well. What does that mean? It means a dwindling market for the exports of our petroleum products. That is what it means.

So, whilst you were all sleeping, there was Mr. Chavez eating away at our market as well. It is St. Vincent, Dominica, Antigua—they are ready—and then you have these other three countries. So, Caricom, really, is in danger. I really want that you really embrace Caricom when you go to the next meeting in Suriname—please do not go via New York and Miami, you can go there through other connections. When you go there we really have to push discussions on economic spaces, judicial and legal spaces, security spaces, as well. We have to start talking some new worthwhile governance arrangements, proper institutions, et cetera, setting up special linkages for common purposes; that is the kind of discussions that I expect Trinidad and Tobago to pilot at these Caricom meetings and play a formidable role when you go to that meeting.

Whilst you are there for that meeting as well, I believe—it is expected, actually—that the new prime minister of Jamaica, Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller, would be making a commitment about Jamaica's adoption of the Caribbean Court of Justice as their appellate court. So, I do not want you to be embarrassed or ashamed. I really think that the hon. Prime Minister should join her sister, Portia Simpson-Miller, new prime minister, and commit to the Caribbean Court of Justice. [*Desk thumping*] Be prepared to commit to it when you go to that meeting. So, if you know that you have to get Cabinet approval and so on, do the needful. I think your guru, Basdeo Panday—the Prime Minister's guru—would be very impressed because, as you know, it was under his administration that Trinidad and Tobago signed on to the CCJ.

I really want you all to look at the bigger picture of creating our own regional jurisprudence as well. To honour the obligations of your Government, we are giving you our unwavering support. It is a fact. Let me remind you of what Lord Phillips had to say—he is the president of the new Supreme Court of Britain. He said, a couple months ago:

In an ideal world, former Commonwealth countries including those in the Caribbean should stop using the Privy Council and set up their own final courts instead.

What that means is that they are evicting us. They are evicting us and you really have to do the needful to adopt the CCJ in all its capacities.

So, I have said it before in a previous presentation, but if you believe in the fundamentals of true independence, and if you believe in integration and regionalism, we would sign on to the CCJ now. I really would want to hear what the COP has to say with regard to the CCJ as well.

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In speaking about the Caribbean and the special cases in the Caribbean as well, I just want to bring to the fore, a particular case in point, which is the case of Grenada. I am not too sure the public would be aware, but I learnt of it—it certainly was in the press. The Grenadian government was in a bit of a financial quagmire as a result of a diplomatic row with Taiwan with whom it enjoyed diplomatic relations for some time, and that relationship has gone sour. In fact, Taiwan has won a judgment of about US \$28 million for loans granted when things were favourable between them; this was granted over a 10-year period.

As a result of that judgment—I will tell you why I am saying that and what I am expecting from this Government. All aircraft flying into Grenada, for instance—all sums paid to the government were required to be put into an escrow account so that money coming in from Virgin Airways, Delta, British Airways and so on, all had to go into a special escrow account and could not go into the government's coffers. That, of course, has threatened the stability of the management of the airport, and, of course, the management of the country.

For Grenada, for all these countries that have been suffering as a result of low levels of tourism; very uncertain financial times, not knowing when you are getting out of the crunch and so on; not knowing when you will ever see a turnaround in this world economy—they are really threatened, economically. Countries like Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Kitts and so on, GDPs in excess of 100 per cent and that kind of thing.

What I am saying is with a situation like that before your Government, I want to ask the Prime Minister whether or not she has thought it fit to pick up a phone to call Prime Minister Tillman Thomas to at least offer some help. I want to know if there were any conciliatory talks; whether we could have offered a guarantee; whether we could have sent up some technical people from the Ministry of Finance to offer some assistance in debt restructuring or help with negotiations and so on.

I would like to be corrected on this because I would like to think that the Prime Minister's approach to governance is rather biblical, and that if she is doing anything like this, other people would know and so on, if she is extending alms in any way. I would like to know in this case because it will really show me that she is really, genuinely interested in Caricom and so on. It certainly will compensate for the largesse of the trips, et cetera.

So, I really want the Member for Tabaquite, perhaps, to say something on it. I want you to impress us that this Government is, in fact, a very humble Government and that it will reach out to its fellow countries in need and soon.

I know the Minister of Energy is going to speak shortly; he knows there is a delimitation line that now exists between Grenada and ourselves that the Prime Minister strongly resisted when she was in Opposition. He knows that Block 22 in the North Coast marine area—

Hon. Member: Block 21.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Block 21, sorry. Thank you for correcting me. The point is, it straddles the line and there is every likelihood that there will be some opportunity for exploration there. My thoughts are that in a case like that you really would want to reach out to that country, especially knowing their financial circumstances. I am glad that you are indicating as well that your approach has been a positive one but I really would be happy to know that we can reach out to them and that we can use our negotiation skills and so on to find an exploration company to the benefit of both countries. That is the kind of thing I am expecting with our approach to Caricom.

As you are nodding your head, Minister of Energy, I just want to add a clarification. I seem to get from the article that was in the papers on the eastern Caribbean gas pipeline project—I sense that there is some kind of ownership that Trinidad is sending out there and I want to remind you that that is almost an entirely private project with just NGC having a 10 per cent share, purely for strategic purposes. For all intents and purposes, it is private, and the PNM had always supported that project. In fact, we are the ones who had sent out the agreement to the Barbadian government to do the needful, just to facilitate the cross-border arrangements as well.

I am saying that because I sense that there are some wanting to claim it as an initiative of the Government showing its role in Caricom and I am discounting it immediately by saying that it is a private initiative and one that the PNM had been involved in. [*Desk thumping*]

I think I have just a few minutes and there is an issue that I just want to raise as well. [*Interruption*] I do not really want to have any private attacks on any particular Minister or so, but I have a concern—I know the Prime Minister has a concern as well—for poverty and poverty reduction; children—their health issues and their well-being and so on. I know she really, generally, cares about the Caribbean. She has given us her history—going to school in Jamaica and so on; but I really want to get her answers, particularly as it relates to poverty, on the issue with the Member for Chaguanas West and the Haitian issue—the accusations which are being made against him.

Mr. Speaker: I have indicated that any matter that is before the Court, that is sub judice, do not get involved in it.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: It is not before the court. This is not a matter before the court.

Mr. Speaker: It is not before the court?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: It is not before the court. I do not mean to be nasty; I do not want to expound on it, but Haiti is a very special case and it is for that reason that—*[Interruption]* No, I do not want to be nasty, but it is because Haiti is a very special case—*[Interruption]*

6.00 a.m.

I know, I mean, you were probably the incoming chairman of the UNC. I know that you are competing and you probably are the chairman again. The Prime Minister ought to be concerned and aware about a Cabinet Minister against whom accusations are being made, and so on. Why I think she should say something is because of your position and because of these peculiar circumstances of Haiti, where poverty is 77 per cent—general poverty level is 77 per cent—and in some areas it is as much as 88 per cent. So I am concerned. I would love nothing more than to know that those funds have been accounted for fully and that there is no need for all of these lawsuits that have been flying far and wide, and so on. It is, again, because of Haiti's situation, Haiti being one of the poorest nations in the western area and where, in fact, hunger is a chronic issue. So I would like some answers on that.

Anyway, in finalizing, in summing up, in closing, I was going to talk about the Petrotrin issue, you know, because, generally, I have found that this whole business of corporate social responsibility is really lacking with the board of Petrotrin where they chose to pick a fight with the MP for no good reason, you know. I see these people, the chairman passing me like a flying bus and then I see these people living off the fat of the nation, one of the booths in the Grand Stand, Petrotrin, and their high-flying management, the executive, champagne flowing and the MP cannot go there, and I am the first representative of the people of Point Fortin, the first representative. What I am saying is, I am questioning the whole corporate social responsibility issue of the executives of Petrotrin.

Again, I said the Prime Minister is not a good picker of men and I think she has made a terrible appointment in the members of that board and that they seem to be carrying out the job of the UNC. They are seeking the UNC's interest instead of dealing with the falling oil production and the high human resource capacity as well. They are issues to deal with but you all have gone and picked a fight with the MP.

Anyway, I am going to close, to say that generally there is just not a feeling of trust and confidence in this Government and in the Prime Minister. I think that whatever hope people had and whatever faith they had at the beginning, they have lost that, and that is precisely because there is a perception that the Prime Minister is self-absorbed; that the Government and the Prime Minister have not demonstrated an interest in the needs of all of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and not a few; that the Prime Minister has shown that she is not willing—the Member is not willing—to accept responsibility for the actions of all of those persons falling under her charge; that the Prime Minister continually makes wrong judgments; continually and unjustifiably blames others and that the Prime Minister is not open to the views of all; as well they change the rules to suit themselves. All of the consultations and collaborations are not exercised. There is inconsistency in her behaviour and I say lastly there is sometimes some distortion of truth by omitting information to suit their own political agenda.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I want to say that when it comes to instilling trust and confidence, it is behaviour and not position that builds trust and confidence. I want to end with a quotation:

There is not a great deal that we know about our nation's future in these very troubling times but what we do know is that we cannot rely on the administration and the Prime Minister and it is in the best interest of each and every citizen of this country our nation definitely is not in good hands. I thank you.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to join this debate at six o'clock in the morning, I believe, of March 03, 2012. This is my debut to the House of Representatives. I thank Members for the welcome.

I will restrict my contribution to matters of the economy and matters of energy as both matters are interwoven. Before I forget, I want to respond to something that was raised by the Member for Point Fortin with regard to Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector and its relationship with Caricom. We have been in

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contact, at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, with our counterpart in Barbados, Mr. Darcy Boyce, and we have been in contact with our counterpart in Grenada, Mr. Maurice Burke, and we have been in contact recently with Minister Phillip Caldwell, the new Minister of Energy in Jamaica and we have been in contact with the government of Guyana.

At the Ministry we are very cognizant of the role Trinidad and Tobago plays in providing energy security for the Caribbean and we have been playing that role at the Ministry and I would add that there are very significant events taking place right now in what we call the Guyana Basin. As we speak, two wells are being drilled offshore Guyana and it is very probable that Guyana will soon become an oil-producing nation. We have, therefore, to be very wary and prepared for that because Guyana is in no position to support an oil industry in its infancy and therefore would rely heavily on Trinidad and Tobago for support, and indeed the rigs that are being drilled are being supported by services from Trinidad and Tobago as is the oil industry in Suriname.

Mr. Speaker, I started off on that regional point and, as I said, I will deal with matters of the economy. The Leader of the Opposition, when he spoke he based his presentation on two pillars, some 16 hours ago, one being crime and the other being issues of the economy, and as I go on I intend to deal with the issue of SABIC and I am very glad you raised it, Leader of the Opposition, because it gives me an opportunity to state the facts of the matter and to clear up a lot of misinformation that has been in the public domain with regard to that.

With regard to the economy, Mr. Speaker, we all know that we live in interesting global economic times. We all know that the situation in Europe is a perilous situation. Greece, a country which was considered to be the birthplace of western democracy, might be the resting place of western democracy. Greece is virtually on the verge of collapse. In Spain, there is an unemployment rate of 21 per cent. Yet, while all this is happening in the world, we have relative economic stability in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Central Bank projects that in 2012 the economy will grow by 1.5 per cent. Those are not my words; these are the words of the Central Bank governor. The IMF has projected the Trinidad and Tobago economy will grow by 1.7 per cent in the year 2012. According to the IMF, and I quote from their press release following their article for consultations:

There is concrete evidence that the economy is turning the corner, and economic growth will resume in 2012 notwithstanding the ongoing technical disruptions in the energy sector.

The Leader of the Opposition alluded to the fact there was a shortfall with regard to the gas supply to Point Lisas. That is exactly what the IMF is referring to there. Real economic activity is projected to increase by 1.7 per cent in 2012 as private sector credit expansion gains momentum and the resolution of the Clico matter is brought to finality.

I also have a media release from the Central Bank dated February 24, 2012. I will just quote briefly from that Central Bank press release:

Loans for real estate mortgages and business loans were the main areas where growth was evident—and the operative word there is “growth”. The expansion in real estate mortgage lending maintains its momentum at close to 9 per cent or near in December. Meanwhile, from a position of continuous supply for most of 2011, business lending rose by 6.9 per cent in December, up from 2.7 per cent in November as some large companies in the energy and construction sectors obtained project financing from local banks.

So there is tangible evidence that the economy, after it was stabilized in 2010 and further stabilized in 2011, has been put on a growth path by this Government.

Mr. Speaker, Standard and Poor’s, in a report dated January 26, 2012, admitted that the economy was also turning around. They too cited a weekly growth of 1.2 per cent, but under political risk, Standard and Poor’s notes, and I quote:

The new Government—they are, of course, referring to this Government—the new Government is addressing inherited problems while trying to diversify the economy.

So we know what some of those inherited problems are.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: You hear that, Member for Point Fortin?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: This is Standard and Poor’s, Member for Point Fortin. So, I will now quickly turn to the energy sector, and there is a lot of talk about stagnation in the economy and nothing happening, and so on. In the year 2009, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker—I apologize, my familiarity with this place is not as it is in the other place. In the year 2009—exploration wells are significant proxies for economic activity in Trinidad and Tobago—there were zero exploration wells drilled in Trinidad and Tobago. The year 2010, there was one exploration well drilled in Trinidad and Tobago. In the year 2011, last year, there were six exploration wells drilled in this country. And this year, 2012, Mr. Speaker, we will see 15 exploration wells drilled in Trinidad and Tobago.

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The Energy Chamber, in an article in the *Guardian* of January 12, 2012—I have half an hour—says:

Level of optimism in the energy services sector increased significantly in the final quarter of 2011 to levels not seen since mid-2007. The increase in optimism reflects, in particular, an upswing in activity in the upstream exploration and production sectors and positive indications of significant investor interest in new downstream projects.

That is the Energy Chamber.

So there are signs that the economy is beginning to grow and be on a growth path, and that growth of course, as usual, is being driven in the main by the energy sector. And, as I said, 15 exploration wells are being drilled this year. I recently spoke to one of the world's leading explorationists and he told me to expect a success rate of five in one. So if we are drilling five wells, we could assume that we could have possibly, on a probabilistic basis, three finds in the year 2012.

On Saturday of last week, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege—some of you may have seen photographs in the newspapers—of visiting one of those rigs that is doing exploration work right now offshore on the east coast of Trinidad and Tobago. This particular rig is called the Rowan Gorilla 3 Rig and is drilling for a company called Bayfield, and all I can say is that the results thus far are very optimistic.

With regard to further activity in the energy sector, there are currently six rigs operating in the waters of Trinidad and Tobago. If you look at the Caribbean, there are two rigs operating in Guyana right now and there is one operating in Cuba. So the bulk of the activity in the Caribbean is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago, but we are keeping an eye, Member for Point Fortin, on what is happening in Guyana and Suriname with respect to exploration and production.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Very good, very good.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: There are six seismic programmes taking place in the country right now as companies actively and aggressively search for new reserves of oil and gas. The major exploration activity, Mr. Speaker, centres around the efforts of Parex Resources of Canada, Bayfield Resources of the United Kingdom and Neeko Resources, also of Canada. In 2012, there is also

going to be significant activity from BP, the largest gas producer in Trinidad and Tobago as they expect to spend some US \$900 million on exploration and production activity.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Fantastic, man, fantastic.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of oil production—oil production in 2011 averaged 92,500 barrels of oil per day, and this is a decline over the number realized in the previous year. But oil production in Trinidad and Tobago did not start to decline in the year 2011. It has been in decline since the year 2006, and one of the main features of that decline, and the Member for Point Fortin would be aware of this, is Trinmar. Trinmar's oil production has been in sharp decline and my colleague, the Minister of Labour, is well aware of this. [*Interruption*] They are focusing on that; I am coming to that.

Trinmar's production has been in sharp decline since the year 2005. In 2005, Trinmar's production was 35,000 barrels of oil per day, and that has now declined; it declined to roughly 21,000 barrels per day. This board, the Petrotrin board you are referring to, has started a programme of investment. I just want to refer to some stats with regard to Trinmar because the Member for Point Fortin is very passionate about Trinmar; it is in her constituency. In the year 2008, Mr. Speaker, the year 2008, you know how many wells were drilled in Trinmar? Zero.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Zero?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Zero.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: And, Member for Point Fortin, you said nothing?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: In the year 2009, Mr. Speaker, number of wells drilled in Trinmar, zero.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Oh good Lord, that is a disgrace.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: In the year 2010, the Government changed, number of wells drilled in Trinmar, 13. In the year 2011, under the new board appointed by the People's Partnership Government, number of wells drilled in Trinmar, 20; and this year we expect that we will have 16 wells drilled in Trinmar. But what I find very strange is that the Member for Point Fortin had asked me a question in Parliament—I was not here to orally answer the question, I believe Dr. Moonilal read out the answer on my behalf, I may have been out of the country—asking the Government to say whether it had intentions to find a private partner for Trinmar.

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We answered that question in this Parliament, and I got the impression at that point in time that the intention behind the question was that the Member thought that we should have some sort of privatization or some sort of private capital injection in Trinmar. So I was surprised when I read over the weekend that the chairman of the PNM, one Mr. Franklyn Khan,—somebody known as Franklyn Khan—right, he emerged from the PNM General Council meeting saying that they had discussions in the PNM General Council meeting about Trinmar and that they were of the view that Trinmar was the crown jewels of the country and should not therefore be privatized.

So, I am not very sure about what is the view of the Opposition on Trinmar and I would like to know whether the Opposition supports privatization at Trinmar or whether it does not support privatization at Trinmar, because I am confused. In the Senate, I see them wearing red ties, and I come in the Lower House today, Mr. Speaker, and I see them wearing balisier ties. So I do not know what to expect.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is currently a very aggressive drilling programme taking place at Trinmar. We are cognizant of the fact that Trinmar has tremendous potential for increasing oil production in Trinidad and Tobago. The current oil production is 22,700 barrels of oil per day. We believe that the true potential of Trinmar is somewhere close to 40,000 barrels of oil per day. There is a 21-well drilling programme taking place right now as I speak. In speaking to people from the OWTU a few weeks ago, they were of the impression that the then Government, now Opposition, deliberately ran down Trinmar. For what objective, they did not tell me but this was the view that was expressed by members of the union.

Mr. Speaker, Petrotrin plans to spend roughly TT \$6.8 billion in upstream activities in the years 2012—2014. The majority of that money or 56 per cent of that money, will be spent in turning around Trinmar and the majority of that money being spent in Trinmar will be spent on one particular field—the South West Soldado field—which has the most potential to increase oil production.

6.15 a.m.

The sad part of the story, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Trinmar was allowed to decay, Trinmar was allowed to run down and I have given the figures. Production went from 35,000 to 22,000 in a six-year period and I gave some figures with respect to wells. There was no drilling activity taking place in Trinmar at a time, 2008, when you would recall that oil prices were \$148 per barrel.

So, one would have assumed that, logically, the correct thing to do in the year 2008 was to invest in Trinmar, but what was really happening is that the company was focused on the refinery. The company was focused particularly on two projects in the refinery. One was a project called the GOP, Gasoline Optimization Project, which I believe the hon. AG is very familiar with. The other project, Mr. Speaker, was the Gas-to-Liquid Project, which is a project that has cost Petrotrin TT \$2.7 billion and they have, to date, realized nothing from that project. All they have for that project, Mr. Speaker, is a very significant lawsuit, close to TT \$12 billion. *[Interruption] [Crosstalk]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, thank you, so kind of you. Could you please tell me, the low-sulphur diesel plant, whether that has been commissioned, whether it is completed, or when can we expect because we really look forward to getting that refine data?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the ultra low sulphur diesel plant is not yet completed. We expect it will be completed some time in the third quarter of 2012, right.

So, Mr. President, coming back to the whole issue of activity in the economy, the energy sector, Mr. Speaker—sorry, Mr. Speaker, I referred to you as Mr. President again. The energy sector, Mr. Speaker, accounts for 45 per cent of gross domestic product directly. Indirectly, if one were to consider the contribution from transportation as being related to energy, if one were to consider the contribution from power generation and utilities as being related to energy, the energy sector really contributes roughly—and I am supported in this view by Gregory McGuire—50 per cent of GDP is related—he is from Guapo, right, he is from your side. It contributes roughly to 60 per cent. I think he has a house in Guapo.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: He is in the wrong party, I think we should—

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: So, it contributes to 60 per cent of the gross domestic product, Mr. Speaker. It contributes to over 50 per cent of government revenues. Most importantly, it contributes to 90 per cent, on average, of foreign direct investment. So, it is the most significant, and the Leader of the Opposition is correct when he said it is the backbone of the economy and we should be concerned about its health. Well, the backbone was under serious strain with the Gas-to-Liquid plant.

Mr. Speaker: Members for Port of Spain North/ St. Ann's West, Laventille West, Laventille East/ Morvant, it is a constant stream of conversing while the hon. Minister is on his legs. Hon. Member, Sen. Ramnarine, continue please.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: So, Mr. Speaker, I will give some idea of some of the activities that have been taking place in the downstream and midstream sector. I referred earlier to the upstream sector when I referred to the 15 exploration wells and the work being undertaken by Petrotrin at Trinmar and so on.

In the downstream and the midstream sectors, Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago coming out of that trip to Brazil, Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, has developed a very strong and significant relationship with Petrobras. Petrobras is one of the largest companies in the world. In fact, Petrobras, I believe, is the fifth largest company in the world. It is a Brazilian company, of course, mainly into oil and gas. We have met with Petrobras in Brazil. They then came to Trinidad to meet with us in November. Earlier this week, we met with Petrobras again in the city of Houston where they held meetings with Petrotrin, and they will be coming to Trinidad in April to hold a seminar on heavy oil resources with Petrotrin. So, we are developing a relationship with Petrobras of Brazil.

With regard to Russia, Mr. Speaker, an MOU was signed between Severstal of Russia, the eighth largest iron and steel company in the world; Metaldom of the Dominican Republic; Neal & Massy of Trinidad and Tobago; and the national energy corporation for the establishment of a direct reduced iron, hot briquetted iron plant in La Brea in the Union Estate.

With respect to India, Mr. Speaker, we have developed a relationship with Reliance, and Petrotrin again is in discussions with Reliance, with respect to how reliance could work with Petrotrin to develop its heavy oil resources. There are about seven billion barrels of heavy oil in Trinidad, which have largely been underutilized.

With respect to China and you see the trend I am taking here, Mr. Speaker—BRIC. With respect to China, we will soon commence negotiations as was mentioned earlier in reference to SABIC. We will soon commence negotiations with the consortium of SABIC and Sinopec for the establishment of methanol to petrochemicals and a methanol to olefins plant in Trinidad and Tobago with a capital investment if those negotiations are successful—a capital investment of US \$5.7 billion. That, Mr. Speaker, if that project come to fruition, will represent the largest foreign direct investment in the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

Next week, Mr. Speaker, we travel to Panama to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Panamanian Government for cooperation on energy matters. Panama is one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America. Its economy is growing by a rate of 8 per cent per annum and Panama wants to do business with Trinidad and Tobago. Panama is offering opportunities for investment to Petrotrin and to NP in that country; that is, taking Petrotrin and NP outside of the box, outside of Trinidad and Tobago and making them international companies.

Mr. Speaker, we also wish to announce that the Ariam 2 plant will soon commence construction and that plant, Mr. Speaker, is a capital investment of US \$1.9 billion. And, of course, the CariSal plant is also expected to start construction this month, March 2012, and that is US \$450 million in foreign direct investment. That is a project which has been around for some time. It was conceptualized during the time of the previous Government and it is about to take shape.

We will complete, Mr. Speaker, the Gasoline Optimization Project by the middle of this year. That project, as the Attorney General knows, has had significant cost overruns, has had significant schedule slippages. We will bring that project to an end by the middle of this year. And as I mentioned recently to the Member, we will also complete the ultra low sulphur diesel plant.

We will complete the multi-fuel pipeline and the loading gantry at Caroni, which are those large white tanks that you see opposite the cremation site. Once that happens, we have a place in North Trinidad where road tank wagons can be loaded. We will complete the gas-receiving facility in Cove Estate in Tobago, and the historic thing about that is, once that is done, natural gas will be the fuel which generates power on the island. Currently, power is being generated in Tobago using diesel which has to be shipped to Tobago at, of course, a cost to T&TEC. Once that happens--

Mr. Speaker: There is somebody's cell vibrating and it is really disturbing the Chamber. So anybody who has their cell on near one of those mikes, check it for me, please. Continue.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, once we complete that facility in Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago will become one of only two countries in the world that generates all its power from natural gas. The only other country that can lay claim to that boast is Qatar.

6.30 a.m.

We have, of course, as I mentioned before, reaffirmed our commitment to the Eastern Caribbean Gas Pipeline. This has made our brothers and sisters in Barbados very happy. They have been speaking to us about their desire to have this pipeline bring natural gas to their country. It is a very small volume of natural gas. It is 30 million standard cubic feet of gas per day, which is less than 1 per cent of what we produce on a daily basis.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: The Prime Minister's commitment to Caricom.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Yes, and the Prime Minister is committed to this project, and as mentioned by the Member for Point Fortin, it is largely a private sector initiative, so there is very little risk for the Government. The NGC does have a 10 per cent equity stake in the project.

What is significant is building the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, and really giving life to the whole concept of regional integration. This is no longer speaking of regional integration but really walking the talk of regional integration.

I also want to put on the record that in my meeting with Minister Phillip Paulwell of Jamaica, the new Minister of Energy of Jamaica—and he came to see me while he was here “to play Carnival” a few weeks ago. He comes to Trinidad every year “to play Carnival”, and he told me that he wanted to reopen talks with Trinidad and Tobago for the supply of liquefied natural gas to that country. Those talks had broken down a few years ago for various reasons, but we believe that there is a commercial solution to this issue and that Trinidad and Tobago has a responsibility, as a senior partner in Caricom, to provide energy security for the region.

The issue, really, Mr. Speaker, is that the price of oil, as you know, is very high, and in Trinidad and Tobago we generate our power from natural gas, but the entire Caricom region has to face the full brunt of international oil prices and this is putting a tremendous strain on their economies and if there is any way that this Government could help, we will help the Caribbean economies to transition from fuel oil and diesel to natural gas.

We have also commenced work, Mr. Speaker, on the Galeota Port. The Galeota Port was a project which had started under the previous administration in the year 2008. Contracts were awarded, and so on, but the project never started

because of a dispute between the National Energy Corporation and BP over an issue of land title. That dispute has now been put to rest and that project has commenced.

What is significant about that project is that given the fact that the Guyanas are becoming oil-producing nations, and given the fact that we are so close to Venezuela, and given Galeota's proximity to the East Coast producing oil and gas fields off Trinidad and Tobago, you may well have the catalyst in Galeota for the development of a new city in southeast Trinidad and Tobago, and that, I think, is very visionary on the part of this Government.

Dr. Rowley: This Government? This Government?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Well, we got the project going. The world has changed, Mr. Speaker. The world has changed and we must recognise that the world has changed, and I make this point over and over in the other place and I will make it here because I cannot say it enough. The world has experienced tectonic shifts in its centre of economic gravity and we must move with the tide in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 2010, 29 per cent of global foreign direct investment came from developing countries and that percentage would increase as we go forward. What that says, Mr. Speaker, is that Trinidad and Tobago has to position itself to be part of that change and has to position itself and align itself with Brazil, India, China, Russia and even South Africa, as an emerging economy.

I reiterate, Mr. Speaker, the world has changed and with respect to foreign policy, which I assume my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications will deal with, there is a relationship between foreign policy and energy policy and in that regard we have been working very closely together in the last eight months.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of a natural gas shortage at Point Lisas, this is a very serious matter which I had cause to write a letter to the editor about a few weeks ago. I do not know if the Opposition saw that letter to the editor, but there is an issue with deliverability of natural gas to the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.

The shortfall for the year 2011 is 9.2 per cent, not 30 per cent as was reported in some of the newspapers. It is 9.2 per cent and the main driver behind that shortfall is maintenance work being undertaken by BP, the country's largest natural gas producer. That maintenance work, I am advised, started in November 2010 and was a global reaction by BP to what had happened to them in the Gulf of

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Mexico in April 2010, where they are going around the world doing asset integrity work on all their offshore installations. So that is what is causing the impact.

What are we doing about it at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs? We have established a quarterly meeting—it is now going to be every two months instead of every three months—with the suppliers of natural gas and NGC and the eventual customers on the estate, to match supply and demand as much as possible, and what that means is that we will match what they call “shutdowns”. So when there is a shutdown in the upstream, we will communicate that with the downstream people so they will know that they could shut their plants down at that time. So we are trying to, as much as possible, do what they call “sheltering”, so you match the shutdowns.

We have also seen a technical solution in a modification of the natural gas pipeline network that will allow us to increase production into the domestic grid from companies other than BP. But of course, the long-term solution to this is to find more natural gas. As I said, I was offshore on Saturday and there are very promising and optimistic results taking place there, but what we have to continue to do, of course, is to find new reserves. And as I said, there is a tremendous amount of activity taking place this year and next year to ensure that we find new reserves of natural gas.

With respect to the concern of the Member for Diego Martin West as to: where is the gas going to come from for some of these new plants? With respect to that issue of gas supply, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition, those plants will not require that gas today. Those plants will commence construction in 2013 and will eventually finish in 2016/2017 and so on. There is, though not much time—there is time to identify new reserves of natural gas, and there are reserves that we have identified with companies that are already on the ground in Trinidad. So it is not reserves that we have to go and find. We are doing our homework to ensure that those new plants, AUM2 and if necessary the methanol to petrochemicals and the methanol to olefins plants, get the gas that they require.

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn to the issue of SABIC and Sinopec, and I stress Sinopec because they tend to be forgotten in this whole equation. In the past few weeks there has been considerable coverage with respect to the development of a methanol to petrochemicals and a methanol to olefins project in Trinidad and Tobago. Many of the statements that have been published in the newspapers are inaccurate and have led to speculations that have resulted in misinformation. I

think the Leader of the Opposition has done me a favour by raising the issue in this debate because it presents me with an opportunity to state the facts and I want to state all the facts, Mr. Speaker, because there is absolutely nothing to hide.

The process was open, fair and transparent, and as I will demonstrate, was conducted by some of the most reputable public servants among the Ministry of Energy, the NGC and the NEC. In April 2011, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs issued an expression of interest to 27 companies for both methanol to petrochemicals and methanol to olefins projects. There were 14 responses to both projects. There were 14 responses to the methanol to petrochemicals and 14 responses to the methanol to olefins. These responses were received in May 2011. I am giving the dates because, as I said, we want to give all the information.

SABIC expressed interest in developing both a methanol to petrochemicals and a methanol to olefins project. Request for proposals (RFPs) were prepared and sent to the respective companies on May 06, 2011. There was a bid clarification meeting in Trinidad and Tobago on June 01, 2011. Attendance at that clarification meeting, Mr. Speaker, on June 01, 2011 was optional. That means that not everybody attended. Some people attended; some people did not attend.

All questions and responses were sent to all invited bidders, in accordance with established process. It should be noted that SABIC sent a third party to represent its interests at this clarification meeting, but requested that the identity of that person remain anonymous, and this request was accepted by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs.

In response to the RFPs, Mr. Speaker, five companies submitted proposals—and hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am answering your question, the one you filed earlier in the week. I will come back and answer the question again, but in response to the RFPs, five companies or consortia, because some of them were consortia, submitted proposals for the methanol to petrochemicals project in September 2011 and three companies submitted proposals for the methanol to olefins project in November 2011.

A cross-functional team of senior professionals, drawn from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the National Energy Corporation and the NGC was selected to evaluate the proposals, and the evaluation was done based on criteria approved by Cabinet in August 2010.

The members of the evaluation committee included Errol Baldeo, Advisor, Special Projects, Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs—who was the team leader; Dr. Vernon Paltoo, Energy Industry Development Manager, NEC (National

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Energy Corporation); Shazeeda Hosein, Assistant Manager (Commercial), NGC; Merlyn Rennie-Brown, team leader, Business Development, National Energy Corporation; Ivor Superville, Business Analyst, Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs; and Mr. Sheldon Butcher, Senior Chemical Engineer, Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs.

The evaluation committee reported to a steering committee that comprised the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the President of the NGC, the President of the NEC and the Technical Advisor to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, who is Mr. Frank Look Kin. The report of the evaluation committee, including its recommendations, was submitted to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs in December 2011. These recommendations were taken to Cabinet in January 2012.

In February 2012, Cabinet accepted the recommendation of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs for the selection of SABIC and its partner Sinopec as the preferred bidder for the two RFPs from methanol to petrochemicals and methanol to olefins. A public announcement was made by your humble servant, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, on February 09, 2012.

With respect to some of the concerns that have been raised by various ambassadors and by newspaper articles, and so on, I will deal with three of the major concerns that have been raised. One was the issue of companies being prohibited from bidding on two projects. At no point, Mr. Speaker, in the process was it stated that firms that responded to the methanol to petrochemicals RFP would be prohibited from submitting a proposal for the methanol to olefins RFP. An invited bidder was free to submit bids in response to both RFPs, thus making it possible for a bidder to win in one or both categories. It is exactly for this reason that the RFPs were issued simultaneously and it was for this reason that two tranches of gas were made available. So that is the issue where people are saying that they were told they could only bid on one project.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister very sincerely for giving way. Since this is your maiden speech, I welcome you to the House. Could you just enlighten us as to what might be the reason why—in the face of that clarity—are the Japanese making this case and bringing it in the way it is being brought by way of diplomatic intervention? What might be the reason for that?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to be very sincere and very open with the Parliament and state all the facts and I am getting crosstalk that people must be mad and people must be crazy, and so on, so I do not know if to continue with my line of sincerity.

Mr. Speaker: Wait, wait, I think sometimes you have to ignore what is coming from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. What I will ask you to do is that—you have come here specifically to clear the air on issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition. For the time being, I will protect you and I will ask you to address me and deal with the issues as raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

If the Member for Diego Martin North/East is not interested, that is his business. I am interested, the Parliament is interested and the Leader of the Opposition is interested. I will give you protection, continue. [*Desk thumping.*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It is a valid question. As I said, there is nothing to hide. The evaluation—I called out the names of the people who comprised that committee—they are public servants who have served administrations, from the NAR, to the PNM, to the UNC, to this Government. I have the highest regard for the people on that evaluation committee and for the oversight committee, which included the presidents of the NGC, the NEC, Mr. Jupiter, Mr. McIntosh, Mr. Look Kin and the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, and it was their recommendation that was accepted by this Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs and taken to Cabinet.

On the issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition, which is valid, the consortium in question which raised some of these objections, we believe, is a consortium of an American company with a Japanese partner. So they are the ones who, we believe, may have had a misunderstanding of the RFP process. I mean, we cannot understand for them if they misunderstand what the RFPs meant.

Dr. Rowley: So is it your understanding that it is one company with two prongs that is causing this disturbance?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Yes. From my understanding of the issue, it is one bidder that raised this issue. We have received letters. As I said, we got five bids for the methanol to petrochemicals and three bids for the methanol to olefins. We have received letters from other companies that have bid saying very politely, “You know, we are disappointed, and so on, but we look forward to doing business with Trinidad and Tobago in the future.”

So it was a case of an American-Japanese consortium that we believe may have misunderstood the RFP process. But we are prepared again to consider doing a full press conference on this at the Ministry with the evaluation committee. There is absolutely nothing to hide. This project is far too important to the people

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of Trinidad and Tobago to lose it in politics. [*Interruption*] The company in question, the American-Japanese, and I do not want to call the name of the companies, attended the bid clarification meeting.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: They should have sought clarification there.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: On the issue of the natural gas pricing, which I think is a bigger bone of contention, articles appeared in the newspapers saying that the consortium of SABIC and Sinopec had made an offer of a natural gas price which was 36 per cent less than the NGC price, and I will clarify that right now.

Mr. Speaker, in the process of bid evaluation, natural gas pricing was one of the elements used in the process of evaluation. There were several elements used in the process of evaluating these bids. We looked at the issue of local content.

Mr. Speaker: Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Minister's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Goopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much colleagues on this side and colleagues on that side. As I said, this is a US \$5.7 billion investment. It is too critical to the country—and the entire country is going to benefit—to really lose it in any sort of politics, so I want to clear the air totally and respond as much as I could, Leader of the Opposition, to any questions you may have.

On the issue of the gas price, I come back to that. It was reported in the newspapers, and so on, that the SABIC/Sinopec consortium had offered a price which was 36 per cent less than the NGC price, and I will now explain what that means. In the process of evaluation of the various bids, the NGC put out a natural gas price and companies then bid a price relative to that price. All companies that bid, bid a price lower than the NGC price, Mr. Speaker. In the case of the SABIC/Sinopec consortium, they bid a price which was 36 per cent less than the NGC price. That actually was the highest price bid by all the bidders. There were other bidders who bid 61 per cent less than the NGC price. The issue of the NGC price was only for the purposes of bid evaluation.

Once a successful company was selected, that company would then enter into negotiations, fresh negotiations with the National Gas Company for a gas supply contract. So, that has no bearing on that negotiation. It was simply for the purposes of evaluation of the various bids. And as I said, there were other

elements. Natural gas pricing was a 15 per cent weighting. There were other elements such as local content; such as corporate social responsibility; such as the degree of downstream value added, et cetera.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you for giving way again. So am I to understand, Minister, that—I have not seen the actual letter from the Japanese ambassador, but I have seen the publication with a quotation, where it is being stated categorically that the Japanese ambassador is saying that the Japanese companies did bid a higher price than SABIC. Am I to understand that that is incorrect?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Speaker, through you, maybe the Japanese ambassador may have been misled by somebody. It is interesting, hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the letter from the US ambassador and the letter from the Japanese ambassador were both received by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs on the same day, and the US ambassador copied the Japanese ambassador on the letter.

In your speech, you had made reference to the fact that the Japanese letter came afterwards, but the fact of the matter is that they were both received by me on the same day. One was dated February 01 and the other one was dated January 31. So that is the issue of gas pricing.

As I said, no gas price has been arrived at for this project. All the Cabinet has done is to authorize the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, the National Energy Corporation and the NGC to enter into negotiations with the consortium of SABIC/Sinopec. Those negotiations, we have a timeline for them, a three-month period. If those negotiations fail, we simply move to the second-ranked company in the entire process.

There is another issue, which was being bandied about in the news, and so on, and that was the issue that SABIC somehow appeared out of the blue, and I think in my chronology of events, I pointed out that that was not so. They were part of the process since the letters went out in April 2011 and they did attend that bid clarification meeting through a third-party consultant who requested to remain anonymous. So that is the issue of SABIC appearing out of the blue.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple more issues to deal with on this matter and I just want to say that SABIC is not any small company. SABIC is one of the largest companies in the world. SABIC is ranked 210 on the Fortune 500. SABIC stands for Saudi Basic Industries Corporation, of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It is one of the world's leading manufacturers of petrochemicals, fertilizers, plastics, et cetera. That company currently produces, 67 million tons of commodities per year, so

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this is a very large company. SABIC also has a major plant in Delaware in the United States, employing 4,000 Americans. SABIC also owns GE Plastics, which was formerly a branch of General Electric.

The other company which is part of this consortium, which has not received much attention, is Sinopec of China, which is ranked, Mr. Speaker, fifth in the world on the Fortune 500. So these are not small companies and these are companies that value their reputation.

The feedback that has been coming to me is that these companies have been affected by the way their names have been bandied about in the newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago, and they have had cause, I understand, to issue what they call “cautionary notes” to the various stock exchanges around the world, explaining what is happening here in Trinidad and Tobago.

So when we treat with international investors, we have to be very careful because they are not obliged to come to Trinidad and Tobago. That \$5.7 billion investment could have easily gone to another country somewhere in the world. So, I think I have shed quite a lot of light on this issue.

Dr. Rowley: On the location issue—[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, this Motion has a purpose, and it is being used for that purpose. Minister, thank you for giving way. With respect to the location, could you enlighten us on that because that is another issue we have. That one is local.

As you know, we anxiously were looking for something in the La Brea area to replace the cancellation of the aluminium smelter. It was first put out that this project was coming to La Brea. Here now we are hearing that it is going to Point Lisas. Could you enlighten us on that, please, and what is the basis for any change?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker; thank you, Leader of the Opposition. The question is again very pertinent and I know the Member for La Brea is very passionate about projects in his constituency, and I did mention the Severstal project. It is something that we will focus on to ensure that something comes to La Brea. There is also a pipe-coating company which is soon to be set up in La Brea. Dr. Moonilal, I think you are aware of that project.

With respect to this particular project and its location—the question raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition—this project requires 200 hectares of contiguous land. We were advised that the land available in La Brea is 150

hectares of noncontiguous land. It is broken up. So the location best suited for this project is an area called Point Lisas North, which is north of what was then the Farmland MissChem plant. It is now the Point Lisas Nitrogen Limited plant. That is the area north of that plant. It is a large expanse of flat land and that is the area that has 200 hectares of contiguous land.

Mr. Jeffrey: Could I raise this question? In the case of La Brea, that Union Estate going eastwards, there is a large expanse of secondary forest, well drained. Why they cannot extend the estate going eastwards?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Member for La Brea. Mr. Speaker, this is what I was advised by the technocrats at the National Energy Corporation. What the Member for La Brea is suggesting is an expansion of the existing Union Estate, which is going to be very costly and may have environmental consequences, and so on.

I want to end my contribution by saying that we are cognizant of the need to do something in La Brea and the Severstal plant is one plant. There is another plant which will soon be located in that part of the country.

With respect to the fabrication industry, there was a vibrant fabrication yard in Labidco, as you know, which has now virtually become a ghost town because there are no platforms being fabricated there. We have the commitment, Mr. Speaker—through you to the Member for La Brea—from companies in Trinidad and Tobago that they will commence the fabrication of new platforms that are required for developing offshore resources in Labidco, so that activity may return in the medium term, I think, to La Brea.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to wrap up by saying—

Dr. Rowley: Before you do—we do not get you here very often—before you wind up, I would appreciate if you could throw some light on where we are with Loran-Manatee in light of the announcement that was made about a year ago. Have we made any progress?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Again, a very pertinent question by the Leader of the Opposition. As he would recall, I think it was in August 2010, the former Minister of Energy, Member for San Fernando West, she had gone to Caracas and she had signed the Field Unitization Treaty that unitized the two fields, and what has happened since is that various committees—a number of committees had work to do to arrive at several decisions: to arrive at a unit operator, to develop a marketing plan for the gas, and so on.

7.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I myself have found that that process is going rather slow. In December of last year I met with Minister Rafael Ramirez in Caracas. In November of last year I met with his junior minister, and they have committed. I informed them that we were of the view it was progressing slowly, because Trinidad and Tobago of course needs their gas. I did not communicate that to them. We need our gas probably more than they need their gas. So they have committed to me to accelerate the process. A high level team, Leader of the Opposition, from Venezuela is coming to Trinidad this month to iron out several outstanding issues. If one were to follow the David Renwick column, it is quite up-to-date with these issues.

We are continuing to pursue Loran-Manatee, and we expect that the whole issue of cross-border reserves would be something that keeps cropping up into the future. When one looks at blocks, especially blocks which currently have no operator and no discovered resources allocated, there are several more blocks along that Trinidad and Tobago/Venezuela maritime boundary. So the Loran-Manatee is really going to be a test case to get those other fields unitized in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken a lot longer than I intended to speak. This is of course a Motion of No Confidence in the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. It was premised by the Leader of the Opposition in his presentation that it was based on two legs: one being crime, one being the economy. He went into several issues related to the energy sector, which I thought that I had to reply to.

I close by saying that I have been the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago for eight months and approximately four days. The Prime Minister has reposed tremendous confidence in me, in giving me the responsibility of leading the country's economic backbone. I simply want to put on record my confidence in the Prime Minister in the way she has handled the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. We are still 21 months into the 60-month term, but we believe that we have stabled the economy, we have put it on a growth path and we believe that we will run the course and turn the economy around in the next couple of years.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you very much, and I thank Members for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

Miss Alicia Hospedales (*Arouca/Maloney*): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to say good morning to members of the population who stayed up

through the night until this morning listening to us, as well as to the constituents of Arouca/Maloney for your continued support.

Hon. Member: Good morning, my dear.

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, the Motion before this House today reads:

“Whereas an unending series of events have demonstrated:

- A. The Prime Minister’s gross incompetence;
- B. Failure to stimulate the economy and create sustainable employment;
- C. A consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago;
- D. An absence of effective management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister, resulting in persistent confusion and encouragement of wrongdoing in the conduct of the national affairs of Trinidad and Tobago;

Be it resolved that this Honourable House express its concern and lack of confidence in Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.”

Mr. Speaker, for one moment I want to just talk about the “failure to stimulate the economy and create sustainable employment”.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs made several projections about the economy, stating that the IMF indicated it was going to grow by 2012, et cetera, et cetera. An online dictionary says that the word “projection” means an estimate of something in the future requiring a plan for an anticipated course of action. What the Minister failed to provide for us was a proper plan for an anticipated course of action. Exactly what plan are you going to implement? Where is the plan Mr. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Oooh! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: You were sleeping or what?

Miss A. Hospedales: Where is the plan to stimulate the economy? Where is the plan to transform the economy? What is your short, medium and even long-term plan? [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I would like to hear in silence, the contribution of the Member of Parliament for Arouca/Maloney. I would like Members to observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c) respectively. Continue, hon. Member.

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, what we have not heard is how the Government intends to diversify the economy. In their *Review of the Economy 2011*, we were told that for the petroleum companies the number of barrels of crude and condensate produced had reduced. We were also told that offshore production remained relatively flat and onshore production declined. I thought that the Minister would have told us in his contribution exactly what they intended to do to ensure that onshore and offshore production would have increased, as well as to ensure that the number of barrels of crude oil and condensate—in terms of production—would be increasing over time.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs demonstrated to us that under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Government has no ideas, no vision, no plan with respect to the economy, with respect to transforming the economy. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: To be fair, the hon. Minister came here with a specific mandate. He is not to anticipate. He came to respond specifically to the concerns raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. That is why he came. He did not come to answer all those questions that you are putting to him, otherwise he would have to remain and get the consent of the House to deal with all those matters. So be fair to him, please.

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, it is a debate, and I am responding to the information given by the Member on the floor.

They have no course of action to take the economy in a positive direction, and it is even stated. I remember in the budget debate I told them that the economy was on shaky foundation, and they were saying that it was on a steady foundation. We were saying no, that it was on a shaky foundation. As I said, I am responding to what the Member would have told us. They have not taken the economy in a positive direction, but rather they have taken the economy in a negative downward direction.

Additionally, with respect to employment, the Motion says that there has been a failure on the part of the Prime Minister through her leadership of this Government to create sustainable employment. On page 26 of this same *Review of the Economy* that was printed by the Government we are told that there has been a rise in unemployment during the first quarter of fiscal 2011. That was in 2011, you could imagine what the unemployment figures would be today. Even in the rural areas the unemployment figures are going to be much, much higher than what may be recorded.

The other issue is that they failed to tell us the number of persons who are actually unemployed. We have not heard anything about that. We have not heard from the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development in terms of what exactly they intend to do with respect to creating sustainable employment. A number of persons have been laid off from their jobs. Contract workers would have been laid off. You have URP workers, OJTs and CEPEP workers. So many persons today are unemployed and unable to sustain their family. We are saying that we have no confidence in the Prime Minister, in her leadership of this Government to create sustainable employment. [*Desk thumping*]

The figures are here to show that in the first quarter of 2010 the unemployment rate was recorded at 5.9 per cent, and today based on IMF figures it is a double-digit figure. Overall the total number then of unemployed persons increased from 29,500 to 36,600. It is probably ranging within 50,000 and above right now, because the Government has not been presenting to us the accurate figures, especially with respect to poverty and unemployment. They have not been telling us the truth. [*Desk thumping*] We know that once the unemployment rate goes up, poverty levels also increase.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on. The Prime Minister told us in the Report Company, which is actually a partner of Guardian Media, that:

I want a government and an administration which is accountable and transparent. I will not tolerate corruption.

This is what the Prime Minister told us, that she would not in any way support corruption. But we saw under her leadership a Minister of Government issuing two contracts to the tune of over \$47 million and over \$35 million for airfield lighting control and monitoring systems at Piarco International Airport as well as at Crown Point International Airport. We saw a Minister of Government issuing contracts without proper tendering procedures, in the absence of the Airports Authority Board of Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister: was she aware of the award of the contracts before or after the media highlighted the information in the public domain? I would also like to ask her: why was a decision not taken to ask the Minister to step down when this discovery was made? The same thing happened when the grandstand was built. We had another scenario where an award of \$55 million was given in a contract, without any tendering procedure, another Minister of Government. We are saying: why was that Minister not asked to step down? I am asking this in the context that the Prime Minister said to us that she would not tolerate corruption. [*Desk thumping*]

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In the two examples that I have provided, there seems to be a tolerance for corruption.

Mr. Peters: Would you give way, Member?

Miss A. Hospedales: I am not giving way, Sir. I waited very, very, very long for this opportunity.

Mr. Peters: But you are asking a question and I am answering you.

Miss A. Hospedales: On January 23, 2011, the *Sunday Guardian* reported:

“PM reads riot act”—and tells board members she will not tolerate corruption. The reporter said:

“Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar yesterday read the riot act to 300-plus state board members insisting that she will not tolerate corruption.”

Attending that meeting were Ministers, Senators and Parliamentary Secretaries as well. Mr. Speaker, what happened after that?

Firstly, before I go on to what happened after that, I would like to ask: is the Prime Minister really serious about fighting corruption? What did she mean when she said that she would not tolerate corruption? What did she mean when she said that?

Mr. Jeffrey: Lip service.

Miss A. Hospedales: I am asking another question: why does she allow alleged corruption by Ministers to remain pending for months, even in the face of evidence?

7.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, on May 10, 2011, there was a newspaper article stating;

“Breaking news: Mary King fired”.

Six months after the information was received by the Prime Minister, Mary King, who was then a Senator and Minister of Planning Economic and Social Restructuring, was released from her job. The information received was that a meeting was held with the President and based on evidence that implicated Mary King in the inappropriate awarding of a \$100,000 contract to a company called Ixanos, which is her family’s business, she was eventually asked to step down.

We are told by the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara that in another article dated Wednesday May 11, 2011, that the reason Mary King was asked to step

down was because she participated in the invitation and evaluation process of the award of a \$100,000 contract to a company, Ixanos, in which her family has an interest, a matter deemed highly inappropriate by Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking why was George Nicholas, the chairman of Caribbean Airlines, not asked to step down when he did exactly what Mary King did? He participated in the invitation and evaluation process of an award of a \$27 million contract [*Desk thumping*] to CIC Insurance Brokers in which his family has an interest, and not only his family because we were told in a *Trinidad Guardian* article dated May 16, 2011 that CIC Insurance Brokers, a wholly owned subsidiary of CIC Holdings in which Issa Nicholas Holdings Limited is the fifth largest shareholder—CAL Chairman George Nicholas is a director of Issa Nicholas Holdings.

I am asking another question, why was this not deemed highly inappropriate by the Prime Minister? In the case of Mary King she said that Mary King was fired because what she did was highly inappropriate. So I am asking, why was this not deemed highly inappropriate by the Prime Minister? Why is there one standard for one person and another standard for another? Why was he not fired?

The Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara made reference to tendering and when one company comes in higher than the other, some companies placed above the other. Listen to what happened. We were told that Risk Management Services Limited—there were three companies that tendered their documents. The first is Risk Management Services Limited, the second is CIC Insurance Brokers, and the third, 21st Century Limited. CIC Insurance Brokers placed second, Risk Management Services placed first, but yet still CIC Insurance Brokers they were given the contract—\$27 million. I am asking, why was George Nicholas not required to step down?

In a statement by the Prime Minister on the Strategic Services Agency in this Parliament on February 04, 2011, the Prime Minister said to us:

“Mr. Speaker, I will always strive to do the right thing, and if things go wrong I am willing to do whatever it takes to make things right.”

I am asking, why in this situation did she not make things right by ensuring that this chairman of this board—ensure he stepped down? Despite these and other statements made by the Prime Minister there appears to be a high tolerance for corruption.

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There is another instance. We have the scenario where a Member of the Cabinet of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was found to have been involved in some bribery allegations with respect to a major world governing body for football. What happened was that the Member was eventually suspended, and eventually the Member resigned. I am saying, in the face of evidence, there was a tape where the Member was caught engaging in the bribe. In the face of evidence nothing was done to deal with this particular issue. There were calls nationally for a police probe, with respect to this particular issue, and the fact that there was evidence, and to date this issue continues to remain unaddressed and unresolved.

The question I would like to ask the Prime Minister is, what happened to this investigation? We heard a national cry for a police probe. We heard that the Commissioner of Police would investigate, we also heard that there would eventually be an investigation by the Comptroller, et cetera, but there has not been any accountability or transparency on the part of the Government regarding this investigation. We want to know whether or not there was actually an investigation and we would like the Prime Minister in her winding-up, or whatever part of the debate she contributes in, to tell us about this particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, the cries concerning this particular issue were so loud that even the chairman of the local arm of Transparency International, called for the resignation of this particular Member of the Cabinet, called for the Member to step down, immediately, because this was causing shame and disgrace to be upon our nation. We are saying to the Prime Minister, why are there some rules for some, and why are there some rules for others? Why is she not dealing with the issue at hand, and again she said she will not tolerate corruption. This is just lip service.

The same Minister was also named—and the Member for Point Fortin made reference to it—in a Haitian AIDS scandal. We are saying that all of these things are standing in the name of the particular Minister, but yet still the Member continues to serve in the Cabinet of this country. This has to be a measure of grave, grave, grave concern for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We are saying that the Prime Minister must give an account for her lack of final decision on that particular issue. Can the Prime Minister tell us why is corruption being tolerated? Why is it being tolerated? We would like to hear from her.

What is prohibiting her we would like to ask. What is prohibiting her from firing this particular Member of the Cabinet? Why has she not dealt with that particular individual? This Minister is also—you said do not deal with that

issue—but is also in a bitter battle with the Soca Warriors, and we are saying why has not the Prime Minister asked the Minister to bring closure to that issue, to respond to the court order that was given to him by providing all the accounts, et cetera?

Mr. Speaker: Please, I told you do not deal with that, it is sub judice, it is a matter before the court, it is being heard, you know about it, stay clear. Move on.

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, as I said I was not going to go in depth into the issue. I am moving on. [*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Do not shout at the Speaker.

Miss A. Hospedales: We were also told on January 05, 2011—it is a statement made by the Prime Minister—that the Government is going to bring laws against ill-gotten gains, and in the report the Prime Minister was saying:

The Government is moving to create an offence of unjust enrichment to deal with white-collar crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

This is very, very far from the truth because one day she says something, and another day she does something else, and the Member for La Brea said, “We cannot trust her”. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot believe her because there is inconsistency in what she says and what she does. There is continuous inconsistency.

There is another issue that was highlighted in the *Trinidad Guardian* on June 12, 2011: “Handpicked state chairman assists cops in \$2M marijuana probe.”

The question I want to ask the Prime Minister is, when was she first made aware that the businessman was assisting the police in investigating a drug investigation? Who recommended him and why was he even appointed on the board, even in the face of major concern expressed by Members of the Cabinet? I would like Prime Minister to answer that particular question.

Then we had the issue of the \$20 million NP contract being awarded. There was so much concern expressed in the media, on the radio, so much concern being expressed by the citizens of this country. It was only after a lot of concern was expressed via the newspaper, the television, as well as on the radio, that the contract was withdrawn from this particular individual. Mr. Speaker, we are saying: why is there such a high tolerance for corruption?

Again, in a state enterprise, we see the Auditor General report questions \$5 billion—not \$5,000—\$5 billion of contracts in the PURE Programme. What

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was stated by the Auditor General is the award of \$5 billion of contracts to entities who are not pre-qualified, and there were also awards of \$5 billion of contracts without free public tender. This is cause for concern, and these are the kinds of things that are happening in the Government. The Prime Minister lacks leadership, does not have the competence, [*Desk thumping*] is unable to bring Government Ministers in line, and even so, does not have the fortitude to fire a Government Minister when he is found doing something wrong. What is the difference between Mary King and the Ministers of Cabinet who have been found in impropriety? What is the difference between them and her? [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, 36(5). The Member is stating that Ministers of Cabinet have been found with impropriety.

Mr. Speaker: I guess she would want to elaborate on it, and she would want to identify names. Continue.

7.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I elaborated before. I spoke about the \$55 million contract being awarded for the building of a cowshed in the Savannah without tender. I also spoke about the award of two contracts—

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, where is the cowshed?

Miss A. Hospedales: In the Savannah. [*Interruption*] There are several examples. [*Laughter*] So, I am asking, what is the difference between Mary King and all those individuals I have given examples about? The only difference is that Mary King is a woman. That is the only difference. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister speaks about gender equality, gender equity, and I would like to ask her, how has she exercised gender equality in these affairs that I have listed here? How? The other thing is: it appears that corruption among men is tolerated—because there are all these examples here that men committed, and the woman who committed an act she was fired, whereas you have all these other individuals still maintaining their positions on state boards or in the Cabinet, et cetera.

There is an article in the *Newsday* on March 15, 2011 where the Prime Minister of this country lobbies the Australian Prime Minister to put gender affairs, gender rights, on the agenda for the UN General Assembly—it really just does not add up. It is almost like “heckle and jyde or hyde”.

Mr. Roberts: What! Oh Lord. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Jekyll and Hyde.

Miss A. Hospedales: Jekyll and Hyde. [*Crosstalk*] She says one thing and does something else. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot believe her, we cannot trust her and we have no confidence in her. We have none whatsoever. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I am going back to the Motion. We are agreeing with the Motion that the Prime Minister exercises gross incompetence in her duties. We are agreeing again with the Motion that there is a consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and there is an absence of effective management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister resulting in persistent confusion and encouragement of wrongdoing in the conduct of the national affairs of Trinidad and Tobago. I have so many, many more examples that I would like to highlight—

Mr. Imbert: Bring them, bring them.

Miss A. Hospedales:—when we are looking at the issue of the absence of effective management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister, resulting in persistent confusion and encouragement of wrongdoing in the conduct of the national affairs of Trinidad and Tobago.

In the *Newsday* dated January 13, 2011 there is a report of “Anil Roberts’ accident kept secret”. This accident occurred since October of the previous year and three months later the report was made in the media. Guess what happened? The hon. Member for Diego Martin West, our Leader of the Opposition, asked a question in Parliament about whether or not a Minister was involved in an accident while using a State vehicle? The Member for Chaguanas West was the person who answered the question. This is what he said:

“I want to say this too because”—He said, yes, the Minister was driving a Ministry vehicle and he also said this:

“I want to say this too because it does not give me any pleasure in making this public because the Prime Minister deliberately did not want to make it public but the question from the Member for Diego Martin West has forced me to do so and therefore I have to make it public.

One such vehicle was involved in a...accident and was driven by the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.”

Why did the Prime Minister want to keep this act of wrongdoing at the time, by a Member of her Cabinet, secret? Why did she want to do that? [*Desk thumping*]

This Minister was not the only unauthorized driver of a State vehicle. There were other Ministers of the Cabinet, Senators as well as parliamentary secretaries,

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who were all guilty of using State vehicles without the necessary authorization. This went on from June 2010 to March 2011. It was only in March 2011 that the Minister changed the policy—and that is why I am saying they had unauthorized use of the vehicles from June 2010 to March 2011. It was only in March 2011 that the Government changed the policy outlined in June 1997, which expressly prohibited the use of Government vehicles by persons not employed by the Public Service Commission, namely, Ministers and their drivers. So, not only were Ministers unauthorized but their drivers were also unauthorized.

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Government, according to Regulations, Chap. 23:50—a Minister of Government and his driver are not authorized to drive a Government vehicle. This is according to the Travelling Allowance Regulations, Chap. 23:50, and they are not covered by insurance under the Government vehicle insurance fund. But, what we saw happening was the bending of the rules, the changing of a policy to ensure that a wrongdoing was made right. [*Desk thumping*] This is something that we have been seeing over and over. There are so many other examples out there. Cabinet approved the new policy to allow Ministers to drive State vehicles. So, they were encouraged by their leader to continue to do wrong. From June 2010 to March 2011 they were encouraged in wrongdoing. [*Interruption*] There is not only tolerance of corruption but there is also the encouragement of wrongdoing by the leader of this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we saw another development taking place where two Members of Cabinet bought Porsche Cayennes to drive, using Ministry funds—

Hon. Member: Not at all! Not at all!

Miss A. Hospedales:—claiming that it is a Ministry vehicle and that they are going to be using it for their use in their ministerial duties. I am asking: can the Prime Minister tell us whether a new policy will be developed to authorize Ministers to purchase any vehicle that they want using Ministry funds? Can the Prime Minister tell us that—because, we see there is a consistent support of wrongdoing.

Mr. Speaker, another thing happened—we have not heard from the Prime Minister regarding a Minister of Government who, basically, would have driven over the foot of a woman during the Carnival time. [*Interruption*] We have not heard anything from her. We have not heard anything from the Prime Minister regarding the teacher, the principal at the Tunapuna Hindu School.

Hon. Member: She does not speak on those issues.

Miss A. Hospedales: No, she does not. The Prime Minister wants us to believe that she is a defender of the rights of women, that she is interested in gender equality and gender equity, but that is so far from the truth. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*] There are instances when women plead with her to get help and no help is provided.

Dr. Rambachan: Example.

Miss A. Hospedales: We have, for example, a report in the *TnT Mirror* dated December 09, 2011 where a board chairman of the National Schools Dietary Services Limited was fired because her husband appealed to the Prime Minister via a letter to get her intervention with respect to an issue of sexual harassment by a Member of the Cabinet.

Hon. Member: “Hmm”.

Miss A. Hospedales: To date they got a response and all the response said is that we received the information. That is all. But there has not been any investigation, so, the husband of the woman who was sexually harassed by the Cabinet Minister wrote to the Prime Minister and months later he got a response. Eventually, the wife was fired and, on top of that, not only that, the Cabinet Minister had the audacity to write to the sexually harassed woman and threatened her—

Mr. Imbert: What?

Miss A. Hospedales: Yes—through his lawyer, according to another *TnT Mirror* article dated December 11, 2011. He had the audacity to send a letter, through his lawyer, to the sexually harassed woman to indicate to her that if she tells anybody about the incident he—

Mr. Speaker: Is that a letter you are reading?

Miss A. Hospedales: Sir, I am reading from the article.

Mr. Speaker: No, I am asking you. Just give us the date of the letter, signature and so on, so we could have a proper record.

Miss A. Hospedales: Sir, I am reading from the *TnT Mirror* article and it is quoting the letter which is dated July 29, 2011. [*Interruption*]

Acting on Gopeesingh’s behalf—that is what the *TnT Mirror* said—the attorney went even further. He said: “I further advise that the publication of this letter”—they were telling her in the letter that if she publicized the contents or slandered the name of the Minister, et cetera, made mention of the sexual

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harassment allegation, she would be sued. This is the kind of thing that the Prime Minister is presiding over—wrongdoing, encouraging wrongdoing. [*Desk thumping*] She projects herself as a woman who is a defender of women, but, really, is that the truth? That is far from the truth, she is not a defender of women. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister claims she has a high level of interest in ensuring that women's rights are advanced and that gender equality is advanced, gender equity is advanced, but when things are happening to women there is no redress. There is no statement from the Prime Minister regarding the wrongdoing that women would have suffered at the hands of Members of her Cabinet. There is no word from the Prime Minister, and this is a sorry state. So, we say that we have no confidence in her, we do not believe her and we do not trust her. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I am going back again to the Motion. (C) of the Motion says there is "A consistent unwillingness to act"—on the part of the Prime Minister—"in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago." We have seen it over and over again. We have seen so many examples. In an address by the Prime Minister at the formal commissioning ceremony of the Augusta Westland AW139 helicopters at Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard, Piarco, the Prime Minister had this to say, and I am just going to quote a few extracts. She said:

"Today's ceremony is a very important one, as it deals with our nation's security strength and its ability to defend our country against crime and its perpetrators on an aerial front."

7.45 a.m.

They were commissioning two state-of-the-art helicopters and this is what she said again, Mr. Speaker:

"My dear friends, when I outlined various aspects of Government's crime plan in the past year, one of the things I sought to continually stress was that our plan was much more than a long list of quick-fix remedies, but rather, a careful long-term plan to make Trinidad and Tobago's security systems strong again after too many years of neglect and mistakes."

Mr. Speaker, she also said:

"I will cautiously venture to say that this is truly the beginning of results in our fight against crime and in my Government's efforts to rebuild our country's defence system and strengthen our security apparatuses to ensure that we win the fight against the criminal elements."

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen happen—after all of this flattery, I would say, was that the two helicopters that the Prime Minister talked about that would be used in the fight against crime, that would be used to secure the borders of Trinidad and Tobago and to ensure that the borders are so protected that guns, drugs and human trafficking, et cetera, would not take place or would be reduced to some measure—is that those crime fighting helicopters are now being used as Government taxi service—up and down.

Mr. Imbert: It is used to commit crime.

Mr. Speaker: You are bordering on tedious repetition. That matter has been raised over and over. Get on to something new, please. At any rate your speaking time has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss. M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, what we have seen is that the Government is using State assets for their own personal use. And as a leader of the Government she is setting a bad example for the other Members of the Government. What we have seen happen under this so called Government and under the leadership of the Prime Minister is that there has been no vision, no plan, with respect to crime fighting in Trinidad and Tobago. They have scrapped the anti-crime unit of Trinidad and Tobago without replacement—no other plan in place—plucked the blimp out of the sky; cancelled the offshore patrol vessels; dismantled the SIA and SSA Units; Used crime fighting—well I said that—used crime-fighting helicopters as taxis.

Mr. Speaker, a number of security experts—a number of persons who are specialized in the area of security expressed great concern, and decried the decisions of the Prime Minister and her Government with respect to all that they have done to dismantle the security services in Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister wants us to believe that they genuinely care about the illicit drugs and firearms trade. She said at a UN meeting in September 2010 that they are going to be tougher on crime, that they are going to have a tough action against the trade in illicit drugs and firearms and, Mr. Speaker, she said that they are interested in ensuring that crime goes down. That is so far from the truth. The evidence is not there.

Even the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce expressed great regret; expressed great dissatisfaction with what the current Government is doing. They

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made reference to a speech that was made by the Prime Minister in Parliament, September 2011, in seeking to extend the state of emergency. In her speech the Prime Minister said that some of the crime-fighting initiatives are the 21st Century Policing and Colour Me Orange. Just imagine Colour Me Orange being used as a crime-fighting initiative. It has to be the, “hands up, hands down put your hands on your lip”. After the Prime Minister’s address, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce had this to say:

“...The Prime Minister’s address...remains unclear”—and does not have a “comprehensive crime plan”.

They stated that a comprehensive crime plan does not exist, “with stated time frames for implementation and expected outcomes”. Mr. Speaker, even the Chamber of Commerce was disappointed.

We are saying on this side that we have no confidence in the Government, no confidence in the leader of the Government, no confidence in the Prime Minister and—[*Desk thumping*] as the Member for La Brea said, we do not believe her. We do not trust her. Anything that she says cannot be taken for granted. [*Desk thumping*] What we have seen happen under the leadership of the Prime Minister was that poverty increased to 21.8 per cent. This is probably higher today.

- Unemployment increased;
- A decrease in Tourism;
- An increase in crime and corruption;
- An increase in the tolerance of corruption as well;
- A decrease in public accountability and transparency;
- A decrease in public confidence in the Prime Minister and her Government; and
- An increase in public discontentment.

Mr. Speaker, I express no confidence in the Prime Minister and this Government on behalf of every right-thinking member of the population, and all the constituents of Arouca/Maloney who lost their jobs because they either look like PNM or who lost their jobs during the state of emergency—the push-cart workers, the CEPEP workers, the URP workers, the OJTs, Mr. Speaker, [*Desk thumping*] those who had jobs, the professionals that had contracts and the contracts were taken away from them even before the contracts ended, their jobs

were taken away. On behalf of all those persons who lost their jobs, we have no confidence in the Prime Minister and we have no confidence in her leadership. [*Desk thumping*]

What we have seen happen over the last few months was the Prime Minister in her—she has been most interested in seeking to accumulate frequent flyer miles, rather than attend to the governance of this country. [*Desk thumping*] She has been more concerned about attending to her personal business rather than attending to work, going to meaningful work on a daily basis. She has been more concerned in strutting down catwalks than ensuring that strategies are implemented to make sure that this economy is on an upward movement.

Mr. Speaker, as we have said in the Motion, we have no confidence in the Prime Minister, none whatsoever. Today, we are saying that the Prime Minister of this country cannot be trusted. The Prime Minister—anything that she says we cannot believe her. [*Desk thumping*] Even Robocop has no confidence in the Prime Minister of this country and the Prime Minister does not mean what she says and we really cannot believe her. I am asking this last question to the people of this country: based on the information that was shared today, is the Prime Minister fair and balanced in her approach in tolerating or not tolerating corruption?

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Prakash Ramadhar): Morning to all. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to this debate. I was born in Freeport to my parents, Siew and Samdeo Ramadhar. Every breath I have taken from my first breath, every sip of water I had from my birth, every form of sustenance I have had as a child came from this land. It came from the air and it came from our water and I say this to mark the love and respect I have for my country and for its people.

Mr. Speaker, it is important, that when we stand in the Parliament, to appreciate that a Motion of No Confidence—and that point had been made before, but it is worth repeating—is a serious constitutional weapon and a serious constitutional tool, and must never be used lightly, flippantly or frivolously. We ask ourselves, after all these hours that we have been here and talked and talked and talked, whether this nation is in a better place from where we started to where we are now. Has this nation paid a price for this No Confidence Motion? Have we improved ourselves or have we gone into the negative territory?

I humbly suggest that the entire world, the political world, looks upon every Motion of No Confidence to see what is happening. It is a marker of instability in

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a country as to its governance; as to whether a Government could fall or stand after being duly elected and shortly within the period it was supposed to have been.

That really is the context in which a No Confidence Motion should be looked at, not just within our shores but into the wider global space to appreciate the damage that this could do to this nation. I asked myself if any true patriot, any true lover of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, would have used this tool for cheap political gain, nothing other than that. It was doomed from the beginning we know really, and they have admitted it, that with the numbers alone they could never have won it, but more important than that you ask yourself, the timing of this No Confidence Motion. Why was it put now, when there was an expected fomenting of industrial unrest in this nation?

I used a term—maybe it was not the best advised term to describe what was happening but for the sake of clarity, so that we would not be poisoned by the injection of race and divisive comments along the way. I said that this is an act—because a friend told me this of a political “corbeaux”. Anything that survives off the death or demise of another body is a vulture. And with all due respect, nothing could better describe the action of this No Confidence Motion than being that of a vulture because it takes from the nation that which it needs most now.

In this Motion they talk about lack of confidence and the stimulation of the economy. Has it ever been considered, really, that the action of the No Confidence Motion itself could affect confidence and investors to come to Trinidad? The Leader of the Opposition, with all due respect to him—I saw his body language—he knew he made a fatal error in bringing this No Confidence Motion because at the very highest, all we have been given is really the repetition of what we have heard for the last year. Something that we have warned about over and over to be very careful that you do not use the Parliament as a place to make loose allegations against persons unless you have absolutely good reason or solid evidence upon which you could stand.

8.00 a.m.

Let me just put this thing in context. My friend from Arouca/Maloney has given us a painful exhibition of many things which are wrong in this nation. When we hear of the Prime Minister exercising her authority as Prime Minister in relation to Mary King, suddenly I am hearing from the other side that it is a matter of gender discrimination by our Prime Minister. Forgive me, but I take a different view.

Miss Hospedales: Why did she not deal with the others?

Mr. Speaker: You had your chance. Allow the Member to speak.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Rest assured, I try to be fair and I will tell my friend why not. One of the most sacred rights of any individual in any nation and, in particular, in Trinidad and Tobago—and I think we need to understand what it really is—is something called the presumption of innocence. For centuries that right never existed, but it is a right that we have, and the reason for that right is that for the very personalities and the beliefs of persons who hold high authority who do not understand the consequence of their words, that you could make an allegation against someone and you could permanently damage them with an untruth, with an allegation that, when you look at all of the facts, proves to be wrong.

The distinction between the Mary King affair and any other is that Mary King herself made admissions as to what transpired. Therefore, there was material upon which the Prime Minister could have acted.

Miss Hospedales: That is nonsense.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Arouca/Maloney, if you continue to disturb the Member, I will ask you to leave this Chamber. Continue, Member.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Thank you very much. The other allegations that we have heard of, there are institutions to deal with those things. We have the Integrity Commission; we have the police service; but it is clearly a situation where those on the other side believe that the old rule still exists where political interference into institutions could have the effect that they wish; that they do not believe, first of all, in the independence of institutions.

We on this side truly believe that if a nation is to succeed, the institutions of State must be strengthened, be made independent, given the resources to do what they have to do, because the moment you leave it up to the discretion of any politician to decide whether a person is guilty or innocent, you have no democracy. That is a fundamental flaw in the thinking of those on the other side, especially my friend from Arouca/Maloney.

It is easy for one to sit and read newspaper reports or any report from the *Mirror*, or whatever, and make a finding of fact in your mind and point a finger and say that person is guilty. I could tell you—and I am sure my friend from Diego Martin North/East will agree—that there is a trial process for those who are accused of serious offences, and that is a necessary machinery or mechanism to sift the truth from the falsehoods.

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I grew up learning that there are at least two sides to every single story, and the easy side is to give a man a bad name and then hang him. But we cannot live like that. It is either we are civilized and we believe in truth, or we believe in allegations. Allegations are important as a first step, but then the machinery of State must take the next step to find truth, and that is why this country is pained. We came in, yes, on a promise to ensure that justice is served, and we have done a lot of things in the Ministry of Justice, and I shall not repeat all the legislative devices that we have brought before this Parliament to enable those who have the duty and responsibility, to effect their duty.

But then we see in the newspapers this week—it could be true or not—that the chief investigator into the Calder Hart affair has been sent on 21 months' leave, a matter which, for two or more years, on a simple issue of perjury; documents which were provided by the Congress of the People to this nation and to the Commissioner of Police. Investigations go on and on and on and then the investigator goes on a long vacation.

These are the things that the country has no confidence in. How is it possible that simple matters like those could have such a long span of investigation? But yet my friend from Arouca/Maloney will suggest in a moment, and point her finger: “that one guilty; that one guilty”, and therefore take action that will damage the reputation and the very lives of people.

I was pained yesterday when I heard the Leader of the Opposition bring the name Resmi Ramnarine to this Chamber again. He is entitled, of course, to make comment. But if that young lady has done a deed poll, for whatever reason, I do not know if that is public business at this point in time, unless some impropriety occurs thereafter.

Dr. Moonilal: They will hound her until “she dead”.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Is this young lady not entitled to move on with her life? Has she been found guilty of any offence? Should she be a pariah in this nation that she could find no employment anywhere? The name alone, nobody wants her. But they hound one young woman and then they talk about gender discrimination by our Prime Minister? Do you not understand it is a human being; somebody's child they are dealing with? I do not know what she has done. I really do not. I am not here to defend her; I am just stating as a human being to a human being, it is easy to say, for political points, that a person has no right to exist because you believe that they support somebody else or the other.

I heard all sorts of ugliness in the debates last night; the insinuations of racism and all sorts of things. When I hear, for instance—I would not point out who, they must know, because I believe in a higher justice and a higher truth. It does not matter what you say, but what is in your heart you will be judged by. What you do is what you will be judged by.

The hypocrisy of the politicians in this nation has got to come to an end—*[Desk thumping]*—because we preach one thing, practice another—

Dr. Rowley: And you are a good example of that.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Dr. Rowley.

Dr. Rowley: The best example of that.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West, please, please—

Hon. P. Ramadhar: I am happy—

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West, I know sometimes you get hot under the collar, but, please—

Dr. Rowley: I am very cool, Sir; probably cold.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but please, do not shout to the hon. Member. I would not allow anybody to shout at you whilst you are on your legs. I would object to it and I want you to show respect to the hon. Member for St. Augustine. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. P. Ramadhar: I am grateful, Mr. Speaker. You see, this brings me to a point that is often overlooked. When any instance occurs, any fact is put before you, or any scenario is played out before you, how you interpret that which you see, hear and observe, says as much about you as it does about what is happening, and if it is that there are persons who see only doom, gloom, nastiness, evil, conceit, deception and hypocrisy, then that tells you the foundation upon which those facts have been laid. Therefore, you ask yourself, why is it that you hold high office but you are not able to have a wider perspective to at least appreciate that the view that you hold which is—from what I am hearing—totally negative, that there is no other?

Mr. De Coteau: No optimism.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: These are things that bother me to no end because I really hope and believe that when you are elevated to leadership level, whether in Government or in Opposition, and you hold office, that you realize you are no

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longer who you were; you are now positioned at a higher level and, therefore, you have a responsibility to be circumspect. You must have decorum and dignity. But more important than everything else, you have got to be fair.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: “And doh quote from the *Mirror* only.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: You have got to be honest. You know, we hear the other side throwing barbs about corruption, corruption, corruption.

Mr. Imbert: What you want, evidence?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Absolutely. If we have corruption, I am the first to say that whoever does wrong must pay the price.

Mr. Imbert: I will comply.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: We have to set that example. Somebody said I celebrated Mary King. I did not celebrate it. I congratulated the Prime Minister. For the first time this nation has seen a standard set and an immediate response to the calls of the people.

We need to know where we are. We appreciate in human life that there is the good, the bad, the ugly, and as a result of that knowledge nobody could say that all persons will be fair and honest, but that is why we have laws, and this is the only administration that has taken the steps necessary to bring the procurement legislation so that we would have that standard that if you fall below it, you will know what your consequences are.

There will be no ambiguity as to whether you should have sole selective tender or whether you should have open bid. We want to set that. But when given the opportunity, those who speak about corruption all along, instead of partaking and participating in the development of that necessary tool, for most frivolous reasons, walk away and say, “We want no part of that.” The work of the Parliament cannot be stymied. We will continue and we will do what we have sworn to do—our duty to our people. Therefore, the procurement legislation will come before this House.

We have been elected for a five-year term. We must earn the right for another term. In that process, you will get all sorts of criticisms that we have not delivered. We are into 22 months of our Government. I make no excuses for failures. What I do make is a fair assessment of where we are and how we got there.

We have inherited a system—and I tell you, in the Ministry of Legal Affairs as an example, it was as if things had stopped from when I made enquiry from

2001 to 2010. But realizing that the nation needed the services that were critically necessary—I would give you some examples—in this period we have already opened 12 outlying offices for e-registration of births and deaths. Two more will come on stream within the month. We have gone out to the people. So no longer would you have to come to Port of Spain. You go there; you can register the births or deaths.

I want to say that now the registrars are available 24/7—at every location we have, or on our website, there are numbers for the registrars for every area. That is for registration of deaths, as an example. We have had the horror stories of persons dying, especially our Muslim brothers or sisters, and they need immediate death certificates and a registrar could not be found. We have now put it so that you have 14 locations you can go to—well, 12, and two within the next couple months or weeks.

You can call them out and they would come and you would get your documents. It is already that you could go to any of these centres, make your application for your birth certificate, death certificate or marriage certificate, and you do not have to return. We mail it to you, just as an example.

I hear the hypocrisy of the PNM when they speak today, about caring for the people. Do you know—I am just giving some random examples of their caring—since 2002 they have allowed the Rent Assessment Boards to lapse. What that meant was that a large number of the population were left without protection.

Mr. Warner: That is true.

Mr. Imbert: One hundred people.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Hundreds of thousands.

Mr. Imbert: One hundred.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Left without protection. What has happened is the kind—and I am sure every Member of Parliament here will tell you of the sort of complaints of the—what shall I say?—hideous conditions that they have to rent; the high rental that they have to pay. Very often you hear a person coming and tell you more than half their salary goes to rent.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Single mothers.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Single parents. Painful! And that is the PNM. They allowed that to lapse. But not just that. In 2006 they took a decision to not renew

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the legislation to allow rent assessment. In my Ministry, we have taken the bull by the horns, and we have gone to assess—

Dr. Ramadharsingh: The raging bull?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Whatever you want to call them. And we have gone to the population with many consultations throughout the nation. We had in St. Augustine; we have had in Tobago and we are going to have in central and in south and back into Port of Spain, to get the views of those tenants and also the landlords, so at the end of which, this Government will have a policy and legislation to ensure that there is fairness in the market for rental properties. No Government could sit idly by and allow the abuse of its citizens. It is not an easy thing, but it is a necessary thing and we have taken that responsibility.

8.15 a.m.

In relation to land regularization in Tobago as another example—and, I was a bit pained when Mr. London, the Secretary of the THA made a comment and put it into the news yesterday. I received a letter yesterday by fax, dated March 01, where he talked about dragging feet and so. The irony is that a committee had been put in place and an interim report has been created in relation to how we are going to deal with the land regularization in Tobago, which is extremely complicated.

You know what happened? We had a consultation on rent on February 29, 2012, where it was announced that we would have consultations on land regularization in Tobago within a short period. But, the next day the Secretary found it necessary to put into the media about dragging feet. I found that a bit circumstantial. We have promised to deliver that—the whole issue of regularizing land in Tobago—by May of this year and we are going to live up to that deadline.

These are the things that trouble me—when they are not taking on the responsibility that was given to them because, when I came in as Minister, there was a report done by Dr. Eastlyn McKenzie and her committee, which was on a shelf for four years and they did nothing about it. We thought it was right and proper that that report, a new committee would look at it and speak to the people of Tobago for them to come up with their ideas as to how best to work this machinery.

These are simple things, but we hear on the other side all sorts of grandiose statements about who “doh care and who doh what”. But, when they had the responsibility they did not. We are sickened. I am almost seasick to hear about OPVs over and over and over again. Nauseated and seasick!

You know, Mr. Speaker, a simple thing: how many citizens have forgotten the coup of 1990? How many? I do not think many of us have. But, do you know there was evidence in a court matter not just here but in Florida, where guns came in through the port? In ply board—a container load of ply board. They want to spend billions of dollars on OPVs—and I make no comment on the merit or demerits of the OPV system.

What I could tell you is that administration always looked for the big-money, big-ticket ideas, instead of the simple, cheap and effective ones. Why do I say this? I always wanted to say it secretly, but I cannot. Do you know none of our Ports in this day and age, 2012, with the technology that we should have had, none of our ports has a scanner to scan containers? How unimaginable is it, when the technology exists that every container that comes through our ports could be scanned, not just for drugs, but for arms and ammunition, the weapons of death and contraband?

One of the first things that this administration has done is to instruct that scanners be put on all of our ports. They never did that. But, they would come here every week, every opportunity to carry on about bringing down the security fences and leave the place—the border security, to make it porous. But, the most obvious thing, to deal with your ports, they never did. You observe what has happened in the recent past. There have been many drug busts on the port itself, in what? Containers. Therefore, that is a simple first step. We are taking that, we are doing that.

Mr. Speaker, let me just go back a bit about my Ministry. On a daily basis we may have almost 2,000 persons visiting the offices at Legal Affairs on South Quay, Port of Spain. On mornings, people come from all over this nation: Cedros, Sangre Grande. When I came as a Minister there, we realized that people would arrive at our doors sometimes four, five in the morning, and we hoped it would not be raining because then they would be out in the weather. One of the first things we did was to give instructions to let the people in. We have limited space at the old building we are in, Registration House, so we have a big tent. Unfortunately that is the best we could do. Put some air conditioning in it, water, coffee, and they have washroom facilities. What a huge difference it has made to the lives of people.

The reason we are still at Registration House is that the Legal Affairs Towers that the last administration spent hundreds of millions of dollars on—which was handed over to my Ministry a year-plus ago—when we took delivery of that building, it turned out to be nothing other than an empty shell that requires

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hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars again to outfit, to make usable. But, that is not the end of that horror story. You know, when the building was handed over to us, there were over 200 defects in the building. So, those defects have got to be rectified. Without even knowing that, I had said, with the optimism that I had, that we could get this thing done in six months and occupy it. Well, look at that. It has been over a year and we cannot because of those simple things—the legacy of a PNM maladministration, the legacy of caring, the legacy of failure as far as I am concerned.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion is about confidence or lack of it in our Prime Minister. I am not surprised that none of my friends on the other side has expressed confidence in this Government. That is their job, that is what they believe their job is. But, what is important to note is that they have not brought any single issue of gravity that would shake the foundations of our democracy to the sufficiency that people would feel that this Government has got to go. They have brought tidbits. Nothing is perfect in this world. No government has ever been perfect, but, what we do have on this side is a will and an intent to improve what we have received, to set new standards of how we conduct ourselves. Even in this Chamber, the transparency—what my friends continue to complain about—is manifest; every single question that has been posed to this Government has been answered in time.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, right.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Yes, they would mock that, but that is critical to our democracy.

Mr. Imbert: Answers are nonsense.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: You have given others, Mr. Speaker, the advice to ignore the Member for Diego Martin North/East. I think, I shall now heed the advice. I gain nothing from him today.

Mr. Imbert: Nonsense.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: As the Leader of Government Business in his most clinical [*Interruption*]—Sorry, I beg your pardon.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, you are becoming—I just want to be fair. You cannot be shouting unparliamentary expressions across the floor especially to Members who are on their legs. You could take a note because you are yet to speak and you are going to seek my protection, you know. You are going to seek my protection. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: I would not get it.

Mr. Speaker: You may not get it this time. You might be right. You might be right. I find you to be rude, to be quite frank. The hon. Member for St. Augustine and Minister of Legal Affairs is speaking. You do not agree with what he is saying, but you do not have to be shouting across the floor and using insulting language. And then, you are rude to the Speaker as well, and disregarding my ruling. Well, I am warning you for the final time. If you continue to disregard my ruling and my advice, I will order you out of this Chamber. This is my final warning to you. I do not want to hear you for the morning again, except when you are speaking. Hon. Member for St. Augustine, continue.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is obvious that my friends on the other side are using old rules to the new politics which my founding leader has espoused in this nation, and the country has now taken to heart. Mr. Winston Dookeran, of course, is a hero to this nation and he has propounded—and not just spoken—he has lived the life, and it is a life of a politician that I think we should all make an effort to emulate.

Our present Prime Minister is Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, is a true leader, who really lives and who really exhibits the qualities of leadership. And, if you would permit me, these are some of the, you know, what shall I say, gifts that a person should have to be a leader. Not everybody who claims to be a leader should be made leader or be given the title of leader. And, if they have it by false means it should be removed from them.

The criteria for leadership—first of all, you must have a person who is truthful, a person who is honest, a person with dignity, a person who has decorum, honour, compassion, love for the people, forbearance, wisdom, intelligence, strength, open-mindedness. They must be able to inspire hope; they must be able to inspire a sense of what you can achieve, that your potential is great and you could be better than you are today.

A leader, however, who exhibits only anger, hate, negativity, recklessness, spitefulness, venom, inspires a nation to the darker side, to a side that would lead to destruction—[*Crosstalk*—and, I am hearing once again, the wickedness that springs up from the heart of many interpreting very innocent and very straightforward statements in the most hideous light. My friends on the other side seem to believe that if they poke the monster of racial divide in this nation that they would somehow succeed.

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There is something called scorched earth. I do not know, we should speak to them more about what that means—scorched-earth policy, where you destroy the land upon which you wish to conquer; nothing would sustain upon it. That is what they deal with. Every single thing, it is about division, it is about breaking, it is about destroying. I want to ask, really, if these are the qualities that are exhibited on the other side, should they ever be given the right to rule or to lead this nation? If they consider it very comfortable to complain, and to contest, and to criticize and to oppose, well, then they are very well fit for being in the Opposition. I wish them very well there for an extremely long period of time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity and I want to express the confidence that we have in the Prime Minister, who through very grave and difficult times was able to bring together five different parties, the interest of all of the nation represented within that five, to keep us together strong even though we may have different points of view, at the end of which every decision we take is always in the interest of our people.

That is said and in the context it is done of an imperfect political landscape with a country that is unaccustomed to the new paradigm of coalition politics, where others interpret disagreement to be destructive, when disagreement in itself is the lifeblood of democracy. The right to express yourself, but at the end of which to be able to work together is a blessing that we have now in this nation. We thank our Prime Minister for having what it takes, all those qualities, that magnetism to keep us together to work in the interest of our people.

8.30 a.m.

Others may condemn and they may seek to destroy because what has happened in this nation is that there is a “newness” where good is finally winning over evil, but evil would not stay by lightly or allow itself to be destroyed completely; they would resist it with all sorts of mechanisms and tools. I want to assure all those who wish to destroy, or who wish to be negative, that we on this side are committed by our love to our people and to the love of our nation, and we will survive and we will prosper and we will be here for the very, very long term. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Mr. Speaker, I would take this opportunity to speak before you throw me out. Now, Mr. Speaker, an incident occurred in this Chamber earlier this morning, and it is very relevant to the Motion before the House. The Motion before the House, which was filed by the Leader of the Opposition, in part (d) it refers to “An absence of effective

management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister, resulting in persistent confusion and encouragement of wrongdoing in the conduct of the national affairs of Trinidad and Tobago.” Around the time that we took our break for doubles—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: What time is that?

Mr. C. Imbert: Three o’clock or thereabouts. An incident occurred where the National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister laid in wait for the Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the Member is making reference to persons who are not Members of this House—

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, is he getting up on a point of order?

Dr. Moonilal: —and relating stories that are not the subject of any report. [*Both Members standing*]

Mr. C. Imbert: You cannot have two people standing. What is going on here? I am not giving way. Thank you. Next time, get up on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: If you are referring to a matter that has been brought to my attention by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, I have asked the Marshal to enquire into that matter. So, I would not want you to deal with that until I get the report on it.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I always obey your rulings, but the population needs to know.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but what I am saying is that I shared the report to the Marshal.

Mr. C. Imbert: Why is it a secret, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I am not saying it is a secret.

Mr. C. Imbert: Well, I think I can speak in general terms about this matter. Thank you very much. The National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister threatened the Member for Laventille East/Morvant in this very Chamber tonight. That is why it is difficult to have confidence in the Prime Minister because this is just yet another example of the people that the Prime Minister has around her who are causing her to fall into disrepute, and she turns a blind eye to these things.

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[*Desk thumping*] The hon. Member was physically intimidated. I hope there is a proper investigation of this matter, and it is dealt with appropriately, because it could have very serious consequences.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. Member for St. Augustine speak just now and every time he speaks, I get the impression that he is completely disconnected from reality. For the record, between 1991 and 2010, there have been at least nine no confidence Motions in this Parliament, at least eight of which were brought by persons associated with your Government. The present Prime Minister brought three—one in 2008, one in 2009 and one in 2010.

Now, if, according to the hon. Member for St. Augustine, when an Opposition files a Motion of no confidence that they cannot win, using your logic, because you do not have the parliamentary majority—and on all occasions that the then Opposition filed their various Motions of no confidence, they did not have a parliamentary majority—therefore they could not win any of them. In fact, those that actually were debated, they lost them. Nobody resigned by them. No Member of the then Opposition resigned when they lost their Motions of no confidence. If, according to the logic of the Member for St. Augustine, you file a Motion of no confidence which you cannot win, then you are a political “corbeaux”. That is what he said—a political “corbeaux”, a vulture. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramadhar: Would you give way please so that I could—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: No, no, that is what you said, I wrote down what you said.

Dr. Browne: Disappointing! New politics!

Mr. C. Imbert: That would any true patriot use the mechanism of a Motion of no confidence when they do not have the votes to win it, it is an act of a political “corbeaux”. So that in 2008, 2009 and 2010, when the Member for Siparia brought various Motions of no confidence, by your definition, the Member for Siparia was a political “corbeaux”, a vulture. [*Desk thumping*] There is too much histrionics, too much hype associated with this matter; this is a very, very simple matter. The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West has filed a Motion giving the reasons we should have no confidence in the Prime Minister. The one that interests me the most is, “an absence of effective management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister...”

The Member for St. Augustine also went on to say that you can make a false allegation against someone and damage them. Well, we had a situation like that tonight, and the Speaker, in his wisdom, indicated to me—when I objected—that

in a Motion of this nature, I am supposed to take notes. Listen to the false allegations, take notes and respond. So, you had the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara uttering the most outrageous falsehoods in this Parliament without a shred of evidence; I have to take notes and respond. But, according to the Member for St. Augustine, people can make allegations against someone and damage them, and according to you, that is wrong. So therefore, the behaviour and conduct of the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara was completely out of order and completely reprehensible according to your logic.

What the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara falsely alleged was that I, as Minister of Works and Transport, had instructed the tenders committee who were evaluating the bids for the Rapid Rail contract, that they should disregard the Bombardier tender for the Rapid Rail project. That is a complete falsehood. It is unfortunate that I cannot use other words to describe that. The evaluation committee for that project was comprised of officials from the Ministry of Finance including the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, experts in the field of railways and officials from the National Infrastructure Development Company.

There was no ministerial involvement in that Tender Evaluation Committee and no Minister could possibly have given instructions to that committee. A complete, utter and outrageous falsehood! No evidence whatsoever; just trying to score cheap political points, that is all the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara—. Then, insinuating after that I had something to do with the test drive of the Bombardier aircraft by the former Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something. Some miscreant, some malcontent, when this matter came up years ago—the question of the test drive on this Bombardier aircraft—some dishonest person wrote a letter of complaint to the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago alleging that I had participated in this test flight. Next thing, I got a letter from the Integrity Commission telling me that I have been accused of a conflict of interest because I had participated in this test flight with this Bombardier aircraft. So I asked the Integrity Commission: do you have a passenger manifest? Of course, the answer was no. Do you have a photograph of me on the plane? No. Do you have testimony from somebody who was on the plane that I was there? No.

The fact of the matter is that I was nowhere around, knew nothing about it, was not informed, had no connection whatsoever with it; but that is the kind of allegation that the Member for St. Augustine was talking about when a Minister gets up in this House and talks this rot. This has already been dealt with in the

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public domain, but what hon. Members opposite are wont to do is to repeat falsehoods ad nauseum in the hope that, eventually, somebody would forget that these matters have already been discounted in the public domain. That is why it is difficult to have confidence in the Prime Minister because the Prime Minister would allow Ministers to come into this Parliament and utter the most outrageous falsehoods and do nothing about it. Do absolutely nothing about it!

I also heard the Member for St. Augustine speak about procurement—*[Interruption]* I do not know where he ran away to—where he indicated that his Government is the first and only Government that is moving to enact procurement legislation, and that the Opposition has withdrawn from that process for frivolous reasons. Well, we have not withdrawn for frivolous reasons; we have withdrawn for very good reasons. You see, there are Government Ministers and Government Ministries who are breaking every tender rule in Trinidad and Tobago, breaking every procurement law, who are in breach of the Central Tenders Board Ordinance.

I happen to know, and I could say this without fear of contradiction, that the Attorney General's office has already advised the Ministry of Transport—*[Interruption]* Not the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. I know, I heard something about the Minister of Works and Infrastructure wanting to talk after me, God knows why. I do not have any time for him. His hon. friends opposite will deal with him. I do not have any time to worry about him. I came here this morning to deal with other matters.

The Attorney General's office has already advised the Ministry of Transport that that Ministry cannot lawfully procure goods and services on its own behalf outside of the ambit of the Central Tenders Board Ordinance. They have given them this advice with respect to the regional fast ferry project which is now up in the air because the process was unlawful, and the Attorney General's office has advised the Ministry of Transport that the process was unlawful. The initiation of a tender process for a light railway on the Priority Bus Route by that Ministry is also unlawful. The invitation of proposals by the Ministry of Planning and the Economy for Invaders Bay is unlawful based on the advice that I have seen coming out of the Attorney General's office going to the Ministry of Transport.

It is for those reasons, that we in the Opposition have come to the conclusion that it is pointless to sit in a committee with the hon. Members opposite and discuss lofty ideals and noble principles of procurement when Government Ministers are running wild and breaching all the procurement laws in Trinidad and Tobago. And the Prime Minister just sits by and watches on while all this is

going on, says nothing, does nothing, Mr. Speaker. And that is the part of this Motion that interests me the most. [*Crosstalk*] I do not know, I cannot participate with hypocrites. How can I sit in a committee with hypocrites?

8.45 a.m.

Let me give you some examples of hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] What are you talking about? Mr. Speaker, I would wait for your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure you can use more elegant language.

Dr. Rowley: It is not unparliamentary.

Mr. Speaker: It is not unparliamentary.

Dr. Rowley: Because I intend to use it too.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am going until you rule me out of order. If you say it is not unparliamentary, they are all a set of hypocrites as far as I am concerned and I would show why. As I have said, the Member for Chaguanas thought I was coming after him. I have no time for him.

A number of documents have been sent to my mailbox and they are shocking. They involve, primarily, the Ministry of Education and the Education Facilities Company Limited. This is why we cannot sit on that procurement committee with you, because while we talk lofty principles and noble ideals in that committee—two years of talk, from May 2010 to March 2012, we are still talking—nothing has come out of the Government yet, in terms of rules and procedures that you would like to see incorporated into law in Trinidad and Tobago; just talk.

While all of that is going on, let me give you an example of what is going on in the Education Facilities Company Limited. Let me start with the tender for the electrical upgrade at the Tranquillity Secondary School. This was in December 2011. A number of firms tendered for the electrical upgrade for the Tranquillity Secondary School. The companies included Kisle Company, John Jeffrey, Jeremy Baptiste, Clamens Marketing, Cell Plus Leef Company, Gobin's Electrical, and so on. After a thorough evaluation, the tender evaluation committee comprising the procurement officer, quantity surveyor, procurement manager and the divisional manager, procurement and contracts, at the Education Facilities Company—I have the actual documents here with the signatures—recommended as follows and this recommendation was December 20, 2011.

“The tendered price of John Jeffrey would best serve our interests of efficiency, ability to successfully complete the job within the specified time and cost optimisation.

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The evaluation team therefore recommends John Jeffrey be awarded the contract, as identified, for the Tranquillity Secondary School for the tendered sum of \$1,813,775.”

It was signed by the various officials—[*Interruption*] \$1.8 million, after having evaluated and gone through a complex and thorough evaluation of the tenders. The contract was awarded January 2012, the next month.

Education Facilities Company Limited

Mr. Suresh Kissoon

Director, Kislee Company

We refer to the above captioned matter: Electrical upgrade.

The Education Facilities Company Limited is pleased to inform you of our acceptance of your tender to undertake electrical upgrade at Tranquillity Secondary School.

Is that the same person? It is not! And the contract awarded to Kislee is \$1.9 million. So, here you have, in late December 2011, the evaluation team comprising technicians, comprising procurement manager, et cetera, comes to the conclusion that John Jeffrey—and they put it in writing and they signed it.

Dr. Moonilal: John Jeremie.

Mr. C. Imbert: No, John Jeffrey. You could make light of this. I have plenty more. I am sending everything to you, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Send it to the police.

Mr. C. Imbert: John Jeffrey at \$1.8 million is the best bid. They then turned around and awarded the contract to Kislee Company Limited of Rest House Village, Mayaro. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Ramlogan SC: \$100,000 more?

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, \$100,000 more, no reason given. I hear you talking Attorney General. Explain to me how a tender evaluation committee would go through eight tenders, pick one, say this is the best in terms of price and technical competence, recommend that person get the contract, sign the tender evaluation report and then the company gives it to somebody else. You explain that to me.

The letter is from—I think you know what is going on. The chief executive officer awarded the contract. I think you know what is going on. Right, I have plenty more. [*Interruption*] I would send it to you.

I also have in my possession, the tender evaluation report for a project which the Minister, I am sure, is very familiar with—a multi-purpose hall at the Lakshmi Girls’ Hindu College. I know you are nodding because I am aware that you are familiar with that project because I know you have queried it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Because you know why?”

Mr. C. Imbert: I know you have queried it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. C. Imbert: All I will tell you is, here we have the Education Facilities Company Limited Tender Evaluation Report for the construction of a multi-purpose hall at Lakshmi Girls’ Hindu College. At the end of the day, they evaluated all of the bids and recommended that the contract be awarded to the firm of Civstruct for \$13 million.

Mr. Roberts: Spell that.

Mr. C. Imbert: C-I-V-S-T-R-U-C-T. This is the recommendation:

“Based on the foregoing and consideration of price but more so demonstrated capability, the evaluation team recommends that the contract for the construction of the multi-purpose hall for the Lakshmi Girls’ Hindu College be awarded to Civstruct Associates.”—in the sum of \$13,432,000.

This is signed, again, by all members of the evaluation team, dated December 15, 2011.

Let us see what happens on December 16. One day later, the contract is awarded to a company—one day later. December 16, 2011, they signed—the evaluation team comprising the technicians, the managers in the company—evaluated and came to the conclusion that Civstruct Associates has the best bid, in terms of price and technical capability. That is December 15. December 16, they cannot wait—24 hours later, a letter to:

Mr. Wazid Amarali

Managing Director of Envirotech Limited

Construction of the multipurpose hall at Lakshmi Girls’ Hindu College, The Education Facilities Company is pleased to inform you of our acceptance of your tender for the construction of the multi- purpose hall at Lakshmi Girls’ in the sum of \$14,407,000.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: \$400,000 more?

Mr. C. Imbert: No, \$1 million more, 24 hours later, after a detailed technical evaluation, the evaluation is a series of pages. *[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: Something is wrong with that evaluation committee.

Mr. C. Imbert: Oh, is that so? You have Lisa Bridglal, senior project manager, Secondary Schools Division; Kavita Singh, project manager, CEO's office; Aldrich Sinaswee, quantity surveyor; Julia Warner-Ettienne, divisional manager, Secondary Schools; and Heather Joseph, procurement manager. All of these highly competent people, on December 15, said give the contract to Civstruct because they have a lower bid and they are more technically proficient than anyone else. One day later, they awarded the contract to Envirotech, which is \$1 million more and is not as technically competent as—*[Interruption]*

They bid for the companies, four of them. Moosai Development bid \$15 million, Envirotech bid \$14 million, Civstruct bid \$13 million; Thermal Impact bid \$12 million. They went through every single thing. They looked at the analysis of the tender price. They looked at the competence and the tender committee recommended that they give it to Civstruct.

Mr. Volney: That is their prerogative.

Mr. C. Imbert: Am I hearing this correctly? “Is mad people ah dealing with?” The tender evaluation committee goes through the bids, selects a bid that is good on price and competence, signs it and makes a recommendation on December 15, and a day later the chief executive officer awards the contract to somebody else, no explanation, for \$1 million more? “All yuh think dis is ah joke?” *[Interruption]*

Mr. Volney: What about the *Su*?

Mr. C. Imbert: Okay. *[Interruption]* I know you are querying it. You are not frivolous and flippant like the Member for St. Joseph, who would think that this is a big joke. This company is a mess. This is when we talk about a feeding frenzy and we talk about a complete breach of tendering procedures within the state enterprises. How can we participate with you on a procurement committee? I cannot believe the Prime Minister is not aware of this. I cannot believe, because she says she is not tolerating corruption, she is cleaning up state enterprises, stamping it out. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: The Minister is dealing with it.

Mr. C. Imbert: The Minister is not dealing with it at all. They have already awarded the contract. He cannot do anything about it. They have awarded the contract and the person now has a claim—a cause of action. They have a letter of award.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, there is also a huge scandal with the procurement of textbooks and I am sure the Minister knows about that as well. I have in my possession—[*Interruption*] you are not doing anything about it—a letter from Charran Book Services Limited, written to Mr. Kiran Shah, chief executive officer, Education Facilities Company Limited, December 28, 2011.

Supply and delivery of textbooks for Forms IV and VI in secondary schools for the academic year 2011/2012.

Dear Mr. Shah

Further to a phone call from Miss Heather Joseph, last week, I am writing to clarify some of the concerns of various stakeholders regarding the recent tender at caption. Our concerns relate to the evaluation criteria, potential copyright infringement, potential violation of distributor arrangements.

Now, this is just the tip of the iceberg because, when you go into the actual tender evaluation reports themselves you see that some unknown company called Zas Printery from Barrackpore was awarded contracts for the supply of school books for the year 2011/2012, in a total sum of approximately \$2.2 million.

9.00 a.m.

They were given package 1 at a price of \$515,000 and package 2 at a price of \$1.6 million, Mr. Speaker. But when you go into the actual figures, you see that Mohammed Book Stores—and this store has been around since I was in primary school.

Mr. Roberts: “Oh God, dats ah long time!”

Mr. C. Imbert: A very long time. Their price was \$835,000 and Charran’s Book Stores’ price was \$667,000, but Zas Printery, an unknown company got the contract for \$2.2 million.

Hon. Members: Ooooooh!

Mr. C. Imbert: It is no wonder that both Mohammed Book Stores and Charran’s Bookstores complained about irregularities in the matter. But it gets worse, Mr. Speaker. Do you remember during the Uff Commission of Enquiry there was much confusion about a fax number? Remember that?

Dr. Moonilal: “He remember dat!” [*Points to the Opposition Bench*]

Mr. C. Imbert: “Well, it look like all yuh doing it too.”

Hon. Member: Wow!

Mr. C. Imbert: Because I have in my possession an official copy from the Registrar General’s office of an application for registration by Zas Contractors, of 148 Rochard Douglas Road, Barrackpore. On the form they said the other business occupation of the individual is Zas Printery Limited. So Zas Contractors and Zas Printery Limited are the same; they have declared this to the Registrar General.

I also have in my possession responses to queries from the Education Facilities Company Limited with respect to a tender submitted by Zas Contractors to the Education Facilities Company Limited, but it was faxed from a number, 654-2108, under the name of Saudia Enterprises Limited. So Zas Contractors, which is also Zas Printery, is using a fax machine owned and operated by Saudia Enterprises Limited, fax number 654-2108. And who is Saudia Enterprises, Mr. Speaker? If you go to the Companies Registry, the name and title of the director of Saudia Enterprises is a fellow called Shaffiat Ali.

Hon. Members: “I know dat name.”

Mr. C. Imbert: “You know dat name? “Oh, yuh know de name.” Because— [*Interruption*—we will talk about that in a little while, and some other things too. If you go on the Internet and you look at the Education Facilities Company Limited Board of Directors, you will see the chairman is: one Mr. Ronald Phillip; the deputy chairman is a fellow called Lester Applewhite; another director is somebody called Mr. Rudy Narinesingh. I am sure the Minister is familiar with that name. I understand that person’s name has come up in correspondence to the Minister. Another director, Mr. Stanley St. Omer and surprise, surprise, Mr. Shaffiat Ali. So Mr. Shaffiat Ali, Director of Education Facilities Company Limited, who is the owner and director of Saudia Enterprises Limited, whose name and fax number appear on a fax sent by Zas Contractors, which is also owned and — [*Interruption*] “yeah, yeah”, hold on.

Mr. Speaker, [*Interruption*] they could say what they want, I happen to know that an employee of the Education Facilities Company Limited discovered this fraud, discovered that Mr. Shaffiat Ali, a director of Education Facilities Company Limited is associated with Zas Printery Limited, who received the

schoolbook contract at twice the price of the other more reputable booksellers, went to Barrackpore to meet with the gentleman. He did not know that the person knew he was a director of the Education Facilities Company Limited.

Here you have under the stewardship of the Prime Minister—because the Prime Minister at the end of the day has to approve boards of directors of state enterprises. Under the stewardship of the Prime Minister you have a director of Education Facilities Company Limited who is involved in a massive fraud with respect to the procurement of schoolbooks in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I call for a forensic audit of the Education Facilities Company Limited [*Desk thumping*] the same way they did with PURE. They want to terrorize the Member for Chaguanas West, to go and do a forensic audit in PURE, for what reason? No. It had anything like this? You had directors—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you give way?

Mr. C. Imbert: Oh, sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In fact, when I realized there were some irregularities in EFCL, as the line Minister, I called on the Minister of Finance to go into the EFCL to see whether they are breaching any financial irregularities. I understand the Deputy Permanent Secretary went in and did some work; the Minister has sent a report. I have asked for EFCL to have an audit tendered by large firms, and for EFCL to be audited immediately. I have asked for that.

Mr. C. Imbert: I am glad to hear that. But I think there needs to be a criminal investigation into the procurement of textbooks by the Education Facilities Company Limited, and establish whether Mr. Shaffiat Ali, director, has associated himself with a company which has fraudulently obtained a contract for the supply of schoolbooks in Trinidad and Tobago. I expect that the Attorney General is going to look into this. This is no joke.

I have a whole folder here full of irregularities at the Education Facilities Company Limited. It is a feeding frenzy inside there. You see, the problem is, having raised it in this Parliament this morning, what is the Prime Minister going to do about this? What is going to happen? Is it going to be a situation like we have at T&TEC? Let me come off the Education Facilities Company Limited for a little while. Let me go to T&TEC.

In T&TEC, Mr. Speaker, tenders were invited for land acquisition consultancy services. Three firms submitted tenders. The three firms were DMP CIAS, ACQROW and the third firm—I do not have the name of the third firm at this point in time.

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There was a complete and exhaustive evaluation of these tenders, points were awarded in accordance with the invitation to tender: land acquisition consultancy services; evaluation report; tender No. 9084; land acquisition Brechin Castle, Union Estate, 220 kV corridor; Debe, Penal 132 kV corridor; San Raphael, Wallerfield 132 kV corridor.

Mr. Speaker, points were awarded to the three firms: geometric surveying consultants; consortium of land acquisition system specialists; ACQ and Associates in accordance with the established criteria in the invitation to tender.

I am beginning to believe that in many of these state enterprises there is wide-scale fraud and bid-rigging taking place. How can you invite tenders for land acquisition services and have a system of awarding points, and when the company that you are favouring gets the lowest points, you then instruct the management to award the contract? That is precisely what happened here, Mr. Speaker. The company that came last is this company that goes by the acronym of CLAS. Let me read out the complete name for you: Consortium of Land Acquisition Specialists, they came last and yet I am advised, that the chairman of T&TEC instructed the management to award a contract to the company which came last. Here is a response from the management of T&TEC:

I am in receipt of your memo dated 2012.01.03 on the subject—Land Acquisition:

Given your written instructions—the person instructed a member of the management—I have signed the Form C recommending the award of the caption tender in favour of DNP CLAS.

So the management is being instructed to award this.

I wish to reaffirm my position in support of the Evaluation Committee's recommendation that ACQROW being the first ranked tenderer based on all the published criteria should be awarded the tender. I, therefore, disagree with the tender committee's approval of DMP CLAS for the award, but I have acted as instructed...

“The fella eh want to get fired.”

The reasons for my disagreement are as follows: DMP CLAS was not the tenderer that was first ranked by the evaluation committee. The Tenders and Contracts Committee in recommending DMP CLAS only considered two of the five published criteria: cost and time. The other criteria: resources, experience and methodology were not considered. The evaluation committee took all published criteria into consideration in the evaluation of the tender.

The technical committee did it properly, considered all five criteria, came up with a different recommendation. The tenders committee, which is where the board gets involved decided to disregard three out of the five published tender's criteria.

I am of the view that the time frame of six months to execute the work is unrealistic and would not be accomplished. The tenderer approved by the tenders committee has no track record in the area of compulsory land acquisition...and it goes on.

Mr. Speaker, listen to this, the company where the management had instructed to give them the contract, gave a completion time of six months for the land acquisition. The technocrats are telling the board that a completion time of six months as provided by the lowest ranked tenderer is the worst tender, however, the stipulated time frame between the service of section 3 and 4 legal notices, is six months. Additionally, when service of section 5 legal notice is required, the allotted completion time would have expired. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out.

So the technocrats are telling them, "If ah man tell you dat he could do compulsory acquisition in six months he lie." Because under the law you have to allow six months to elapse before you can compulsorily acquire the property. The management is telling the board you all have got to be crazy. You want me to award a contract to a company that has given an unrealistic timeframe; has no track record; no experience in this area; cannot do the job, "He say I will do it you know." You have instructed me in writing, I will do it.

That is what is happening in the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, Mr. Speaker. I will ask the Attorney General to audit this as well. Would you kindly—I will give you the documentation, I will be happy to provide you with all my documents—would you kindly audit the award of contracts for land acquisition consultancy services in the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission?

Mr. Speaker, a lot of documents have come to me in my mailbox, and you see, when we as Members of the Opposition sit in a Joint Select Committee with the Minister of Legal Affairs, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Justice, I am not sure, I cannot remember—and everybody is talking about, as I said, all these lofty principles and noble ideals of transparency; level playing field; no bid-rigging; fair application of the rules, and then all the state enterprises are doing what they want. Board members instructing management to disregard evaluation; disregard published evaluation criteria and award contracts to unsuitable companies?

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What is the Prime Minister going to do about this? This is yet another example consistent with the third or the fourth recital in the Motion with respect to the manner in which the Prime Minister deals with persons under her control. Let us see what the Prime Minister is going to do about this.

9.15 a.m.

Just as an aside, Mr. Speaker, let me say, off the bat, that I have every regard for the management of T&TEC no matter which Government is in power. Whether it is the PNM, the UNC or the People's Partnership, I have always found the management, staff and workers of T&TEC to be completely professional and responsive. It is just unfortunate that the political appointees, in this instance, are muddying the waters of T&TEC.

I spoke about the fact that Members opposite, when they are challenged about an irregularity, they say they are looking into it. There was a problem with this same chairman from T&TEC. Somehow a CV from this gentleman arrived in the Cabinet with bogus qualifications. This is a matter of public record. Somebody sent a CV for the current chairman of T&TEC to the Cabinet and in that document it was alleged that the gentleman was the holder of a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of the West Indies and a Masters in Business Administration from the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business. That has not been denied.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [Miss M. McDonald]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Imbert: I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: You are not thanking us over here?

Mr. C. Imbert: I am sorry. I thank all Members opposite, although some of them may not be too happy when I continue with what I have to say. Not everybody would be too happy on that side.

The fact is that when this matter came up, the Minister of Public Utilities said he was looking into the matter. There was no denial that a CV had been submitted to Cabinet, which contained false qualifications. It was accepted that the individual did not have a bachelor's degree from the University of the West Indies and did not have an MBA from the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business.

This matter came up one year ago. The Minister of Public Utilities is quoted as stating that he was still checking on the validity of the qualifications allegedly held by the chairman of T&TEC. He went on to say some other strange things: that the T&TEC Act does not say that the chairman has to have a degree, et cetera. The fact is that I was asked to look at this and I can state categorically that in Trinidad and Tobago there is a published list of engineers, as you have a list of chartered accountants and a list of attorneys-at-law.

If you look at the list, you will see the hon. Member for Oropouche East. There will be a number, which will have a reference to the year in which he was called to the Bar. You will see the Member for St. Joseph “and all”. You will see the Member for Port of Spain South. Similarly, if you go to the Board of Engineering, under the Engineering Profession Act, there is a list of every single registered engineer in Trinidad and Tobago. I can state, without any fear of contradiction, that the chairman of T&TEC is not on the list of engineers registered by the Board of Engineering of Trinidad and Tobago.

Nobody is owning up. The most amazing thing—and that is why I have a problem with the Prime Minister—is if an allegation is made that somebody submitted a doctored, bogus resumé to the Cabinet, who did that? Was it the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities? Was it the Cabinet Secretary? Was it the Minister? Nobody is owning up. They are admitting that the Cabinet received a resumé and on that resumé it is said that the “fella” has a degree from UWI and a degree from Lok Jack institute, but nobody is owning up as to where that CV came from, how it reached the Cabinet and how it found its way into a Cabinet Minute.

That, as far as I am concerned is called “the avoidance principle”. In psychology, Member for Caroni East and Member for Barataria/San Juan, you would have had to do some courses in psychiatry. You know about the principle of avoidance. You do not want to deal with something you pretend does not exist. It is a mental illness. Accept it. So you have a situation where somebody submitted a false CV to the Cabinet, but they are avoiding it. As I said, it is a form of mental illness, you know. You pretend it does not exist, so you do not have to deal with it.

I learnt subsequently that the individual indicated that he had received a degree in engineering from the University of Manitoba, so I went on the website of the University of Manitoba and I looked at all the degrees they do by distance learning. I saw a number of liberal arts degrees, but I saw no engineering degrees.

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I said: what is going on here? You go on the website and there is no degree in engineering offered by the University of Manitoba by distance learning. So, I communicated with the university, asking them:

I would be deeply grateful if you would confirm whether the University of Manitoba has ever offered or awarded a degree in mechanical engineering by correspondence or distance learning.

This is in July 2011 and I got a reply from the registry.

To the best of our knowledge, there has never been an engineering degree offered through correspondence or distance at the University of Manitoba.

What is the Prime Minister going to do about that? The principle is not whether he has a degree or not. The Act says that one of the members of the board must have special qualifications in engineering and it is generally accepted that special qualifications is, at the bare minimum, at the level of a bachelor's degree.

That is beside the point. It is not whether or not the person has a bachelor's degree. It is that the person is purporting to have a bachelor's degree, first from the University of the West Indies, and when that was shown to be untrue, then from the University of Manitoba, which says it has never—[*Interruption*] You reach late—they have never offered an engineering degree.

Mr. Speaker, what is the Prime Minister—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fyzabad; it was going good when he was not here, you know.

Mr. Speaker: I want to agree with you. Member for Fyzabad, we were going very well before you arrived, so we will ask you to follow the debate in silence. Continue hon. Member. You can speak after.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the sky will fall. You agree with me.

The fact is that this is a serious matter. There is a police commissioner, for example, who calls himself Dr. Gibbs. I know Dr. Moonilal. I tease him a little from time to time and tell him he went to some polytechnic in Holland. I know that he went through a programme of study that qualifies him to be read and to be awarded the degree of doctorate. I know that. Dr. Rowley also went through a rigorous course of study to receive a PhD in geology.

Mr. Roberts: He did?

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, he did. Mr. Speaker, as a former university lecturer myself—[*Interruption*] University of the West Indies—[*Interruption*] I taught a

postgraduate programme for six years. “Ketch uhsself!” Faculty of engineering. Check it out; no problem. As a former university lecturer myself—[*Interruption*] Check it! Check it! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I would like to hear the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East in silence.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I know you also attended the University of the West Indies. You know about quality degrees. I strongly object to persons posing as holders of higher degrees when in fact they are quacks. I strongly object to that. I take offence. I take deep offence to persons pretending to have degrees from reputable organizations when they do not.

When this gentleman’s appointment came up—when Mr. Gibbs’ appointment came up, we raised this matter, but the Government was so hot and sweaty at the time, so hasty. I am sure you are regretting it now though. In your quiet moments, I am sure you are regretting it. So hasty.

Mr. Roberts: “All yuh process.”

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, but we did not recommend him. I have in my possession a document called Fox Doctor’s Diploma Mill Degree.

Mr. Roberts: “Pronounce dat properly, eh.”

Mr. C. Imbert: This is the channel you do not like, the Fox channel, May 14, 2004.

“The Los Angeles doctor Fox Television has tabbed to provide ‘psychological counseling’ to contestants on ‘The Swan,’ its controversial plastic surgery makeover show, received her Ph.D. from a California correspondence school that was described this week as an unaccredited ‘diploma mill’ by congressional investigators...”

Guess what university it was? California Coast, where Dr. Gibbs got his degree. California Coast charges a flat fee for a doctor’s degree. Her degree would have set her back about US \$4,000.

According to its website, California Coast no longer confers Ph.Ds. Well, after that congressional investigation, they have decided to drop the whole thing. The whole point is that this university, California Coast, prides itself on the fact that you can get a master’s degree and a doctorate without attending a single class. They give you points for life experience. The gentleman got both a master’s degree and a Ph.D from California Coast within three months.

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I know that the hon. Member for Oropouche East took a little longer than three months to get his—about three or four years. The other night I heard that Dr. Rowley took almost five years; but the whole point is that anybody who buys their degree for US \$4,000 from a diploma mill in the United States, comes to Trinidad and Tobago and parades and moves around, as Dr. Gibbs, you have to watch that “fella” and I take great offence to these matters. I know some Members of Government are listening and others think this is a joke; but there are far too many false résumés floating around in state enterprises and government departments. There are far too many false résumés, bogus qualifications, floating around in Ministries and state enterprises.

9. 30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, let me go back now—how much more time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: You end at 10.01 a.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: 10.01 a.m. I have 40 minutes? “Nah” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: About 35 minutes. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: About 32 minutes?

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. What am I saying? [*Crosstalk*] How many?

Mr. Roberts: You have about 14 minutes.

Mr. Speaker: You have about 17 minutes.

Mr. C. Imbert: That is enough time.

Mr. Roberts: I know you are enjoying it.

Dr. Khan: Could I give him my hour? [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Minister of Housing and the Environment had a lot of fun harassing people in the family. Let me just go to his exact words. [*Crosstalk*] Apart from the fact that you inflated the figures and given incorrect information, that is all right. That is not what I am challenging you on. [*Crosstalk*] Apart from the fact that your figures are wrong, and that the individuals have been involved in this industry for over 15 years, it is okay. Let us see what the Member for Oropouche East had to say:

“The chairman of the party...hit we for \$60 million over the period. You think anybody would permit that in this administration? You think the Member for Siparia would permit that in this administration?”

And then you have, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar—“Never!”

Hon. Member: I am sure she never said it like that.

Mr. C. Imbert: The hon. Dr. R. Moonilal—“Never!” It has an exclamation mark.

“Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Siparia gets wind of anything like that before \$2 reach, ‘is shut down’ and back to the Attorney General.

That is the approach. If information comes to her and she looks at it she says, ‘hello, stop that immediately, you see that, stop that.’ So ‘fellas’ could try what they want, they could try, but you are not likely to get away.”

Then the hon. Member for Fyzabad—“you would not succeed.” Real drama, real theatrics, you know.

So, according to the Member for Oropouche East, if anybody in the PP administration tries to get a contract exceeding \$2 for their relatives, the Prime Minister will shut it down immediately, Mr. Speaker. Well, that is interesting because I have in my possession an article which has not been disputed by the Minister of Trade and Industry. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Later. No problem. “Leh we forget that”, we will deal with that in due course. But let me go to a newspaper article that I have in my possession.

Mr. Roberts: The *Mirror*. “You gone to the *Mirror* too”?

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes the *Mirror*. But you see the *Mirror* is just the beginning of the whole thing, Mr. Speaker.

“Cadiz Cashes In.

By Irene Medina - October 2nd 2011”

Dr. Moonilal: She is a PNM.

Mr. C. Imbert: It is all right. This is what the article said. [*Interruption*] I do not know, I do not work for the *Mirror*. I was not there. I am reading what the article said.

“Companies owned by the family of Trade and Industry Minister Stephen Cadiz have seen a significant increase in Government contracts since the change in administration, but the Minister claims that he has had nothing to do with this seeming good fortune.

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...*Mirror* has learnt that Cadiz's Company, The Power Outlet Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cadiz's Tropical Power Holdings Limited, of which his wife Suzette is now the majority shareholder, has recently been awarded two substantial contracts to repair and upgrade schools.

According to reports the contracts were awarded by the Education Facilities Company Limited..."

Dr. Rowley: Which one?

Mr. C. Imbert: Education—same one.

Dr. Rowley: Same company?

Mr. C. Imbert: We are coming back to that, you know.

"...under Government's Public Sector Investment Programme, amounting to \$1.445 million..."

[*Interruption*] Member for Oropouche East?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Sir.

Mr. C. Imbert: Contracts amounting to \$1.445 million—the Power Outlet, owned by the wife of the Minister of Trade and Industry. I think that is a bit more than \$2, eh? Let me repeat what you said. [*Crosstalk*] I am making a point of hypocrisy. The hon. Minister in his attempt to score points: "...if the Member for Siparia get wind of anything like that before \$2 reach, is shut down, and back to the Attorney General." But here we have a situation where the contract is \$1.445 million, Mr. Speaker.

Now hear the next piece of theatrics from the Member for Oropouche East, Mr. Speaker: "...in this business, everybody is a businesswoman. For somebody teaching in a primary school, then they are a businesswoman, they go and build house'." So, according to the Member for Oropouche East, Ministers wives start off as primary schoolteachers, then they become business women, then they get contracts from the State. Okay. Let us go to this article because—[*Interruption*] he was not talking about me; he was talking about "he".

"...the contracts were awarded by the Education Facilities Company Limited...amounting to \$1.445 million to repair Toco Secondary School and \$184, 600 to repair Blanchisseuse Primary School.

Cadiz confirmed that he had transferred the shares to his wife, saying, It's a family business and that's what I did. I was told to divest..."

It is amazing how cavalier these Ministers are, Mr. Speaker.

“...or put it in a trust but everything is family owned”

So they told him to put it in a trust but he said, “nah, is family own man, so I will give it to meh wife”. The lady in question, Mr. Speaker, is a former primary schoolteacher.

Dr. Rowley: He was throwing words for Cadiz.

Mr. C. Imbert: “Is Cadiz he throwing dat for, not me.” But if you want to say it is the *Mirror*, and the *Mirror* is inaccurate and “is a set ah scandal and ting”, let us go to the Companies Registry, Mr. Speaker, and let us look at the company’s record with respect to the Power Outlet Limited.

Now, one of the unusual things about this story is that the Minister of Trade and Industry attempted to explain the fact that the Power Outlet, a virtually unknown company, had got this construction contract by saying this: “We started in 1987 and have been involved in all kinds of activities.” That is what he said. “It was not true to say that the company was not equiped to handle any construction or upgrade of school contracts because it has been involved in the construction industry for some time.” That is what he said. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: The company was incorporated in 2006, Mr. Speaker—2006. Let him get up and say that it is not true.

Dr. Rowley: Repeat that.

Mr. C. Imbert: The company was incorporated in 2006. May 23, 2006 is the date of incorporation of the Power Outlet. But you have the hon. Minister saying they started in 1987, and they do “all kinda different ting,” and then they got into the construction industry. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. C. Imbert: What is the Prime Minister going to do about that? But let us move on. So we have in 2008 the directors of this company were Stephen Cadiz, Jerry Patrick, Jason Ash, Robert Cadiz, et cetera, et cetera, all perfectly in order. And it goes on and goes on until you reach 2010, Mr. Speaker. In 2010 there was a change of directors of this company, and Mr. Cadiz came out and was substituted by Suzette Cadiz. And guess what is put into the Companies Registry?

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Notice of Directors

The directors of the company as of this date, which would be July 06, 2010 are, one:

Suzette Cadiz

11 Moka Road

Moka Maraval

Occupation: Teacher

As I said when the Minister of Housing and the Environment was making all of this “comess” about Ministers’ wives start off as teachers then they become businesswomen and then they get contracts, he was throwing words for the Minister of Trade and Industry. But you see—[*Interruption*]—pardon?

Mr. Warner: What is wrong with that?

Mr. C. Imbert: What was wrong? Well, I am coming to that, I am just dealing with the issues. So you have a company called Power Outlet which was not started in 1987, it was started in 2006, it has no track record of any significance in construction, it is into power, things with electricity, it does electrical and that sort of thing. [*Crosstalk*] Hold on, I am not finished.

You see, the unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, is that this company was awarded a contract by Education Facilities Company limited. One of the things that is very interesting about the Education Facilities Company Limited is that they went through a prequalification exercise for the repair of secondary and primary schools around the middle of 2011. The purpose of the prequalification exercise was to prequalify contractors who were then invited to tender for contracts. But the Power Outlet did not prequalify. Let the Minister say it is not so—did not qualify.

So how could a company that did not go through the qualification process be awarded a contract—and this company has no track record in construction—with the Education Facilities Company? That is the mistake the Minister made. You asked me what is the issue, a company that did not prequalify, has no experience in the construction of schools, being awarded a contract for \$1.4 million, and this kind of association is going on and the Minister throwing words and saying teachers become businesswomen and all of a sudden they get contracts.

When you want to pelt stones at people, make sure it “doh” turn around and the stone “doh” hit you. [*Desk thumping*] You see, this is the problem I am having

with this administration. They speak out of two sides of their mouth. If the company had continued to do what it is in the business of doing—generators, electrical wiring—nobody would have said “boo” because in this country every citizen, regardless of political affiliation, has a right to tender for contracts from the State, Mr. Speaker, everybody. Whether you are a UNC, or whether you are a PNM, what is important is that you must be qualified to do the job and you must win the contract fair and square.

So all of this “ol’ talk about PNM minister wife” and so on, you have to look at the competence of the people involved, their track record, whether they have been in the industry for a number of years, the type of contracts that they have administered—

Dr. Moonilal: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Whatever. You have to look at it in context, Mr. Speaker. What is good for the goose has to be good for the gander. You cannot have a sanctimonious Government piously pronouncing on the alleged misdeeds of relatives of Ministers in the former PNM administration when on the face of it, based on the information that is available to me—that was sent to me in my mailbox—you have the new administration doing worse than what they have accused the former PNM administration of doing. [*Desk thumping*] That is why I call them hypocrites. They are hypocrites. And what is the Prime Minister doing about this?

Look at what this Minister said: as to allegations that his companies were cashing in on Petrotrin, Cadiz said there was nothing questionable about any deals with Petrotrin, since in the past, he had always gotten contracts from the State-owned oil company. So when he was not a Government Minister he was getting contracts from Petrotrin under PNM, now it is UNC—look at what the man saying, it is the policy of the Government. No problem, I was getting contracts before, I do not see anything wrong with me getting contracts now, Mr. Speaker. And that is the sanctimonious hypocrisy I am talking about. Sanctimonious hypocrisy. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Nonsense.

9.45 a.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: You see, that is why we on this side have a difficulty with the Government’s approach to procurement. How can a company that did not prequalify get a contract? Is it just a coincidence, Mr. Speaker? I mean, this

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Education Facilities Company is a real horror story. Did you hear about Bruce Electrical? Do you know Bruce Electrical's association with the gentleman behind you? The man behind you! Get up and say that you are not associated with them.

Mr. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I am not associated in any way with Bruce Electrical. I know the gentleman, but I am in no way associated with him.

Mr. C. Imbert: Now, if you say so we will see about that.

Hon. Member: Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. C. Imbert: There is no 36(5) in this. [*Crosstalk*] Bruce Electrical, Mr. Speaker, was contracted to do work at the Rio Claro Secondary School, and submitted an invoice for in excess of \$1 million. The management of the Education Facilities Company objected and said that the price was too high, and that hon. Gentleman, who just got up and said he had nothing to do with Bruce Electrical, is accused—he stands accused and he could deny it if he wants—of instructing Education Facilities Company to pay the higher price. Get up and say you did not do that! I have people ready to testify that you did it. [*Crosstalk*] I have people ready to testify that you did it. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Khan: Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. De Coteau: Standing Order 36(5). I did not say that.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, fine, he has denied it.

Mr. De Coteau: I know the man, but I did not say that.

Mr. C. Imbert: He has denied it.

Mr. De Coteau: Find out when the man was given the job.

Mr. C. Imbert: He has denied it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Both Members cannot be on their legs. You have denied it, fine, continue. Wrap up; wrap up!

Dr. Moonilal: You are telling stories.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am telling stories. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, address the Chair.

Mr. C. Imbert: So, it is a story that the junior Minister of Education is interfering with the Education Facilities Company. I ask the AG to look into that. Go and ask them when you are doing your forensic audit.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Motion of the Leader of the Opposition because, from the little information I have received, it is a feeding frenzy of corruption in these state enterprises [*Desk thumping*] and the Prime Minister is turning a blind eye, and I cannot have any confidence in the Prime Minister until she puts her foot down and deals with this rampant corruption. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Jack Warner): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been regaled with all kinds of disclosures here this morning, so let me catch my breath a little. You cannot say anything about me because I have nothing in the sun.

Mr. Speaker, before I take the meat of my contribution, I want to be able to rebut a few points that were raised earlier on, and I will begin with the Member for Diego Martin Central. Among the many things he said, he said that there was corruption at MTS, and MTS comes under me, as the line Minister. So, when I heard that, Mr. Speaker, I called the chairman and asked him to send and tell me what he knows about what was said because we were told that the 34 vehicles are insured with New India Motor Insurance, and the cheaper units were cancelled. We heard that there were \$3 million per year rental and so on.

Mr. Speaker, the chairman is Jim Mohammed, and hear what he says:

My company does not import the Isuzu pickups or Ford Ranger as mentioned. The short-term rentals in MTS were inherited from the PNM—this is how we found it. The record will show that the board had requested a total evaluation of the company's fleet, and it is almost ready for a proper tendering process.

This is from the chairman, Jim Mohammed. Of course, for me, it denounces totally what we were told earlier on by the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Following that, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West gave us an extensive lecture on race relations. She said that the hon. Prime Minister must explain the race card. She even inferred that she knew about race relations better than we on this side. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, I would like to ask her, even in her absence, to tell me why of the 11 Members on that side, I have not seen one Indian Member.

Hon. Member: Excuse me. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. J. Warner: Let me finish. I would say it just now. Tell me, Mr. Speaker, when she complained, how come, of course, she does not have a "dougla" or a white and to tell me that they did not win their seats, you could have

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put them in some safe seats. I am the Member for Chaguanas West, and Chaguanas West is the safest seat in Trinidad and Tobago. I am in Chaguanas West. Chaguanas West is like 99.9 per cent Indian. I am an African, I was put there. All you had to do was to put somebody in Laventille West, put an Indian in Laventille West and put an Indian in Point Fortin and so on.

Dr. Moonilal: La Brea!

Hon. J. Warner: So, I am making the point, therefore, that it is difficult to accuse us on this side of racism. Put an Indian in La Brea. That is all I am saying to you. As we are on this, somebody asked earlier on, how many Hindus do you have on that side? How many Hindus? How many Muslims do you have on that side? How many do you have? Anybody here could do a ramayan or a puja? How many do you have? [*Crosstalk*] It is not my fault.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was livid. She spent more than half her time on the race card and so on; more than half her time. I want to tell her this morning, even in her absence, when Dr. Eric Williams died the two contenders for Prime Minister were Errol Mahabir and Kamaluddin Mohammed. Why did any of them not get it? Why? It had to go to George Chambers. So do not come here in this House and tell us here about race. [*Crosstalk*] Look and see the complexion on this side. I must sit here and listen for 45 minutes or more about race relations, and that we are playing the race card.

Then, of course, the Member for La Brea said that we must put country before party, like what the PNM did; put country before party. I said here, what a joke? What have you demonstrated to show, before 2010, when you did not pave Barrackpore, Siparia and Papourrie Road and Quinam Road? What did you do? Did you put country before party? From the south of the Caroni Bridge go right down, of course, to Siparia not a single road was paved. You did not build a school; you did not pave a road or build a box drain, and you are telling me now to put country before party. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: He is on his legs, but take your notes. You spoke already. Well, you have to cool it now [*Laughter*] and do not disturb the Member for Chaguanas West, Member for La Brea. Continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Member is talking about discrimination, and the new highway is passing through La Brea. Discrimination! I went to La Brea and paved road by night and by day. Discrimination! You sent me a thank you card, the very first thing, but that is discrimination. What

discrimination? And then, Mr. Speaker, we have been given another lecture about leadership and leaders. That lecture, tell it to your leader—I mean if you could find out which one it is—but tell it to your leader.

Mr. Speaker, following that, of course, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, my very good friend, spoke and the point she made about Boxu Potts, what I want to tell the Member for Laventille East/Morvant is that Boxu Potts will not bring down this Government. I do not think Boxu Potts is even that important, honestly, for the part you give him here. The fact is, I am not going to tell you—Ashwin Creed, if what you say about him is true, then he will pay a price for it. I have no problem with that, but do not give Boxu Potts, who I know very well, the importance he does not deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to go to the Member for Arouca/Maloney. You know, it is the same speech over and over in the same monotone and so on. I would expect that after a while—before I even say that, the Member for Laventille West came with 25 questions which we all have—fixing T&T. We all have that, Member for Laventille West. If that is the level of your research, then I am sorry, but we already have those things. The Member spent 50 minutes talking about a tax that nobody understood, a tax that the Minister of Finance told me does not even exist; 15 minutes to talk about a tax that does not even exist. You know, if this was not Lent, I would leave here and take one big drink this morning on “all yuh”, but it is Lent.

I want to tell the Member for Point Fortin that not even the people in Point Fortin know who the Member for Point Fortin is. For five years now you have been elected, and up to now the only time the people in Point Fortin would see her, for most times, is here when she talks on TV live.

Listen to the *Sunday Express*; “Pressure for Paula in Pt. Fortin”, dated Sunday, February 26, 2012 by Camille Bethel.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Who are you talking about there?

Hon. J. Warner: Paula Gopee-Scoon, the Member for Point Fortin.

Dr. Moonilal: What did they say there Jack?

Hon. J. Warner: It is dated February 26, 2012, the *Sunday Express*.
[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, you cannot sit where you are and shout. You have spoken and everyone has listened to you. If you are tired, because of the hour, we

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will release you, but please, please, do not disturb the hon. Member. Hon. Member, continue, please.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying, on Sunday, February 26, 2012 in the *Express* on page 4, the headline is “Pressure for Paula in Pt. Fortin”. The article is written by Camille Bethel and it says:

“Paula Gopee-Scoon has a problem.

She has been the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin for five years. But it appears she needs more face-time with her people.

Some don’t know what she looks like.

Others thought she was a man.” [*Laughter*]

Mr. Sharma: “Oh God, yuh gone through!”

Hon. J. Warner: “Others thought she was a man.”

Dr. Moonilal: After five years!

Hon. J. Warner: And you are coming here to bore us for 75 minutes so that people could see you in Point Fortin. Go and do your work in Point Fortin! Do not come here and take up good parliamentary time for people to see you in Point Fortin. Go and do your work.

It goes further:

“Many are irritated that she lives in Westmoorings but represents a constituency on the other side of the island.”

It is here. [*Crosstalk*]

10.00 a.m.

And, of course, to give the impression that you are an expert on foreign policy, you are not. [*Interruption*] Yes, that is true. [*Crosstalk*] You know something, in some constituencies where they have a woman, they think it is a man and some who have a man, they think it is a woman. That happens. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5)?

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, I come now to the Member for Arouca/Maloney. The main point—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Standing Order 36(5), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: In this debate? No, no, no, in this debate Standing Order 36(5) is a bit flexible because it is a substantive debate. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, yes, yes, you take notes. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. J. Warner: Then, Mr. Speaker, I go to the Member for Arouca/Maloney. The Member for Arouca/Maloney is so sorry for Haiti, and this money for Haiti and so on. She is so concerned about Haiti, I want to ask her: what has she ever done for Haiti since Haiti has been on the map?

Let me tell you: I received two donations for Haiti: one for US \$500,000 and one for US \$250,000. The minute I saw the article in the *Trinidad Guardian*, I sent back to them, for the second time, all the bills. I did not have to look for them. The bills I sent for them— [*Cellular phone rings*]

Mr. Speaker: Somebody has a cellular phone on? I heard a cellular phone. [*No response*] Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. J. Warner: The bills I sent for them, Mr. Speaker, amounted to US \$970,000. I got US \$750,000, I spent US \$970,000. I sent all the bills to them. Check it, if you want to. Therefore, to come here to impute motives about Haiti and me and money is, of course, in my view, fallacious. I will ask again: has the Member for Arouca/Maloney done anything for Haiti or for anybody for charity and so on? Has she?

Hon. Member: No.

Hon. J. Warner: And she comes here and accuses me. Furthermore, she says that I was suspended by FIFA.

Mr. Speaker, I was not suspended by FIFA, I resigned. [*Interruption*] Do not ask me why, I would tell you. Henry Kissinger was once Secretary of State for the United States for 12 years; he came to Zurich—

Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker, I cannot hear.

Mr. Speaker: I, too, am getting some difficulty. I believe that the last row seems to be restless. That last row from La Brea right down to Point Fortin. [*Laughter*] You seem to be restless. It is a restless group. I am asking you to just pay some respect to this honourable House by allowing the Member for Chaguanas West to speak in silence. I would like to hear him and I am sure you would like to hear him. So, the Members for Point Fortin, Arouca/Maloney, Diego Martin Central and La Brea, please. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I spent about 30 years in FIFA and in our collective lifetime nobody in this country would even spend 15.

Mr. Speaker, I was talking about Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State for the United States. When he came to Zurich, he said to Mr. Blatter, to me and the secretary, that he has been in politics for over 12 years, but FIFA politics is one that is bigger than what he has ever been into. The point I am making, therefore, is that the Member for Arouca/Maloney has no idea about FIFA politics; she has no idea. In fact, I do not know if she even knows about this politics. The fact is, if you do not know, ask. Do not run to the *Mirror* and every news you get you bring it here as if it is yours.

Mr. Speaker, she said that two Ministers—two Members of Cabinet—bought Porsches using Ministries' funds. That is wrong. The Porsche that was bought by Mr. Emmanuel George was bought with his funds—his funds! But she comes here again—two Ministers from Cabinet bought two Porsches with Government funds: one was bought by the Ministry of Food Production and the other one was bought by Mr. Emmanuel George from his money. Because of the time, I want to say to my good friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell him that I do not choose when I speak. I am directed to speak whenever the leader says. So, if it is before you or after you, I do not know. I do not know when I am to speak. If he prefers me to speak now, I speak now or not at all; that is his remit. I want to say, however, that you made some revelations this morning that, of course, have opened our eyes and I, myself, would have to see about them. I really did not know about that.

So, Mr. Speaker, where are we now? Before I go into the gist of my contribution I want to take a trip back in history because I get the impression that not many persons understand how we came here and how we are not there.

The history I am talking about goes back as far as November 17, 2008 when the Movement for Change was formed. It was first mentioned on WIN TV to Sunil Ramdeen in an interview we had with him. That Movement for Change was to change the Government of the country, but because we had to do that, we first had to have elections in the UNC, which they did not have for six years.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you would recall in 2007 the UNC would either have come a distant third and the COP would either have been the Government or the Opposition. Had I not intervened—a price I am paying still—there was no

way the UNC could have gotten four seats, if so many. The COP would have been the Opposition or in Government, and who knows today what would have happened.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, what happened is that this Movement for Change was formed comprising Jack Warner, Winston Peters, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, Veshant Hosein, Dr. Rupert Griffith, and we had one of the most powerful secretaries, Christine Newallo-Hosein.

Let me fast-track now: On March 22, 2009, when we had, of course, toured the whole country and we were now entering the UNC complex, we had a little skirmish and so on. Then, on June 08, one month later, we launched our manifesto—

Mr. Speaker: I have been advised that the Hansard reporters are having extreme difficulty in properly recording the contributions of Members and they are getting a lot of disturbances on the side of the Members for Caroni East, Mayaro and where the Member for Tabaquite sits and, also, on that side, the Member for Point Fortin.

You all are distorting the recording—[*Interruption*] Yes, because of the constant crosstalk. So, I am appealing to Members, at the lower end of the Chamber, to really keep your tones down because it is really having a negative impact on the recording, on the part of the Hansard staff. So, I ask you to keep your tones down, please. Hon. Minister, you may continue.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on July 20, the mayor of Chaguanas was changed. It was not meant for the mayor, personally, but it was an attempt to tell Mr. Panday, at the time, that we had some power and we wanted to get change in the UNC. On July 23, the new mayor in Chaguanas was elected. Before I reach that far, I want to say to you that the Member for Diego Martin North/East played a pivotal part in having us here where we are today.

Hon. Member: How come? What did he do?

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, when we wanted to change the mayor of Chaguanas I went to his office, I met him—Am I speaking an untruth?

Mr. Imbert: [*Nods head, no*]

Hon. J. Warner: I spoke with you in the boardroom.

Mr. Imbert: We spoke, yes.

Hon. J. Warner: I told you I wanted to get your two officers to vote with my two.

Mr. Imbert: Correct.

Hon. J. Warner: You called Patrick Manning, he said yes.

Mr. Imbert: Correct.

Mr. Sharma: Shameless!

Hon. J. Warner: Then I told you I wanted to get Manohar Ramsaran as the mayor, you said, no. We did not want Suruj; no. [*Crosstalk*] That is correct; and then I went to look for a new mayor. So, I am saying if—[*Crosstalk*] if the Member for Diego Martin North/East—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: You are a dangerous man!

Mr. Speaker: Please, Members, when we speak loudly, the voices are travelling, and I am saying that we cannot afford to have wrong recording of Members' contributions. We are, therefore, disturbing the Hansard reporters. I appeal to Members, let us carry on, but in a very low tone, please. Allow the Member to speak.

Member for Fyzabad, do not engage in crosstalk at this time, just allow the Member for Chaguanas West to make his contribution. Take notes, please. Hon. Member.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it had nothing at all to do with the person Suruj Rambachan.

Hon. Member: Do not try that!

Hon. J. Warner: It had to do with, of course, Basdeo Panday. Anyhow, be that as it may, a new mayor was elected. For 14 months we walked the road—Winston Peters, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, Jack Warner, Veshant Hosein and Dr. Griffith—to get elections in the UNC.

On November 29, 2009, Mr. Panday announced the date for internal elections in the UNC. He said January 24, and on December 10, the Movement for Change was disbanded because we had achieved our objective of elections. Mr. Panday announced—on December 10—elections; December 12, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar announced her candidacy for the post of political leader of the party.

Mr. Speaker, I was out of the country. Mr. Winston Peters and I spoke, and we agreed that we should approach Mrs. Persad-Bissessar to assume the post of political leader and then, if possible, Leader of the Opposition.

When this date was announced, December 12—in Siparia and Penal, I was overseas, as I told you—I almost cried because I did not even think that Mrs.

Persad-Bissessar would have announced her candidacy. We all begged her to do so and the ones who were pivotal in this whole thing were Mr. Peters, Dr. Griffith, Mr. Hosein and myself.

Mr. Speaker, January 24 was elections; we campaigned throughout and so on and Mrs. Persad-Bissessar won by a vast majority. She got 13,490 votes; Panday got 1,359 and Ramesh got 729. So, she was the winner. As soon as she became the winner I decided then to try to lobby for her to become Leader of the Opposition. I was trying to put some muscle on Dr. Moonilal—and he said, “Jack, wait nah, wait nah, Jack; okay, give meh some time” —to fast-track it. He signed the letter and then I went around to get Members of the House to sign the letter for Mrs. Persad-Bissessar to become Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, you know something? We got eight signatures out of 15, but Dr. Moonilal and I thought that was too close, we wanted to get a ninth. Even as we had eight, I went to a ninth person—who is now a Minister—we could not get him to sign. So, he and I ran up by the President and said, “President, we have a new leader” and we, of course, gave it to him.

Therefore, I am making the point that we—all of us here—had an investment in Mrs. Persad-Bissessar, her future and where she is. Therefore, to bring a Motion like this, of no confidence in her, in our view, has put history on its head and there is no way that we could have cause to support this Motion. On March 26, Winston Dookeran and Kamla Persad-Bissessar met and they agreed for the UNC and COP to join together against the PNM. They both realized—we were, of course, on tenterhooks because we knew that if COP went alone, and if we go alone the PNM would be there. So, again, we brought them together, they met and they agreed to come together.

I do not know if anybody, but Mr. Manning, knew that he would dissolve Parliament. One day, before he dies, I hope to ask him and find out why, but I cannot figure out why. On April 08, on the eve of Mrs. Persad-Bissessar’s No Confidence Motion, Mr. Manning dissolved Parliament and on April 16 he announced the date. The rest is history: Mr. Manning called general elections, local government election; and that is why we are here.

Now, the fact is that we are here for 22 months, and in 22 months we of course, are expected to bring down fire and brimstone, in 22 months—some things which have not been done for 22 years must be done in 22 months.

Mr. Speaker, there is a saying, you know—“when the cat is away the mouse will play”. Today, speaking metaphorically, the mice are playing. This Motion—

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this morning or yesterday—is not about burying Mrs. Persad-Bissessar; they cannot. We would not even allow it, having given the brief history of how we got to where we are. This Motion is about ensuring that the political retirement of the Member for San Fernando East takes place. For too long, the Member for San Fernando East has been a shadow over the Member for Diego Martin West; he has been a thorn in his side. It is no secret; we all know that the Member for Diego Martin West has had great difficulty in ensuring his authority over his 11/12 persons. He has no authority over them.

Hon. Member: That is not true.

Hon. J. Warner: Why do you not change your tie? Change your tie like his own, if that is not true. Change your tie, here, or take this one.

Mr. Speaker, December 02, 2010, the Opposition decided to leave the Chamber, walking out on the Anti-Gang Bill debate. On December 08, 2010, the *Newsday* editorial summarized it as follows, I quote:

“Dr Browne walked out. He was followed by Arouca/Maloney MP Alicia Hospedales, Point Fortin MP Paula Gopee-Scoon, La Brea MP Fitzgerald Jeffery, Laventille West MP NiLeung Hypolite and a little later by St Ann’s East MP Joanne Thomas, who at first hesitated and was apparently asked by Mc Donald to stay. Nevertheless...”

Joanne Thomas,

...“departed 15 minutes later. Ms Mc Donald, Mr. Imbert, seated in the seat of the absent Dr Rowley, and Laventille East/Morvant MP Donna Cox stayed put.”

So, all walked out on December 02, but three stayed put. Therefore, I am saying, again, he is having a problem in getting his authority on that side. This Motion, this morning, is for him to try to assert his authority. That is the whole purpose.

Mr. Manning was not present at the time of this protest, but the fact is—this is the *Newsday* editorial:

“Mr. Manning was not present at the time of the protest action nor was Port-of-Spain North/St Ann’s West representative, Patricia McIntosh plus Dr Rowley. But Dr Browne is seen as a pro Manning MP.”

Mr. Speaker, the *Newsday* goes on:

“Opposition Chief Whip Marlene Mc Donald may shut her eyes to reality, play word games and deny her parliamentary bench is split, but Friday’s

partial walkout of the Chamber can leave few in doubt of the power struggle that is confusing the PNM side.”

The power struggle that is confusing the PNM side. This Motion, as soon as the Member for San Fernando East has left the hospital, is designed to give the Leader of the Opposition the authority he does not have. I continue:

“Friday’s division of the bench showed TT what it has for six months suspected...”

Hon. Member: That is somebody’s opinion.

Hon. J. Warner: Everything is somebody’s opinion. When you quote it, it is the same thing too, the same thing too. I am quoting from up here.

“Friday’s division of the bench showed TT what it has for six months suspected: since losing office, there has existed a tug of war in the Parliament between MPs loyal to new Opposition Leader Dr Keith Rowley and representatives sympathetic to their former chief, Patrick Manning. Friday was a physical manifestation of the current PNM political reality.”

Mr. Speaker, on April 14, 2011 the Member for San Fernando East moved a Motion regarding a matter of privilege. In the *Express* of April 15 they had this to say, I quote:

“However, the surprise came with the Opposition vote...”

Now, you recall, Mr. Manning had come here with a Motion and I am going to quote now what the newspaper said:

“However, the surprise came with the Opposition vote, which revealed serious divisions in the ranks of the People’s National Movement. Of the 11 PNM MPs who attended Parliament yesterday, five abstained, four voted in favour” of Manning’s motion and two ducked and ran just before the vote was taken.”

This is the *Express* saying so. “Two ducked and ran.” [*Interruption*] You remember?

“Those abstaining were Dr. Keith Rowley, Marlene McDonald, Nileung Hypolite, Paula Gopee-Scoon and Colm Imbert. Those voting in favour of the motion were Manning, Amery Browne, Patricia McIntosh and Fitzgerald Jeffrey.”

This is a party? This is a side?

“Joanne Thomas and Alicia Hospedales (who had seconded Manning’s motion) left the Chamber before the vote was taken.”

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Mr. Speaker, the Member for Arouca/Maloney seconded Mr. Manning's Motion and then she ran. She did not stay.

“Thomas, apparently making no attempt to hide her objective, returned immediately after the vote.”

It is here.

I am saying, this morning, that if you want to compare confidence levels of the leaders in this honourable House, it is the Leader of the Opposition who has a confidence problem. [*Desk thumping*] He has a confidence problem. The Member for Diego Martin West has a confidence problem, not Mrs. Persad-Bissessar. That problem has been there for the last 22 months. [*Interruption*] As somebody says, a simple thing as a tie they cannot agree on; a simple thing as that.

Mr. Speaker, it is known that of the 12 persons on that side, the Member for Diego Martin West has four from 12, but it is also known that on this side, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar has 29 from 29. [*Desk thumping*] This is from five parties, not one. One party, it is not homogeneous at all; but this party, it is homogeneous.

I am saying, therefore, the whole aim is that the Leader of the Opposition used this Motion to try to assert himself as leader of the PNM and he has just two months to do it because in two months' time—all things being equal—Mr. Manning is back. When Mr. Manning is back, again, the gulf gets wider. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: That is not true.

Hon. J. Warner: You see, you could say so if you want to.

I am making the point, Mr. Speaker, that for a long time the Member for Diego Martin West has been living in the shadow of the Member for San Fernando East. Repeatedly, he has failed to command and control his 11 Members, and he could not do it if the Member for San Fernando East was around. So, as he is not here he rushed to do this Motion and, as the newspapers say today, it is not any bombshell, but eggshell. Where is the bombshell? We had more bombshells from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Interruption*] Look it is here, “Rowley's Eggshell”.

Mr. Sharma: Those are Easter eggs, “they soft”.

Hon. J. Warner: They melt. The Member for Diego Martin North/East gave us more bombshells, for want of a better word, than what you gave us.

Hon. Member: That was a “channa bomb”.

Hon. J. Warner: Mr. Speaker, what I am saying now is that when the Member for San Fernando East returns, the Member for Diego Martin West shall be relegated to first mate because the captain would be back.

Hon. Member: And they say he is recovering quickly.

Hon. Member: That is not true.

Hon. J. Warner: Therefore, I am saying that this Motion, this morning, has nothing to do with Mrs. Persad-Bissessar and no confidence. It had everything to do with the Member for Diego Martin West and, of course, his personal difficulty to get recognition among his own ranks.

Mr. Speaker, I have looked at the Member for Diego Martin West, and I remember that he was fired as Minister of Trade and Industry on November 23, 2008. When he was fired on that day he told the *Newsday*—on the same day he was fired because he objected to a plan by UDeCott to construct a 60-room hotel at the Princes Building grounds. He was fired because that was something he could not tolerate; and, thirdly, as a Member of the Cabinet—I am quoting him now—

As a member of the Cabinet, it was news to me and my colleagues, even as a member of the Cabinet it appears that I am not entitled to voice my objections, so for voicing my objections I had been fired.

He also complained of being politically persecuted by the Integrity Commission—some kind of long story—and so on. All of this took place in 2008. What did the Member do? What did he do? This is April. Let us go to September 2008.

In September 2008, when the Motion was brought against the Member for San Fernando East, what happened? The records would show that the Member for Diego Martin West ran and hid. The *Hansard* record for September 12, 2008 shows—I would read it for you, Mr. Speaker—that when the Motion against the Member for San Fernando East was brought to the House, the Member for Diego Martin West, firstly, did not seek nor was granted leave to be absent and he was not noted as absent from the sitting. Secondly, the Member for Diego Martin West uttered not a single word during the sitting; and, thirdly, the Member for Diego Martin West did not contribute to the debate on the No Confidence Motion against the leader of the Cabinet that the Member himself said was not being conducted properly.

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Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West did not vote for the Motion. He did not vote against the Motion and he is not noted as having abstained. That means, he “ducked out” of the Chamber when the time came to vote. He ducked, when taking the vote. So, therefore, I am asking: where is the moral authority for the Member for Diego Martin West to call on anyone here to act in a particular manner? How can he judge us?

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying to you this morning is that the Member for Diego Martin West remained silent and was toeing the party line until October 19, 2009. All this time he was battling with, of course, his former prime minister. Of course, the former prime minister also had lingering doubts of whether to reactivate the Landate issue. He felt—this is by assumption now—that if he acted prematurely, in a particular way, the Landate issue would be reactivated, so he kept quiet.

You would recall, also, Mr. Speaker, the commission of enquiry into UDeCott and other matters where aspersions were cast on him about a missing \$10 million. “Where the money gone?” Though the former prime minister did not say that the money was taken by the Member for Diego Martin West, by his insinuations, he was imputing motives. Although he did not give reasons, he was suggesting, “Where the money gone? Where the money gone?” Ten million dollars; and, even then the Member came to the House, he was slandered in Parliament by his own prime minister but he continued to toe the party line. He toed the party line. In fact, he was even called a “wajang” and he still toed the party line.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West even said—I took this from *Hansard*:

I want to put on *Hansard* this afternoon that I went to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago in August 2003, as a Minister of Government in Trinidad and Tobago, a PNM Minister, and told him that there was bid-rigging taking place in UDeCott.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003 he knew there was bid-rigging taking place in UDeCott and he remained there toeing the party line until he was fired. If he had not been fired, then what? He would still be silent. This is what, up to this day, I cannot understand. If you are so sanctimonious and so on, you have to come and make a clean break whenever it is, but you stayed from 2003; you stayed very quiet for six years.

Hon. Member: He put his tail between his legs.

Hon. J. Warner: October 19, 2009, the Member for Diego Martin West spoke, again, in Parliament. He said he—

...hoped that by speaking out he would save the PNM from the corruption that was taking place.

He said he would also save the attorney general because he said:

...he too has a lot of questions to answer but he can still be redeemed.

He was talking about a scandalous land deal in Valsayn involving Hafeez Karamath and UDeCott when he, Calder Hart—UDeCott—took a loan for \$117 million from the Calder Hart home mortgage bank. You know, of course, it was for \$134 million.

He talked about his wife being hounded down and so on and so on. He even got his friend—Mr. Speaker, I am making the point, therefore, that it was only when he gave up hope that the Member for San Fernando East would not reconsider his situation, would not rehire him, then he said he would speak; and he got up, when he realized—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by a further 30 minutes. [*Mr. E. McLeod*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. J. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I want to say again, the Member for Diego Martin West did not bring a No Confidence Motion against his prime minister. That Member did not resign his ministerial portfolio, be it 2003 or 2008. In 2003 he knew about the bid-rigging. For 2003 to 2008 he did not resign—he did not resign as an MP either—he went on the Back Bench because he was put in exile.

I want to say that in a real sense the Member for Diego Martin West was appointed leader of this party by default. The PM lost confidence in him after he was exiled. He could not even get his friends to talk to him. His best friend was Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, in those days, because they were both on the Back Bench. He did not battle with anybody. He sat down, licked his wounds and waited for his leader to keel over, politically. He waited for an election; he did not fight for the steering before the PNM's defeat. In fact he did not even know Mr. Manning would have called a snap election; like all of us. We all were caught off

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guard and he, in many ways, had contributed to the demise of the PNM—the fact that they lost the election—because we were able to use videos, audios and so on of this whole scenario between him and his prime minister to our advantage.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was democratically elected as leader of the UNC, as I said earlier on, by over 13,000 votes. In doing so, she took on two heavyweight challengers: Basdeo Panday and Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj and she won over both of them. So, she, in my humble view, has more legitimacy than the present Member.

Mr. Speaker, I read where the Leader of the Opposition said that he is ready to be prime minister. I laughed because he is all dressed up with nowhere to go. What I am saying is that this country is not ready for him. In fact, I do not think they ever will be. There is an old saying—the old people have a saying that if you live long enough you will be able to see everything. Let me tell you something this morning, kindly, Sir, that as far as I am concerned the Member for Diego Martin West can live as long as he wants, but there are two things he will not see: God's face and this chair. [*Desk thumping*] He will not see that, as long as he lives.

What has happened today, Mr. Speaker, the leader has pushed the PNM party, as a party, further back. He has weakened the party with this debate.

Hon. Member: It is frivolous.

Hon. J. Warner: It is frivolous, of course. We have been here for about 24 hours, Mr. Speaker, on a non debate. I repeat: the Member for Diego Martin North/East gave more “kangkalang” than the Member for Diego Martin West. The girl changed her name; I changed mine too; mine was Austin, now I am called Mr. Jack. That is a reason for no confidence? You cannot be serious, man. Therefore, I ask: where is the moral authority for us, of course, to have this meeting?

Another thing, too: I have been told quite often by the Member for Diego Martin West—he complains all the time—that, of course, I am completing the work that he started. Not him, sorry, the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Aranguez overpass, we finished it, yes; Preysal flyover, about to be finished, yes, we finished it; Uriah Butler Highway widened, we finished it, yes; CR Highway to be extended, we are doing it, yes; Diego Martin Highway extension is to be done, it will be done, yes; and the Point Fortin Highway is on stream. Therefore, we are completing work which they started. The fact, simply, is that we are doing what they could not deliver.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make two quick points here with regard to what I just said. The Diego Martin Highway is where it is because of the intransigence of the Member for Diego Martin North/East. I want to say here, on record, that as far as I am concerned—and the records will show—it is through public mischief that highway has not been completed. I will not say much more on that because the Member is not here; but I am saying to him to bear in mind that he almost lost his seat to Garvin Nicholas by just three maxi taxis, therefore, I am saying, he has to walk soft. That highway in Diego Martin should have been completed a long time ago.

Mr. Speaker, all in all, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, in October 2011, of course, lost a case in this court. I just went to the Ministry and was hearing talk about one million here and three million there. If you remember clearly, the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, close to the Omeara Road, used to have mounds and mounds of aggregate for years, because there was a court case going on. When I became Minister in that Ministry I asked them what was the problem. They said to me that there was a court case taking place. I said, “Let me see the file.” So, they brought the file to me.

I am not even a “half bush lawyer”, but after I read the file I said, “This does not make sense, we cannot win this case.” He had lost it in the lower court; he appealed and when he appealed, both he and the AG forgot to go to court and it was dismissed, with cost. Then, they appealed to Privy Council. I tried to pull it back and could not. Mr. Speaker, you know what happened? For that case we lost \$32.8 million.

Hon. Member: What a shame!

Hon. J. Warner: We had to pay a contractor and the legal fees, we are still battling; it might be another \$18 million. That cannot be right.

Hon. Member: “Oh good”, that was a deal.

Hon. J. Warner: We are still battling the fees for that highway—\$32 million. If you take that and you add it to the *Mv Su*, you understand what is happening? Then again, when you add the *Su* and you put the two boxes we have under my desk—

Hon. Member: Rapid Rail.

Hon. J. Warner: Rapid Rail, for \$500 million in two cardboard boxes. You understand where we are coming from? Sometimes it pains me when I see I cannot fix a box drain or a road, and I have sitting by my foot, \$500 million. It

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pains me, but that is as it is. Therefore, I am making the point that the Member for Diego Martin North/East did not build the highway through his own fault.

Mr. Speaker, I end by saying that as far as I am concerned, the Member for Diego Martin West has no moral authority to ask for a No Confidence Motion against Mrs. Persad-Bissessar. I do not know who, there, has the authority to speak about good management.

No Confidence Motions are Motions of tremendous significance; very important Motions. As you heard from Dr. Moonilal earlier on, those Motions could unseat a government, if the government is not careful. That is a Motion that has to be put before all other Motions. Therefore, I am saying that while the Leader of the Opposition has the right to bring this Motion, how could he delay our parliamentary agenda with the kinds of things he revealed yesterday.

You know something, Mr. Speaker, two Fridays ago, the Member for Diego Martin North/East complained that we were meeting on a Carnival Friday; of course, he felt we should not have met. However, yesterday at half past one to now we should not have met either. This is vexatious. This is an abuse of the process and this is why, in some ways, I am so angry.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by telling you that the People's Partnership is intact. The confidence in the Prime Minister is forever present. Yesterday, at one o'clock I informed the public that I am prepared to go back, again, as Chairman of the party. I did that in the full knowledge that Mrs. Persad-Bissessar is the most competent person to run this country; that her leadership remains intact; she has been able to hold five parties together when, of course, the Member for Diego Martin West cannot hold one. Therefore, as far as I am concerned Mrs. Persad-Bissessar has nothing to worry about.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Marlene McDonald (*Port of Spain South*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the Member for Chaguanas West, it is almost 24 hours that I am in this Chamber and it is tiring at this point. It is difficult to come at this stage when my colleagues would have gone before me and have presented their debates, so, I would be very tight—I do not know about brief—and try to make my points in the best way I can.

Before I get into my debate, let me thank you for giving me this opportunity to join in this debate at a quarter to eleven. I want to start with the Leader of Government Business, the Member for Oropouche East. The Member for

Oropouche East said yesterday that this Motion is baseless and it lacks substance. He went on to say that he believes it is frivolous. *[Interruption]* Well, I would not use all the language, I am trying to precis. He believes that you should only—I am trying to quote him—file such a Motion if there is some sort of bombshell to drop. As a matter of fact, he made a bold statement after the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke. He said we can go home now, there is no bombshell.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the Member for Oropouche East actually must understand that it is a parliamentary process that an opposition party would use. It is really a tool that an opposition may use to call a government to account. That is, basically, what a Motion of No Confidence is.

As a matter of fact, you knew from the beginning that you could not win the Motion, but the point about it is what you want to do, as the Member for Diego Martin West would say, you are not really speaking to the people in the House, you are sensitizing the national community on what you see as the shortcomings of the current Government. Take it for what you may, I believe that both sides of the divide can benefit from it.

Now, the Leader of Government Business also went on to say that—he presented a whole pile of documents in the manifesto, short-term plans, budget statements, but I will tell you something: I have been in this House—I am the one—for the greater part of 2010—every time I stood up to debate, I have been asking, “Where is the vision?”, “Where is your vision statement?” I know that the Member for Tunapuna would be waiting, when I am finished, to say, “The Member for Port of Spain South has come from a background where the visions are written, but our new policy and our new governance speaks to a vision where you do things.” So, whatever I see you all do, that is a vision. So, I have to go about looking to see what you do and say, “Ah, there is a new vision.” Sir, I beg to differ and I would tell you why a little later on.

Mr. Speaker, it was not until January 2011, in one of our debates here, a very late debate too, we went until six, after six that day, where the Member for Oropouche East stood up, waved the manifesto and said, “This is our policy document. Whatever we have put in here is our vision and is our policy document.” That was when I knew that was your policy document, Sir.

I want to go to the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara. The most I can say about him is that his debate was about Calder Hart, Uthara Rao, UDeCott, et cetera, going back in the past, looking to rehash PNM’s sins, but we will get to that.

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I looked at the Member for St. Augustine, the Minister of Legal Affairs, and he sees a Motion of No Confidence as a cheap political game. Obviously, they do not understand this game called politics. They do not. He stated, “Why are you bringing this Motion at this point in time when there is a trade union unrest in the country?” I want to ask—I am sorry he is not here because he is my colleague; we studied together in Barbados back down to Hugh Wooding Law School.

Hon. Member: In the same room?

Miss M. McDonald: In the same room? In the same classroom. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Member for St. Augustine: why did you not question your Prime Minister when she foisted a state of emergency on this country without a proper explanation? Up to now this country has not been given an explanation for that state of emergency. [*Desk thumping*] To this date! What has she done to small businesses in this country? The timing was wrong. Let the Member for St. Augustine ask his current Prime Minister why she did that. This Motion was not brought here because the trade unions are doing something outside there; it has nothing; it is separate and apart. I was part of the process and, believe me, I do not get involved with those silly games. I would like to tell my colleague from St. Augustine that.

I come now to the Member for Chaguanas West. The Member for Chaguanas West made mention—I cannot remember the exact line—of a perception I got from when he spoke that we do not know—there is no clear leader on this side. [*Interruption*] All right, good, you said it. Well, I want to put some sort of damper on that this morning and tell you, and the national community, that is not so. [*Desk thumping*] It has gone on for too long; there is one leader. It is one leader that we recognize. [*Desk thumping*] It is one leader.

Hon. Member: That is right!

Miss M. McDonald: Listen, if you are in a house—you and your wife, Member for Chaguanas West—you are two different people with two different personalities; two different idiosyncrasies; you must have quarrelling and whatnot. So, what is the issue about a tie? So, a tie could break up the People’s National Movement? We are a party. We are 55 years old. [*Desk thumping*] The oldest political institution in this country; all that you are talking about, we laid the foundation. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: That is right! Tell them!

Miss M. McDonald: We did that. [*Desk thumping*] We are the only party in this country that has written, at every period of our existence, a vision for our country. We did that. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: All you have it wrong.

Miss M. McDonald: You do not even know what you are talking about. You do not even know and I suppose you come from that Pacific university. I have to watch you and mark you. [*Laughter*] Two masters and two Phds and all that.

Hon. Member: How much did you pay?

Miss M. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, to the Member for Chaguanas West, I also looked at—I want to give you a little story; actually, it is facts. In early, I think, March 2010—I was a Minister then—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I ask for your protection from the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, please.

Mr. Speaker: You have my full protection. Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, please. Continue.

Miss M. McDonald: There was a major fire in Siparia and I recall, that night, I got a call from the Prime Minister and he said, “As Minister of Community Development I want you to go immediately, tomorrow morning, together with the Minister of Local Government, and the Minister of Social Development.” We went into Siparia. The fire took place, I think, just obliquely opposite the regional corporation on the main road; a lot of houses burned in that area. When we got there the people were quarrelling; they were cursing; they were able to see the PNM MPs, they could not see the MP for their area, the Siparia MP; a lot of confusion and bacchanal. We went in quietly, with no fanfare; we did not put it in the newspapers that the MP did not show up; and, at the time, the MP was an opposition MP. She was not like the prime minister—to say, well, she is busy now. She was just an ordinary opposition MP.

Member for Chaguanas West, through you, Mr. Speaker, you see what occurred in the *Express* last Sunday with my colleague from Point Fortin, I will not go there to knock anyone, whether or not—[*Interruption*] I will not even bother to repeat that. I would tell you something: I am a hard worker in my constituency and you are well aware of that. If tomorrow, the *Express* decides to come into my constituency—which they will—you know what will happen? They will speak to the wrong person. Then, knowing what we know about the media—[*Interruption*] I think that is just being a little facetious, if I might say.

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The thing about it is, if you talk to the wrong people—people are people—they would say all kinds of things; blow up a whole big story, but anytime they do it, I am waiting. You see, unlike my colleague who remained silent, I do not have that character. I will defend my work in my constituency.

I am saying we are all colleagues; we are all in this together; all 41 of us. If I read anything on any one of you here, I will not believe it, because I know what happens. You all are aware of that too. You would go every week to your constituency office, but you do not go for one day—you are sick—and you know what will happen? “Oh God, I eh see her; you know how long ah eh see her?” “You going, you know, you going.” I have experienced that over my four and a half years inside of there. So, I would leave the Member for Point Fortin alone. Thank you.

11.00 a.m.

You went on when you went into the crunch of your debate. What did you do? Have you addressed—Member for Chaguanas East, sorry, Chaguanas West, have you addressed the substantive Motion before you? You took us back on a trip. You took us back on a trip in history from November 17, 2008, and what did you do? You are saying or you are proffering a reason for the Motion and you are saying that San Fernando—I am trying to read it— that the Member for San Fernando East is a shadow that is hanging over the head of the Member for Diego Martin West. That is the furthest thing from the truth. That is in your mind, that is a perception and I want to remove that cobweb from your mind, Member for Chaguanas West, and that is not so.

I just want to comment because I do not want to waste too much, I want to get into the debate, and you said two things he will not see and that struck me—he will not see God’s face and he will not see that chair, the Prime Minister’s chair. I know sometimes when you make statements there I would say to you, “Are you God?” I have asked you that several times. I am saying you are not God, you are not God. You do not know—all right, good. So, I will just close it off by saying you are not God, you do not know what tomorrow holds. Fine.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the other contributors, Mr. Anil Roberts, Glenn, sorry, Member for Caroni Central—, sorry, I just had the names so I have to put the constituencies—Minister of National Security, Member for Tobago West, Member for Mayaro, a common thread runs throughout their debate. What is that? The bashing of the People’s National Movement. And you know what I am saying, Mr. Speaker. I want to remind this honourable House why we are here. It

is not the PNM that is under the focus here; it is not us under scrutiny; it is not us; it is not the stewardship of the PNM that is under the focus here. Rather, it is the current Prime Minister's handling or, I should say, mishandling of the affairs of this country. That is what is under scope here. Whether or not we have succeeded in getting the points across, that is exactly what we are speaking to.

Mr. Speaker, for lest we forget, this PNM has already been adjudicated on since May 24, 2010. So the country has looked at— when they adjudicated on us, they would have considered Calder Hart; what is the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara's favourite guy? Uthara Rao; the church at Guanapo Heights; UDeCott; the Brian Lara Stadium, what have you. Everything that you want to throw into that pot, all the big buildings, et cetera, that we are now using and Ministers trying to get into the Waterfront. Listen, all those things—and you know what this reminds me of, Mr. Speaker? It reminds me of that period, 1986 to 1991, when that NAR Government took nearly all their term, almost all of their term criticizing three PNM MPs, it was 33/3.

Every time you looking at it, it is always behind the PNM, and the PNM, and the PNM did this. And I am seeing the same thing happening to this Government. If you look at it, you are almost into two years, you are almost into that two-and-a-half-year mark and I would not tell you all what happens at the two-and-a-half-year mark. Any true politician or experienced one will know what happens at that two-and-a-half-year mark. Say what you want about Patrick Manning, a shrewd politician, he knows exactly what happens at that two-and-a-half-year mark, so let us continue with the PNM.

Hon. Member: Where is he now?

Miss M. McDonald: He is recuperating. Mr. Speaker, this debate is about the gross incompetence of the current Prime Minister. That is what we are looking at. We are looking at her failure to keep the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago safe. That is what they campaigned on, that is what the new governance is about, that is what the new politics was about. Her inability to demonstrate leadership in the transformation of our economy. She has failed to effectively manage and control key members of her leadership team. As a matter of fact, it was being brought out from many of our MPs on this side, brought out that exact theme here today, and she has consistently alienated sectors of this national community, especially those who did not support her and her Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has also embarrassed us, not only regionally but internationally as well. Whilst this Motion may not carry or will not carry, we

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on this side have seized the opportunity to talk to the national community, to speak to our constituents and remind them of her unfitness to inspire and to lead this nation. That is the reason, Mr. Speaker, that is the objective; that is the objective of this Motion, nothing else.

Mr. Speaker, the central issue here is one of governance, and this is what they rode into power on, the new governance structure, the new politics. If you listen to my friend from St. Augustine, he is always pontificating, he is always preaching, you know. I listen to him, he is my colleague, but that is what—whatever you say you must be able to put it in action also.

Mr. Speaker, put simply, governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. What is good governance? So good governance would imply accountability, it would imply transparency, it would imply participation, openness, equity and the rule of law. That is good governance. That is what I expect to see from this Government because that is what they told the people; that is what the people are looking for.

By the way, let me just remind you that, on a daily basis, people are disowning this Government, they are disowning you, they cannot find people in Port of Spain or around town who voted for the PP, they cannot find them. Why? Why? You are not even two years yet, why? People are disenchanted because what you say you will do on one hand, you do the opposite. We have a lot of examples to bring out that point.

Mr. Speaker, during my contribution to this debate, I intend to join my colleagues on this side of the Bench in demonstrating poor governance and leadership on the part of this Prime Minister. As I do so, I intend to reflect. I am going to reflect on their policy document, which is their manifesto.

If you look at page 8 of the 2010 manifesto, it focuses on three key elements of good governance. Probably each Member should go back and revise and read over those governance principles because this is where I am getting it from, page 8: "...strengthening existing institutions, enhancing democracy, strengthening execution and delivery capacity." Mr. Speaker, in terms of enhancing democracy, this is what they have to say at page 8, and I quote: "We will support the separation of powers among key institutions in the society such as Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary..."

Mr. Speaker, I charge the Prime Minister, the current Prime Minister with contaminating the separation of powers and threatening our democracy by presiding over the award of Silk to sitting judges. Mr. Speaker, the current Prime

Minister is an attorney-at-law, are we to believe that she did not know better? Our most experienced jurist in this country condemned that action which resulted in the two judges having to return the honour.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know what hurt me? I sat in class with one of them, I sat in class doing law with the Chief Justice, and I can tell you—I can tell you he is an honour to this country. He is one of the most brilliant minds in the legal profession, and so it saddened me—it saddened me when this happened. I know that there was contamination of the separation of powers. Mr. Speaker, I ask the question—as I always say, I am cerebrating, I am just asking questions—was this an attempt to exercise control and influence over the independence of thought of the Judiciary? I will like to know.

Mr. Speaker, the plot thickens because, in their manifesto, the one they all should have, the one that the Member for Oropouche East always holds up, it promised a move away from maximum leadership. You all remember they used to call the former prime minister, he was the “maximum leader”. During the elections of 2010, they superimposed a hat, you know—What is it? One of those general’s hats and overalls, and whatnot, and you had dictator and his hand up. That is the perception they gave people of the maximum leader.

You know what, Mr. Speaker, they then put it in their manifesto: they want to move away from this maximum leadership, and this nation held its head in shame when the current Prime Minister ensured that she, too, was awarded Silk. How scandalous, Mr. Speaker. I will say here today without fear and by no stretch of the imagination, can this current Prime Minister be ever described as an advocate of the law? Her legal record just does not support that view, maybe in time to come but not now, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of good governance, this Government promised in their manifesto to rewrite the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. I am going to say two things to include among other things, a move away from a culture of maximum leadership and term limits for a Prime Minister, to set term limits for a Prime Minister. Now that she has assumed office, she has turned her back on these promises. She has now become the maximum leader. Where is the consultation, Mr. Speaker? No one is talking about constitutional reform at this point in time. Their manifesto confirms that transparency, as I said, is an important hallmark of good governance. This is the good governance they are bringing to this country in 2010.

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But, Mr. Speaker, I have news for you, the PNM has been out of office for almost two years. Therefore, I want to ask the current Prime Minister to explain to me and explain to my Bench why Trinidad and Tobago has fallen from a rank of No. 73, with a score of 3.6 in 2010, to a rank of 91 and a score of 3.2 on the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index for 2011. It is bad enough that Trinidad and Tobago is perceived as being corrupt, more now than ever. We should be ashamed when we look at how we compare with our Caribbean neighbours, and I will give you some statistics, Mr. Speaker: Barbados ranks 16th with a score of 7.8; Saint Lucia ranks 25th with a score of 7.0; St. Vincent and the Grenadines ranks 36 with a score of 5.8; Dominica ranks 44th with a score of 5.2, Jamaica ranks 86th with a score of 3.3; Greece, with all its problems, is 80th with a score of 3.4.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is even more interesting is that India was ranked lower than Trinidad and Tobago with a score of 95— a rank of 95th and a score of 3.1. This is the country—this is why I am telling you I am questioning the judgment of this current Prime Minister—because this is the country that this Prime Minister is hell-bent on making one of Trinidad and Tobago's preferred trading partners. You cannot control corruption here but you are going to align us with another country that could only drag us down further, Mr. Speaker. Unheard of. With all the facts that came out this morning with the Member for Diego Martin North/East, what will the Prime Minister be doing with it all?

Well, I heard—I got a little comfort when the Member for Chaguanas West said he, too, would be looking at it because what came out here this morning, Mr. Speaker, we need to examine it carefully. While I am on the point of India, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister displayed in glorious fashion her devotion to her country when she bowed down to touch the feet of India's President Patel. *[Interruption]* You had your say, allow me mine.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please, address me.

Miss M. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We did not send our Prime Minister to India to bow down before any other leader. Our Father of the Nation, Dr. Eric Williams, that great visionary, moved us from colonialism into Independence into Republican status. Trinidad and Tobago is proud today, we are going to be 50 years this year, we are proud as a sovereign State and we bow down to no one regardless of size or any other criteria. And, today, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister remains unapologetic and defiant—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Proud.

Miss M. McDonald:—and she justifies her action as a mark of disrespect for her—sorry, a mark of respect for her elders. Mr. Speaker, I see that as a farce. If her reasons are valid, I challenge the current Prime Minister now to bow down before Mr. Basdeo Panday, her elder, a man who has made her politically and whom she has shown great— she once said that he is her guru and she has shown him great disrespect and irreverence. So, Mr. Speaker, I challenge—I challenge this Prime Minister’s intention, and that is why I support this.

I am not the type of person who would jump to conclusions easily, but I would wait, I would sit it out, I would look, I would examine before I take a decision. It appears she knows nothing. I would not bring back up the Resmi affair. Today’s newspapers said she knows nothing about Resmi changing her name, or anything of the sort, and she did not know Resmi before she hired her, and whatnot, but she telling this country to move on after the Resmi affair did not appease this country, it did not appease this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister showed lack of judgment and incompetence with that whole state of emergency affair. It was a dismal failure and I am wondering who is advising this current Prime Minister because what has happened—it has hurt the economy; it has inconvenienced the national community; it has damaged our international image and it has destroyed the trust between the communities and the police. And the Prime Minister goes about her way as if nothing has happened and repeating that if she has to do it again, she will do it—that the SoE was a success. You went behind the bridge in my constituency and picked up a set of my constituents.

Dr. Moonilal: Saved their life.

Miss M. McDonald: “Pick up ah set of— you don’t know, we don’t know”, you must tell us how you saved their lives. You must tell us.

Hon. Member: “When they come out they dead.”

Miss M. McDonald: You must tell us how you all saved their lives, do not sit here, the national community wants to know, they want to know. They want to know, give us the details, tell us what has happened in this country. It is only in Trinidad this could happen, you know, only in Trinidad this could happen.

I guess she did not know also, taking wrong advice, like when she cancelled—the Prime Minister, I will take it back—the Prime Minister did not know that when she cancelled the OPVs that our borders would remain porous.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 43(1), tedious repetition, we have heard this for the last 23 hours.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Ad nauseam.

Mr. Speaker: I want to sustain that. You know, so many people have spoken about it and I am sure you have other matters you would like to raise.

Miss M. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I have a one-liner on it and—

Hon. Member: Speak your one-liner and move on.

Miss M. McDonald: It is none of your business, Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, you “don’t get farce, fresh and facetious with me.”

Mr. Speaker: Listen, honourable—

Dr. Moonilal: Next, Standing Order 36 (4).

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes, just withdraw that remark. Hon. Member, could you kindly withdraw what you just said? You made a statement a short while ago.

Miss M. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw, but he also has to.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, do not provoke, please, but the language was unparliamentary, and I will ask you to—I know you made reference, it is a one-liner. I ask you to move on, please.

Miss M. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I am going to next, I did not hear it in this House, certainly not, but the Prime Minister did not know that when she chose to stay at the private home of a friend, who coincidentally was bidding for an NP contract, that it would create the appearance of cronyism and impropriety.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5).

Hon. Ramlogan: The person was not bidding for the contract at the time of this, that was months after.

Dr. Moonilal: Standing Order 36 (5), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. All right. I think that that matter was raised as well by somebody else but if you could just—I know you want to elaborate but let us—

Miss M. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I am not taking it back but I am moving on. The Prime Minister did not know that when she chastised our Caribbean

neighbours with talk that Trinidad and Tobago was not their ATM card, that this Prime Minister would drive a wedge between us and the rest of the Caricom and damage our relationship.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Prime Minister is aware, as my colleague from Diego Martin North East said—“one line ah moving on,”—that a senior Cabinet Member’s wife is in receipt of millions of dollars of contracts from the Ministry of Education.

I suppose the Prime Minister is also not aware about the plot to usurp the constitutionally enshrined authority of the Tobago House of Assembly by influencing board and committee selections in Tobago; also, by injecting their CEPEP contractors in Tobago; and by attempting to foist a second Carnival on the people of Tobago without their consent.

The Prime Minister, I suppose, does not know of the \$4 million government property rental of premises recently belonging to the Attorney General and now transferred to another party to facilitate a monthly rental.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), the Member is imputing improper motives to a Member of another Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: The Member is present but, again, I would ask you to be a little more careful.

Miss M. McDonald Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This one is for the Member for Oropouche East, I suppose— *[Laughter]*

Hon. Member: 36 (5).

Miss M. McDonald: I suppose the Prime Minister has forgotten her own mantra of “serve the people, serve the people, serve the people.” Mr. Speaker, it is more to me like, “fool the people,” that is what you all are doing, “fool the people, fool the people, fool the people.”

Hon. Member: “Dat is what all yuh cyar do again.”

Miss M. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I turn to the economy. The Opposition is not unaware of the state of the global economy and the challenges which we have to face. But it is the Government, led by this Prime Minister, that claimed to have had the answers. They criticized the PNM’s record on the economy and promised to turn things—*[Interruption]*—yes, because you believe, Member for Oropouche East that every Motion is about bombshell. No, no, no, it is enlightening the national community. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the language of the Government Public

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Sector Investment Programme for 2011 and 2012—in 2011, it said, “Facing the Issues, Turning the Economy Around,” and 2012 From Steady Foundation to Economic Transformation.

The Prime Minister has failed to lead her Government to achieve these goals and, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Finance when we debated a previous Bill, I am not going to open it—I said things were not too rosy, and he took me to pieces, dehumanized me, insulted me, and the Prime Minister was right there. He said he did not want to expose me to too many inaccuracies because I had taken on the economy.

Mr. Speaker, let me read from the *Guardian*, Thursday, March 01, 2012, by Geisha Kowlessar, and it says—this is Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir speaking. He said:

“With regards to crime, statistical indicators have suggested that the Government has failed on this front— that is on the crime front—and regarding the economy, the Government is supposed to have a great deal of economic and technical expertise at its disposal, yet the Government has failed to turn around the economy which is in a far worse position today.”

That is not me talking, that is not the PNM, this is Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir. And, Mr. Speaker, I had said, I went through and I had said that there are some indicators that were not looking good and brought it to the attention of the Minister of Finance in the presence of the Member for Siparia, the Prime Minister. I had used, at that time, the Central Bank’s statistics because you just cannot get statistics from the CSO, so then what do I use? I had asked him, in the absence of CSO’s figures, then what should I use?

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, I can tell you, on Wednesday, February, 29—that is at her constituency office—came there with an IMF report, a statement, IMF report, dated February 10, 2012. It is a statement by an IMF mission to Trinidad and Tobago. And, Mr. Speaker, I was seated in my bedroom when the Prime Minister started reading and I remembered the report. I went down to my study, got it, I was watching it, I watch you all, I need to know what you all are saying—yes, of course, you have to know what your enemies are doing.

So, Sir, I went down to my study, got my report, went back to my bedroom and I decided, let me follow my Prime Minister, she is on the ball. And she said, “I want to tell you how we have turned this economy around.” She said that there is concrete evidence, and started quoting,

...that the economy is turning the corner and that economic growth would resume in 2012 notwithstanding the ongoing technical disruptions in the energy sector, real economic activities projected to increase by 1.7 per cent in 2012 as private sector credit expansion gains momentum.

Now, this is their projection. So apparently the IMF report is endorsing:

The resolution for large failed insurance company Clico, the faster pace of Government investment continues and the energy production returns to normal as the maintenance work is completed while energy prices remain high.

She said, “So you see what we are doing for this country,” and I am waiting.

11.30 a.m.

Then she went on to talk about how they met the Treasury completely depleted. That is where I am saying when you make these public utterances, how are you trying to establish confidence in this economy? You do not make these comments and expect that people are going to have confidence in this economy, Mr. Speaker.

You know the next line—you know the Prime Minister left out the next line? Hear what the line says, because this is what I brought to the attention of the—

Mr. Speaker: Hold that, please. The speaking time of the hon. Member for Port of Spain South has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 27(5) to report to you a very—

Hon. Member: What? 27(5)?

Dr. Rowley: 27(5).

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes, continue.

Dr. Rowley: I want to raise with you, Mr. Speaker, under this Standing Order, a very serious breach and an act of contempt which has taken place within the precincts of the House. And for the benefit of Members now hearing it, I read:

“If during a sitting of the House a matter suddenly arises which appears to involve the privileges of the House and which calls for the immediate

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intervention of the House, the proceedings may be interrupted, save during the course of a division, by a motion based on such matter.”

Mr. Speaker, during today’s proceedings, my colleague from Laventille East/Morvant had reason to mention issues relating to a stranger who happened to have been around, and on leaving the Chamber, a stranger did in fact accost the Member for Laventille East/Morvant in the precincts of the Parliament, accompanied her upstairs and menaced her.

I refer this matter to you, Mr. Speaker, for appropriate action.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I will consider the issue raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Member for Diego Martin West, under 27(5) of the House of Representatives Standing Orders and I will rule on this matter in due course.

Hon. Member for Port of Spain South, continue, please.

Miss M. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you Member for Diego Martin West for that extension. Mr. Speaker, this is how the sentence continues, it says:

Still, there are downside risks to the forecast stemming from the global economic environment, uncertainty in gas prices, and possible delays in the implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme.

It goes on:

After recording no growth in 2010 and a significant decline in 2009 there were ample buffers, including savings in the Heritage and Stabilization Fund, low public debt and high international reserves have cushioned the impact of the crisis in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker and this is what the Prime Minister is saying, that nothing was left in the Stabilization—in other words then, the Treasury was empty. And here is the IMF reporting that because of prior savings—and that is the prior savings, so the PNM—

So I wish to amend this report to say—I want to amend the report to say, “...left there by the PNM,” because as at May 2010—

Hon. Member: You cannot amend the IMF report.

Miss M. McDonald: I am doing that. As at May 2010, Mr. Speaker, the Heritage and Stabilization Fund had US \$19.5 billion. That is what the PNM left there. International reserves was TT \$70 billion, and our debt to GDP ratio was 38.5 per cent. It now stands at 50 per cent.

So to stand up there—this is very disingenuous of the Prime Minister. That is why I cannot trust her. I cannot trust her. When you put things out in the public domain, what do you think our investors are saying? What do you think they are saying?

Mr. Speaker, I have to go quickly. The same report—I came here during the debate on the Finance Bill, in front of the hon. Prime Minister, and I spoke about the fact that the loan delinquency in the commercial banks is rising; the provisioning is reducing. I said, so you need—I asked the Minister, if you could recall—you need to keep your eyes on this?

This is what the IMF said, Mr. Speaker. The IMF said:

Although commercial banks remained well capitalised, profitable and liquid, the banking system's non-performing loans have increased and provisioning has declined.

It said:

Given financial vulnerabilities, the mission agrees that continued intensified monitoring and surveillance of the financial system is warranted and urges...

In other words then, they want to see a greater regulatory system in place for an enactment of legislation for the insurance companies, for credit unions and for securities.

Mr. Speaker, it is almost like if—I did my debate here on the 8th and this report is dated the 10th. When I read this report, it is almost as if all the recommendations that I had brought here—and I was dehumanized and insulted—insulted that I was inaccurate and whatnot by the Minister of Finance, the Member for Tunapuna, and here it is I am reading this report—this is not mine, this is not mine—this is the IMF's report.

I want to look quickly at unemployment. This Government has used statistics to bamboozle the population into believing that unemployment is decreasing. Nothing can be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. The Central Bank's Economic Bulletin for January 2012 records a fall in unemployment rate from 6.3 to 5.8. However, Mr. Speaker, the report highlighted the fact that the number of persons employed for that period actually decreased by 10,300. I have the report. I have the report, I can share it with you, Mr. Minister.

I ask the Prime Minister: are you going to restart the Colour Me Orange programme, or what other—or is it you—or what other new make-work scheme are we going to come up with? There are thousands and thousands—

Mr. Warner: Colour me portugal.

Hon. Member: Colour me “poteegal”.

Miss M. McDonald: Good, yes, make light of it, Member for Chaguanas West. You see, all of you eating, you know. I am in a constituency where people every day have to look to “eat ah food”.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of people outside there, and especially unemployed citizens, have lost hope in this current Prime Minister to lead this nation back to full employment, a state that she had met when they assumed office, Mr. Speaker. [Crosstalk]

In the interest of time, I want to look at—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, allow the Member to continue.

Miss M. McDonald: I want to look at the fourth limb:

“An absence of effective management of officers under the control of the Prime Minister...”

Mr. Speaker, I have looked on from 2010 at this particular officer, and I want to start with section 79(1) of the Constitution, and 79(1) says—that is the allocation of portfolios to Ministers:

“The President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, may, by directions in writing, assign to the Prime Minister or any other Minister responsibility for any business of the government of Trinidad and Tobago, including the administration of any department of government.”

Mr. Speaker, all this says, and I was once a Minister, where a Prime Minister allocates a ministerial portfolio to a person, that person gets an instrument from the President outlining all the departments and boards under the purview of that particular Minister. You get your instrument in writing, so there is no ambiguity as to what you have to manage in your Ministry.

The general policy is—and the Constitution does not contemplate that a Minister could just get up one morning and hand over part of his Ministry to a third party. It does not contemplate that. It is the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister alone, who can give—and the Member for Siparia said it nicely, you know, when they took back the AG from her under Mr. Panday. She said, “It is his to give and take,” and the country came down on her. But I say, No, she is correct. It is the Prime Minister who has that authority to give a ministerial portfolio and take back your ministerial portfolio. Of course, she will inform the President.

Mr. Speaker, I say this because I frowned on the Attorney General and his usual shenanigans when he distanced himself from the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau. It was there with him since 2010. Did he complain? No. But as soon as they raided the *Newsday* and the journalist's home, their journalist, as soon as that happened—*Newsday's* journalist, your favourite newspaper—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: What is the headline today?

Miss McDonald: Well, you see how it supports you all.

Hon. Member: What does it say?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: All three.

Miss M. McDonald: So what I am saying is, Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General just got up and said to this country, "I no longer want it. It needs to be restructured." So, in a strongly-worded statement, he wants to hand over part of his portfolio to Mr. Gibbs, the Commissioner of Police.

This cannot happen like that. And the Attorney General—read section 76(2):

"The Attorney General shall, subject to section 79, be responsible for the administration of legal affairs in Trinidad and Tobago and legal proceedings..." etc.

Mr. Attorney General, you are in charge of the legal fraternity in this country, the legal affairs. How can you just get up and decide that you want to hand over? This is something that should come from the Prime Minister. I am saying here it is—and the Prime Minister said not a word, not a single word. That is why I am saying, in my opinion, from what I am seeing and what people are seeing, like she has lost control over you, Mr. Attorney General.

Mr. Imbert: Never had.

Miss M. McDonald: Or probably the Member for Diego Martin North/East is right, she probably never had control.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: The Member for Diego Martin North/East is never right.

Miss M. McDonald: But, Attorney General, what I am saying is—

Mr. Speaker: Would you address the Chair, please, and not the Attorney General.

Mr. Sharma: Do not forget the AG is a Senior Counsel.

Miss M. McDonald: Yes, Silk, sorry. Mr. Speaker, what I am saying here—it is the breach in procedure in the face of the Prime Minister remaining silent, on such an important issue. This is something that is enshrined in our Constitution and you just cannot breach it like that, Attorney General. You cannot breach it like that.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether it is the Prime Minister who is fuelling the exuberance of this Attorney General, or is she just simply allowing him to careen out of control? No, and sometimes the truth is good to hear. The Attorney General is arrogant. Well, I would not say that you are rambunctious as some people say. I would not say that.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: You do not want company?

Miss M. McDonald: No, I do not want.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Well, keep rambunctious for yourself without me.

Miss M. McDonald: Good. In either case, Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister who sets the tone; it is the Prime Minister who exercises leadership; and it must be the Prime Minister who is responsible for all frivolous and baseless and unjustified attacks on our institutions. It is the Prime Minister, with all these witch hunts by the Attorney General—

The Attorney General got, Mr. Speaker, \$94.5 million—

Hon. Member: 94.5 is a radio station.

Miss M. McDonald: \$94.5 million to fight what, to fight ghosts? And in the face of all of this, the Prime Minister is sitting there. Where are the probes? Show us the results. Show it to us, \$50 million for forensic audit; \$33 million on Senior Counsels; \$8.5 for “Other”. You know up to now you have not told us what is “Other”. The Prime Minister—up to now, nobody could tell us?

Now, you know, I get the distinct impression, Mr. Speaker, that this Government does not like to be scrutinized and once I have breath in my body and I am standing here, I will scrutinize you, I will ask my questions. I will ask my questions.

Hon. Member: Who will answer it?

Miss M. McDonald: You do not have to answer, but I will ask it. It will be on *Hansard*. It will be on *Hansard*, because you all are making light of serious issues, and the same thing that you all accused the PNM administration of, you all are doing worse than that; worse than that. [*Desk thumping.*]

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I told Roodal not to put pepper in the doubles, you know.

Miss M. McDonald: You see how they make light of it, Mr. Speaker? You see how they make light?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Port of Spain South, if you address the Chair I do not think you will get in that trouble, you know.

Miss M. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, it is certainly not within my personality and character that I roll over easily.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the Financial Intelligence Unit, and although the Opposition accepts the ruling of the Integrity Commission regarding the Prime Minister's veto of the Public Service Commission's nominee, we accept it, all right, we accept it, but the Prime Minister needs to explain to this nation why she is getting involved in the appointment of public officers and sidestepping the decision of the Public Service Commission. This is mischief and meddling.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, just as what the Member for Fyzabad is saying, "What Manning used to do?"—that is passé; that is past tense; that is water below the bridge. You all are the ones who said you are coming with new politics; you are coming with proper governance, then show me, show me. And so, I will always stand here and talk about it. Do not try to retaliate and tell me that was what happened under the PNM. Absolute nonsense; absolute nonsense.

The Public Service Commission might have ruled in the Prime Minister's favour, but I will tell you, this country—this country will have its time to make its own decision, and I will just want to leave you with that.

Mr. Speaker, there is much more that I can say, but I believe that most of the points—I do not want to be repetitious; and I stand here proud to say that I identify with this Motion; that I and every single Member on this Bench will be voting in favour of this Motion. Despite what the Attorney General said for sensationalism—he had a discussion, I listened to him—he had a discussion when he went to the Siparia constituency on Wednesday night: "after a discussion held today, there are two people who are contemplating voting." Not one single person here.

This is a strong PNM bench. This is a strong PNM bench and all 11, all 11 will be voting in favour of this Motion here today. There is one leader; there is one PNM, and I want you to understand that—56 years old; 56 years old.

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Listen, I cannot be bought and sold. Money cannot buy me. Not a single cent of “all yuh” money could ever buy me.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words—

Mr. Speaker: Twenty seconds.

Miss M. McDonald: Twenty seconds? With those few words, I say thank you.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Hon. Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I enjoyed the very spirited contribution of the Member for Port of Spain South.

We have been here for a whole night and we spent a whole night in this Parliament. The last time I spent a night in Parliament was when I was held as a political hostage in 1990. Probably I am still a hostage, but this time a political hostage of what I call political boorishness, almost to the point as if the conversation in this Parliament and politics has been constipated. [*Laughter*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard, and we have heard, and we have heard, and we continue to hear everything that has been said before said again.

If the Leader of the Opposition expected to inspire this nation, I think he can claim that he was successful in establishing his credentials to be the Leader of the Opposition for all time.

What is this debate all about? Clearly, the debate has come about because there is a new phenomenon and a resistance to that change that is happening in our country. What were the circumstances when this nation gave to the hon. Prime Minister the right to lead this nation? What were the circumstances that were before us before she became the fifth person to be given the oath of office as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, less than two years ago?

To some extent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the boorishness of which I speak is but the symptom of the politics of the past. The question I want to put before this honourable Chamber at this time in this long debate is: what really was this debate supposed to be about? To some extent, the Motion attempted to focus on the Prime Minister’s leadership in different areas. But what really was the challenge of the leadership in May 2010? To do that, I want to briefly go back to what has happened in our history.

I want to remind this honourable House of a statement that was indeed a statement made umpteen times in the lead-up to the 2010 elections. On many

occasions on different political platforms, we will quote the Nigerian poet Chinua Achebe, whose book was titled *Things Fall Apart*. That was the issue in the 2010 election: things fell apart, the centre could not hold. You will remember the population began to sense that. It began to sense that the society was in some form of decay; some call it moral and spiritual decay. The society sensed that our institutions had lost their mandate and their purpose and the public interest was no longer being served.

Some felt that the will of the people was being frustrated by the ruling oligarchy. Then we referred to the ruling oligarchy as the gatekeepers in our society. That was the stage in which the hon. Prime Minister took the oath of office to be the fifth Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and she understood the historical context of her ascendancy to that position. [*Desk thumping*]

Those were the elements that affected the society of Nigeria some years ago and perhaps affect many societies today, so much so that there was a raging debate in the society about Trinidad and Tobago becoming a failed State. Many prominent persons made statements to that effect.

A failed State is one in which the issues of crime and violence became the norm; in which the rule of law in institutions became the practice, and in which there was difficulty in understanding how public policy could change that course. I say that because that sets the basis for this debate. This debate is about leadership to hold the centre together; to stop the decay; to avert the decline; and a leadership to provide safety for our people. That is what this debate is all about. [*Desk thumping*]

That is how the Prime Minister, understanding very well that she had to navigate towards that role, understood at all times what were the higher goals of leadership. Many who have spoken here talked about the pedantic issues of leadership; the Prime Minister talks about the goal of leadership at a higher level, and that is what has motivated her. To navigate that path is what we were all about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt that after 21 months the historical challenge facing the leadership of this country from May 2010 has been well understood by the Prime Minister, and that is why she is unfettered when people expect her not to be. That is why she continues her path when sometimes people believe it is too courageous to do so. That is why her attempt is to hold the centre in Government for the nation because the centre fell apart; the centre could not hold. We knew that. That was the debate in the country, to stop the decay in the

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society, to avert the decline in the economy. This, to me, is what this debate is all about. This is what the notion of the leadership challenge at that time appeared to be.

The Leader of the Opposition started on a very promising note and he asked the question: what does the future hold for us? I thought that we were about to see the articulation of that future from his perspective, against the future that he believes is likely to happen from our discharge of our duty. But then he and his colleagues began to answer the question which he asked, and I listened and I looked for the light.

What was the future? The future was bleak, in his view; establishing a picture that was totally bleak for all of us. It is another example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in which the Members in Opposition move from the diagnosis of the problem to the prescriptions for the solution, without doing the analysis that caused them to get there.

And that is why the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues went on to talk about the policies and performance of the Prime Minister and her Government were inadequate. That was the diagnosis, but what was their prescription? The prescription was: return to the old policies of the administration, of Mr. Manning's administration. That is the sum total, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of what they put forth to support this Motion.

In their prescription, they were able to expose the limitations of their thinking to look beyond yesterday, and in that sense we had many recurring issues that are aimed at not moving the country forward, but nourishing the prejudices of the past. It is in that context that this political conversation here in this Parliament was structured.

It is necessary to hold a Government accountable and it was correct to move, for whatever motive, a Motion of this nature, but if it is merely to nourish the prejudices of the past, it will not be able to take the country into a higher vein, and hopefully by being accountable, the Government can then rise to that occasion. This was a real challenge of the leadership. The challenge of leadership in practical terms manifested itself through a number of objectives.

In May 2010 the journey started, steering the process to do a number of things: first of all, to stop the explosive growth of the criminal industry; secondly, to clean up the corrupt practices that permeated the society; thirdly, to avert the decline of the economy; and fourthly, to protect the weak, the children and the

poor. Those were the challenges of leadership. How do you go about that in a society which at one time was seen as a country in which governance had failed?

12.00 noon

In taking the oath of office, it was the responsibility and the duty of the Prime Minister to be the chief architect, to construct that new future for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, for all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in all our diversities.

How did she approach that exercise which has come under severe criticism? The Prime Minister, in navigating the responsibility to be this architect for that new future—and it cannot be denied because it has been said on many occasions by many independent people—she had to be gentle and firm at the same time. She had to be focused and flexible in her approach. She had to be compassionate and courageous in her decision-making, and I say on those scores, the Prime Minister has performed admirably.

If one were to take a dogmatic approach to steering the ship into safety and creating a prospect of a different future, you will get stuck by the resistance to that. Resistance will always be part of the dangers that you face in trying to steer a new future. It is because of that approach, we stand here today, 21 months after the election, with the firm belief that the centre will hold, with the firm belief that her policies are in the right direction and with the firm belief that obstacles and hurdles, on our part, as large as they are, we now have the strength, the courage and the ability to overcome.

It is a leadership framework that steers the Government to setting new standards, to introducing new policies and to working for higher performance levels. True, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there may have been some missteps, acknowledged by the Prime Minister at times, but with respect to the discharge of our mandate of meeting the expectations of the people, of changing direction of the policy framework, there is no mistake, there is no compromise and there is no faltering. [*Desk thumping*]

It is in that context, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have to understand what were the challenges of leadership and continue to be the challenges of leadership. If for some reason we were to go back to the old method of leadership; if for some reason we were to find ourselves going back to the old policies that had been rejected, have been tried, have been tested and have failed; if for some reason we go back to the politics of gatekeepers, then we would not be discharging our

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historical responsibility to lead this country into a different era. And that is why people do not understand, because they are restricted by the vision of which they speak about, which has not changed with time.

The biggest problem facing the Opposition is their inability to change with time. When you listen to the speakers you get that feeling, that they are so wedded in the philosophy and in the ideology of that time, 55 years ago, and that is credible. To continue that philosophy in this world today poses the biggest challenge they have.

So, the Leader of the Opposition has a major task. Not only would he have to change the direction—because if you attempt to win an election by nurturing old prejudices, the country has moved about to embrace a new sense of engagement, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, I say this to my hon. colleagues, that this is the time to move from that path.

In the debate, specific issues were raised as to how we are approaching the exercise. How did the Prime Minister preside over the Cabinet that created these options? We heard from the Minister of National Security as he outlined his programme to make Trinidad and Tobago a safer place. I think there is a feeling in this country, notwithstanding the depths of the challenge still ahead of us, that today, Trinidad and Tobago is safer than when it was—[*Desk thumping*].

Many of the steps that have been taken have a success. And I believe on this score—I want to just quote a statement that was made by the hon. Prime Minister in Parliament on the issue of the state of emergency: A failed state is where crime and violence becomes the norm. The lawless society takes over, driving law-abiding people out. The state of emergency is not something we picked out of the sky to break the rule of law in Trinidad and Tobago. It is enshrined in our Constitution. The Constitution framers have given us the weapon in order to protect the people of our land and to protect our country. Courageous decisions, dramatic interventions, but if the goal is to move towards the safe society, then you have to take those courageous decisions and make those dramatic interventions, and the Prime Minister was able to do so in the midst of controversy. Only time will tell as to the full result of those measures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard from the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and the Minister of the People and Social Development about the steps that we are taking in order to make Trinidad and Tobago or have Trinidad and Tobago a just economy. I will not repeat them, they

outlined them in great detail. So the longer-term goals are there: the safe place for our people and a just economy. Twenty-one months have elapsed, much work has been done. There is much to see but we all know there is much more to do.

It is in that context that I want to deal, not for long, but quickly, with the issues that were raised on the economic front. And I also want to say something about the responsibility of foreign travels and the goals. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, and to some extent, the Member for Port of Spain South, established the proposition that the economy was doing well and the inheritance was indeed plentiful.

I do not want to go into debate anymore. We all recognize that by the time this Government came into office we had started a steep decline. Decline was not only the result of external factors, which had begun to impact on us, but it was also the result of our failure to take corrective action at the correct time.

The evidence is there, and I will come to the Central Bank report in a while, but I want to just point out two things so that we can dissuade ourselves that things were fine on all fronts. There were challenges. It was on June 11, 2010, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or less than a month after the Government took charge that we published a document, “The State of our Finances and Initiatives for Future Action”. In that document, which I will refer Members to, we said:

“Total Government cash balances declined steadily from \$17.7 billion at the end of fiscal year 2008 to \$9.7 billion at the end of fiscal year 2009, and further to \$5.4 billion as at June 2010. This was primarily due to the generation of the fiscal deficits which began in 2008. In simple terms, the Government’s balances in the Treasury declined substantially over the last two years as the previous administration sought to maintain its high expenditure levels in the face of drastically falling revenues.”

I would not go further, but that is but one indicator of how we had to avert the decline.

So, the proposition that was put forward by the Member for Diego Martin West, and supported by the Member for Port of Spain South, cannot stand up to the scrutiny of the data itself.

We began, therefore, to do a number of things. In order to ensure that the economic decline was averted—and 2009, 2010, 2011 were difficult years, but more difficult in 2010—we pursued a policy, changed the policy in order to be able to balance the books, as they say; in order to keep a low interest rate

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environment; in order to contain inflationary pressures and in order to legislate for an investment-friendly fiscal regime. In addition, we began our thrust to open Trinidad and Tobago to business from abroad. Those were the fundamental premises on which we began this approach.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think for the record, I will need to ensure that those who wish to believe that the future is bleak—as I said—have come to that prescription without the analysis that the Central Bank itself has produced.

I believe that the Member for Diego Martin West, when he was referring to a newspaper article or a newspaper headline with a picture of the Central Bank Governor saying—an article of doomsday—he was careful and rightly so, to say that the headline cannot be attributed to the Governor; but the article showed the strengths and the weaknesses, the successes and the challenges. But you cannot draw from that, that the future is bleak. In fact, to the contrary, the most recent information coming out from the Central Bank has begun to show that those blue skies which we spoke about are somewhere in the short-term horizon.

Hon. Member: You would not see it if you keep your eyes closed. [*Laughter*]

Hon. W. Dookeran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we adopted a low interest rate environment. We wanted to stimulate production, we wanted to create opportunities for investment. We worked with the Central Bank to have an accommodative monetary policy stance. They reduced the repo interest rates. In the state enterprises, like the Caribbean Development Bank, we reduced our interest rate so that the farmers who had to seek credit were able to get interest rates from, I think it was 5 to 7 per cent instead of 7 to 9 per cent. We reduced our interest rate with respect to the mortgage, with the Home Mortgage Bank, and it was a deliberate strategy to do that. In fact, I believe it is in today's *Newsday*, I saw a furthering of that policy with a headline: "Mortgage market rates fall". We are making home mortgage rates more affordable—[*Interruption*—whether it is 25 points or lower, whether it is 25 points. But I am saying that this is the policy direction that we are pursuing.

Mr. Speaker, what is the evidence that there has been some response? I want to quote from the Central Bank Report on the Economy Brief.

There is evidence for an incipient recovery in credit to private sector, particularly, to businesses, which could help to strengthen private investment. After declining in the first four months in 2011, credit granted by Consolidated Financial System began a slow recovery. By December 2011, private sector lending was up by 3.7 per cent, compared to a decline of 2.2 per cent the year earlier.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a suggestion, I believe, by the Member for Diego Martin West, that we had gone on a borrowing spree. What does the report say?

The public debt has remained low. At the end of September 2011 the debt to GDP ratio stood at 36.2 per cent with the external debt estimated at just 6.5 per cent of GDP.

The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund: the Member for Port of Spain South raised it—she said I insulted her. I really never intended to do that. I am sorry you took it that way. I was just trying to say that some of the data you have was inaccurate.

I believe the figure as of June 2010, and I stand corrected, was in the order of US \$2 billion. Now, that figure is US \$4.2 billion. So even in lean times, one of the fundamental strategies we followed—and although there were a lot of demands by others to use those funds to pay off contractors and pay this and that—we decided to keep savings intact and increase the savings. The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund was established some time ago and remains still inadequate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to go into too much detail on this, but there are some issues that were raised that I think I should just correct. In order to establish the point that one can see some light—remember we were in a difficult situation with the Clico fiasco not being attended to between January 2009 up to May 2010. There was no clue as to how to handle that problem. Today, we believe, in financial terms that problem has been handled in Trinidad and Tobago—\$20 billion.

The manufacturing sector grew by 5.4 per cent during the second quarter and 1.2 per cent in the third quarter of 2011. The construction sector registered growth for the first time since the first quarter of 2010—this is the economic report. Job creation: the Minister outlined the data he had about retrenchment and I said that I would provide the data on job creation. In any society there is retrenchment and there is job creation.

One of the significant challenges we had to face was to maintain the employment levels in a declining economy. That was a major challenge, because the figures are one thing, but when they convert and they start to affect people's jobs, then you are in difficulties.

According to the statistics—and I agree with what you have said, our statistics are woefully ill-timed, but we still work with them. The unemployment rate in Trinidad and Tobago fell from 6.3 per cent recorded in the last quarter of 2010 to 5.8 per cent for the second quarter of 2011.

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Job creation took place in the following areas: during the second quarter of 2011—that was when I made the statement about the blue skies, just before that. During the second quarter of 2011 versus the third quarter of 2010, jobs gains were registered in community, social and personal services—11,500 jobs; in wholesale and retail, restaurants and hotels—3,900 jobs; in transport, storage and communication—3,600 jobs; in petroleum and gas—1,000 jobs; and other mining and quarrying—600 persons.

12.30 p.m.

So, there was retrenchment, but at the same time because it was a policy-induced recovery process that we had carefully put into place we began to see the evidence of growth in employment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a lot of discussion here on the bleak picture that was put forward, and I wanted to put on the record what the facts are. Indeed, we recognized late last year—after I had discussions with the Member for Oropouche East about the CEPEP programme, and while we recognize that there is need for change—we recognized that its maintenance was also important. We introduced, *Reclaiming our Youth: Embracing our Future*, which has commonly been called the Colour Me Orange programme, and I am advised by my Ministry that this programme which is being managed by the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, has in fact created 2,000 new jobs in the last four months.

It was a deliberate strategy to contain any unemployment increase in the short term while the economy gets the breathing space to move on—that was it. It was an economic objective. We understood our objectives and this is why we are very careful, and crafted this position as to how to retain. In fact, in our discussions with Standard & Poor's and even with the IMF, one of the issues that they raise with us often is the fact that our unemployment levels did not go haywire during this period of three years of economic decline when they compared that with what was happening in Spain, with 22 per cent unemployment. I would not mention the figures elsewhere. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: In fact, we are way ahead than the usual.

Hon. W. Dookeran: If this was not steering the process correctly and these decisions were all made in Cabinet under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar. *[Desk thumping]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, even on the issue of bank credit we are seeing some sign—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I take my seat I understand lunch is here. For those of you who are interested, we will not be breaking for lunch. Those of you who are interested can trickle out one by one and have your fill and return to the Chamber. Continue Member.

Mr. Sharma: This is better than lunch.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank Members of the House. I just want to put one figure on the record here. I said that we had a major problem which affected between 10 and 20 per cent of our GDP with the Clico fiasco. Everybody knows about it, I am not going into that. To date, this Government, beyond what was done before, made approximately \$4.7 billion in payments to 7,841 Clico and BAT Executive Flexible Premium Annuity contract owners, with contracts valued at \$75,000 and more. The moneys that we had, as little as they were, we had to divert it to meet the challenges of the day and we had to ensure that the savings were kept in place, and at the same time that the social justice economy which we wanted to pursue would not be compromised. The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development was always adamant on that issue.

We did that, as you are all aware, by trying to ensure that there was a minimum support programme for pensioners. Not only did we increase the old-age pension as we are all aware, but because the Finance Act which was finally assented to on February 29, 2012—on which we had numerous debates—now the legislative authority has been put into place so that the National Insurance Board is expected to commence payment on March 15, 2012 of an additional \$1,000 for NIS recipients.

I say that if only to let Members know that the economic programme was one that reflected the compassion of which I spoke, was one that reflected the austerity that was required, and was one that reflected the prospect for growth in the future. There are always choices to be made. The problem is that if you do not accept the need to balance the different interest then your choices go in a wrong direction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is as much as I want to say about the economy—that we have moved but we are mindful, and I keep saying this, that we are entering another period, another period in which we shall be facing even more risk. There

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are two things that I had referred to earlier. One was the expansion of the pension programme to include others in the programme in due course, and also to review the whole question of the income tax regime.

Some have raised issues about some of the visits of the Prime Minister abroad, and the arguments raised were about bowing down and about roots, and so forth. I have no problem with arguments that are being brought forth, but what was the purpose? I have a list of all the travels that were made by the Prime Minister over the last two years, and what the purpose and objectives were, and what indeed was achieved. In today's world, it is absolutely necessary for a Prime Minister to travel. All Prime Ministers do that and I have data too on other Prime Ministers on how much they travelled, but I would not bore the House with that. The purpose is such travelling must be geared towards the alignment of a new interest that would benefit the country.

Where did the Prime Minister travel? She travelled to Caracas, she travelled to Brazil, she travelled to India in terms of that alignment because the political order of the world is changing. The so-called BRIC countries are now ascending in importance, and we in little Trinidad and Tobago cannot sit home and expect to be heard in the new forums of world economic matters.

The list suggests going to Latin America opened up new doors and the Government has begun discussions with the Andean Investment Development Bank located in Caracas, and I have the authority of Cabinet to go and continue those negotiations next week as we open up new doors in Latin America. New financing prospects dealing with the commercial relationships with India are part of the new political alignment of the world. The old prejudices of yesterday no longer exist in today's world, and that is the fundamental issue that I am making.

The political realignment is taking place and we have got to find ourselves there. The details of these trips were outlined on several occasions by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications, but I just wanted to put on the record that this is in pursuance of the vital economic interest of Trinidad and Tobago setting the stage, and setting the stage for ensuring that Trinidad and Tobago becomes one of the countries that will be heard.

The World Economic Forum in Brazil was one of the areas, and then there were other trips that were required because of our commitments to chair the Commonwealth, et cetera. So these were not trips that were not well thought out; they were trips that were aligning or of vital economic interest with economic benefits and discharging our international obligations as a member of the

organizations which we belong to. I just want to put that on the record so that those who have made reference to it in a flippant way would understand that what we are about here is serious business in this Government, realigning the country's vital interest in our foreign policy arrangement and at the same time ensuring that we put our own house in order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated earlier, the challenge was a different challenge to the challenge enumerated by the Member for Diego Martin West. They outlined challenges of procedure. I listened carefully to the Member for Diego Martin North/East. I believe you are the chairman of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. All those questions that you have raised here in this Parliament should be rightly raised in Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, and dealt with there.

Mr. Imbert: They will be.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Well, yes, but what I am saying, that is your job and responsibility, and in our system you have a responsibility to raise them, but to raise them as if they are facts without having the benefit of the scrutiny of those facts leaves us in a position that we do not know—the country does not know. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh doh believe meh?”

Hon. W. Dookeran: But you are the chairman and, therefore, you have avenues to do that.

Mr. Imbert: “It have plenty more.”

Mr. Sharma: You are always short on content.

Hon. Member: That is true.

Mr. Imbert: At least *[Inaudible]* would have plenty more.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Well you are constitutionally in the position to raise them, have them adjudicated and dealt with. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: I am ignoring them. Do not pay attention to him.

Hon. W. Dookeran: I think you want to “buss ah egg bag” they say—“egg bomb”. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Easter egg.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Easter egg bomb or channa bomb. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Indarsingh: Channa bomb.

Hon. W. Dookeran: I “doh” know. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: You are deteriorating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: He is deteriorating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon Member for Diego Martin North/East, allow the Member—

Mr. Sharma: Stop disturbing us, please.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Some say that the Motion is frivolous and I think it might be unkind to the esteemed Leader of the Opposition to put that motivation. Some say that it is meant to positively influence public opinion to his party and his political and electoral prospects, but I think it is clear from what we have heard that instead of positively influence public opinion to his party and to his prospects for the future, it is likely to expose too much to make the country comfortable at this stage.

Twenty-one years after they have adjudicated—and someone made that point on the issues, the country is not yet ready to entertain any thought towards that opinion. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Twenty-one months.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Twenty-one months. I am sorry, thanks for the correction.

Mr. Sharma: At least you are paying attention, you are learning.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Perhaps the motive was somehow they would pelt some mud on the Government and its primeministership, but if there were any pelting of mud the arrows did not get to the point. In fact it is almost as if it was a mirror and these things return. So what is the truth?

12.45 p.m.

What really is the motivation behind this Motion? It has not achieved its goal. The amendment to the Motion has established that the People’s Partnership Government inherited an economy in decline, a culture of wastage, raging and rampant crime, debilitating corruption and a style in leadership which led to the disconnect between the people and the Government. What therefore was the motivation for this Motion?

It seems to me really that in the final analysis the motivation must have to do with the fact that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is now getting accustomed to the new role he has to perform as Leader of the Opposition [*Laughter*] and he is now feeling a sense of comfort, as he settles in that job. I believe this Motion would ensure that he keeps that job for a very long time. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me take the opportunity to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for a very objective contribution, and also my other colleagues who have contributed to this debate, which in 42 minutes would be short of 24 hours. In 42 minutes we would have been debating for 24 hours in this Parliament. I think that is also history.

This debate in which we are participating has attracted widespread interest, not because we believe there is merit in the Motion, but because of where Trinidad and Tobago as a nation sits in the global space. Non-nationals and particularly nationals of this country, both at home and those who are domiciled in the four corners of the earth—while they have taken up residence in the global geography and contribute to the development of their own societies, in their hearts Trinidad and Tobago remains of singular importance. Therefore what is happening here and now in this Parliament is of great interest to us as it is to them and, by extension, to the friends of Trinidad and Tobago and also to the diplomatic and international community, who are taking a very serious interest in our development and what is taking place here today.

In that vein, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important that the claims of the Opposition are dealt with, since many innuendoes and exaggerations made here can do damage to the image of Trinidad and Tobago. For example, reference was made to an article in the *Newsday*, and was taken as fact, that 300 cars were returned by the police service. In the *Newsday* of today or yesterday, but I think today, or in one of the newspapers, it is reported that only 62 cars were returned, and that 62 new cars have been bought to replace those 62 cars. So when we make statements, we must check the facts. This is why I think the hon. Minister of Finance made an important statement to the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East when he said that he had an opportunity to bring that to the committee of which he is chairman, to establish the factual basis of what he was saying. That is what the Parliament is all about.

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Secondly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was very surprised at the extent to which my colleagues on the other side at times reduced the debate to a discussion on race. [Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Who did that?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: They made it into a discussion on race, something that should not be a part of this Parliament. We should respect people as equals and treat people as equals. But I also found it very, very disturbing, rather obscene I may say, that an attack was made on Guyanese nationals, to the extent that one Member on the other side wanted to know whether Guyanese nationals arriving in the country, left the country.

Mr. Sharma: What a shame!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the same time they are talking about Caricom, they are also attacking the good character of people of Guyanese descent. [Crosstalk] It is good to use statistics, but you must not use partial statistics, you must use full statistics.

In addition to that, reference was made to a Porsche vehicle. It was said that two Ministers had bought Porsche vehicles through their Ministries. I remember that there was one vehicle bought by the Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs, but the Minister of Public Utilities made it very clear over and over and over that he bought his Porsche vehicle with his own money. The Member for Point Fortin may yet wish to recall a former Minister of Foreign Affairs who bought a Mercedes SUV, and had it parked upstairs the parking lot there, and kept it only for his use. It began to dry rot after a while, because nobody wanted to touch it, until I recently took it out and had the Ministry using it.

Then attacks were made on the character of my good friend, the Member of Parliament for Caroni East, with quotations from the *TnT Mirror* newspaper. Newspapers can write a lot of things, but, one, when you make an attack upon the character of a person, you must do so with proof. No wrongdoing has been attributed thus far to the Minister of Education, and there is a complete violation of the principle of innocent until proven guilty. Why? For simple narrow political ends.

I am sure that you are most familiar with the reactions of this population to this Motion, as represented in the daily reports in the newspapers, the conversations on the streets, the expressions of people on radio and television talk

shows and in the social media, which tell us that from a domestic perspective there is widespread interest in what is transpiring here today. But suffice it to say that the majority of what I have read and heard tells me that the population, including the supporters of the PNM, are vex with the Leader of the Opposition and this Motion. In fact, today's front page of the *Newsday* tells it all. It says:

“Rowley's eggshell”

The bombshells have become an eggshell. They have just crumpled in this debate here in the Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one acute example of what I have said has been referred to already in a letter to the media by His Worship, the Mayor of Port of Spain, the distinguished Louis Lee Sing, who has now positioned himself as the future leader of the PNM. He has questioned the wisdom of the political leader of the PNM and in particular the sagacity of the Leader of the Opposition. What I can interpret from what Mr. Louis Lee Sing is saying is that this Motion is vacuous.

I would like to make maybe a philosophical interjection in my contribution in the following way. What is Parliament? Parliament is the sanctuary of truth or at least it is supposed to be. In fact, I think it was designed to be. I want to remind us, in this context, what I was taught as a child by my *aajaa*. The word “*aajaa*” is the Hindi word for paternal grandfather. Each evening he would read us selected verses, *dohas* and *chopais* from the Ramayan, in order to instill in us values for righteous conduct and adherence to truth. In a particular section that he read to us, which he loved, there is a conversation in which one character asked of another character what was the worst sin. My *aajaa* used to repeat the answer for us, that the worst sin was to bear false witness against another person. [*Interruption*]

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

My brothers and I used to attend Sunday school at the Avocat Gospel Hall. They were delightful Sundays, and we looked forward to attending. The villagers were very surprised to see us going to the church, knowing that my *aajaa* was a senior pundit and the community's Hindu religious leader. But at the Sunday school and later at Naparima College when I did RK at GCE, I learned and appreciate from the Bible and from the 10 commandments: you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. This is the ninth of the 10 commandments, which are widely understood as moral imperatives by legal scholars, Jewish scholars, Catholic scholars and post-reformation scholars. The book of Exodus describes the 10 commandments as being spoken by God, inscribed on two stone tablets by the finger of God, broken by Moses and rewritten on replacement stones by the Lord.

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Mr. Speaker, there are different views on the meaning of the ninth commandment. Some interpret the scope in the narrowest possible sense, as only a prohibition of lying in courtroom testimony. Other interpretations view the commandment as a prohibition on any false statement that degrades our neighbour's reputation or dignity. Still others interpret the commandment in the broadest possible sense as a prohibition of all lying. I say this because, in this very Parliament, an attempt was made in the past to degrade, to tarnish the good name and the integrity of the Prime Minister, when an attack was made by the Member for San Fernando East. You would recall that he then tried to avoid what would have been the *karma kala*, the fruits of those actions, at the Committee of Privileges.

It really irks me to see here today that those of us who speak about Christian beliefs or hold on to our Hindu beliefs, come to this Parliament and then act and speak contrary to the spirit of our own beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, so many things have been said in this Parliament by the Opposition, but what is this debate about? The hon. Minister of Finance indicated this when he said that this debate is about leadership. Leadership is what this debate is all about. What is leadership? Some define it as the ability to influence others. I say in addition to that it is to have the courage to make tough decisions, as much as you make soft decisions. I say it is the ability to inspire others to perform at a consistently high level, manifesting in delivery of goods and services.

If I link this to the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, she has been able to influence her Ministers to perform at a consistently high level by a demonstration of competence in the various Ministries they hold, and she has also demonstrated, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that as a leader she has had the courage to make the tough decisions as well as the soft decisions. [*Desk thumping*] In this regard, she has made decisions that are people-centred. We call them people-edge decisions. She has made tough policy decisions, and she has also made tough resource allocation decisions.

1.00 p.m.

My Prime Minister, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, as a leader, has vision for this country, and that vision can be put into some simple words—a globally competitive nation, an intelligent nation—and in today's global environment you have to be competitive, and you have to be intelligent as a nation. She has shown us already that smallness is not an inhibitor to greatness as a nation, and that is part of her vision.

She has shown us the meaning of caring. She has shown us the meaning of compassion, and she has done this by practising—herself as a leader—certain important values that support her vision: the value of fairness to all, the value of equality of opportunity; the value of transparency and openness in governance; the value of compassion; the value of practising behaviours that lead to unity, and in a multi-complex society like ours, to create interpersonal peace.

Mr. Speaker, she is also very clear on how she is going to achieve that. Your vision is always supported by your values and your mission, and in her approach she has shown that the Government, and in particular in terms of how she leads, that her mission is to create an environment in which the creativity of our people will flourish, where education will drive competitiveness, and where Trinidad and Tobago will become a preferred place to live, to visit, to do business, to invest and to bring up a family. The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago—in the 21 months and the couple of days that she has been in office and has been leading this Government—is in fact achieving a vision, a mission, and she is living her values.

Leadership though is not just about vision. Vision can remain a dream which turns into hallucination unless you have action that backs it up. In one newspaper today, Mr. Speaker, with your permission, you will see the manifestation of the vision of the Prime Minister. Let us look at something that we have all spoken about—the Children’s Life Fund. This article in today’s *Newsday*, Saturday March 03, 2012 by Rashma Baal the headline:

Children’s Life Fund helps 10 terminally ill children.

The 10 terminally ill children have received assistance since the Children’s Life Fund was converted to the Children’s Life Fund Authority, and this happened in November of this year. Since this has been converted, over 40 applications have been received, and the fund has now raised in excess of \$50 million. She had set a goal of \$100 million; in less than two years, she is there halfway towards that goal, and that has to be because she is demonstrating a vision which can inspire people to contribute money towards a very higher goal, and that of saving the lives of children who would not have been saved.

Mr. Speaker, I go again, on page 8 of the very *Newsday*, in one paper three articles: “China funds US \$150M children’s hospital”. When the Prime Minister came into office she spoke about children and a children’s hospital, something which this country has not seen before, and within less than two years, the sod has been turned, the money has been put in place, and according to the article, in one

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month's time, the construction is going to begin. This is a tribute to the Prime Minister's vision, and to the hard work of the Minister of Health, the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

On the same page, to show you the quality of treatment of all the different groups in the society, the headline reads: "\$28 million school to open on Baptist holiday". You would recognize that the Baptist holiday is March 30, and also you would remember it was last year she announced and asked the Minister of Education to ensure that this school is built. The school is being built in a timely fashion, and being built at a cost of \$28 million. The first phase which began on December 09, included the construction of classrooms and administrative offices with the supply of furniture. The second phase will be completed in July, which will include the audiovisual room, library, computer room and a courtyard.

The school can accommodate 240 students, and there is a picture here of the school being built and that is what you call leadership in action. This is not just talk, this is about performance. So when you talk about the Prime Minister not being a competent person, when you talk about her lacking vision, and not being able to achieve, I have given you three examples from one paper on a Saturday morning which disputes that altogether and show that the Prime Minister is capable of influencing, leading and achieving.

Let us examine this Motion which I consider to be a litany of false truths. The Motion is in four parts as we have heard; firstly, the Motion talks about the Prime Minister is being grossly incompetent, and I have just spoken about that. That the Prime Minister has demonstrated "a consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago". The Prime Minister has demonstrated "an absence of effective management of officers" under the control of the Prime Minister, and I will show you that the Prime Minister has described herself, so often, very correctly, as the CEO, the chief executive officer, and the role of a chief executive officer is to create an environment for high performance.

She has gone about this, because when you examine the performance of the Ministers in the Cabinet under her charge, you will see that they are all performing at a very high level. She has done this by adopting the strategy of leadership, her philosophy of consensus building and collaboration, and because she has adopted collaboration and consensus, she has been able to do two things. One, she has been able to trigger the commitment of her Ministers to performance, and she has been able to energize their creativity and the creativity of their staff. It is that which leads to the expression of competence, which gives

you high performance, and that is the model that the Prime Minister has been using as the CEO of the country, and it is manifested, as I demonstrate to you, in the performance of the Ministers of Government.

Finally, the Prime Minister has demonstrated “failure to stimulate the economy and create sustainable employment”. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the economy, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was talking this morning—well yesterday—about the platform that they left for this Government, but he also said that it is not a perfect platform. There were some imperfections in the platform, but I think I want to go a little more and to talk about what that platform contained. What it is that this Government started off—the hon. Minister of Finance has talked about the strategies that were used in order to turn around the situation, but I think it is important also to understand where we started. What was there on that platform? I like to call it the hand of cards which we were dealt.

The Treasury at that time, at the end of September 2010, had \$5,742.7 million. That was at the end of September 2010, compared to \$9,782.3 million at September 30, 2009. In one year the previous administration had whittled away \$4 billion in cash. So we started off having to manage with less cash resources compared to what was there. In fact, I will go a little further to 2008, and at the end of September 2008, the cash balance in the treasury was \$10,789.3 million. What else was on that platform? A murder rate that was escalating, and which had hit 550 at the end of 2009. We brought it down to under 400 in the year 2011.

Mr. Roberts: Good.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: What was there also—an unconstitutional SAUTT with highly paid officers, some getting \$5,000 to top off their pay, leaving the police service with lower paid officers, and depleted in numbers, a demotivated police service. What did our Prime Minister do? She noticed this discrepancy. She noticed the mood of the police service, she noticed that they needed to be inspired, and came about and granted a \$1,000 non-taxable allowance to all members of the protective services, including the police.

Mr. Speaker, the number of officers was short, in the words of the former Minister of National Security, by 2,000 plus. The economy was in negative growth. I want to repeat, the decline did not start with the People’s Partnership Government. We worked, and the Minister of Finance and his team in particular, and the Prime Minister and the Cabinet worked to halt the decline. The public debt at that time was the highest, and with the Clico and HCU issues, it was threatening the international financial ratings of the country.

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The interventions and strategies of the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister restored confidence of international financial agencies in Trinidad and Tobago. As the Minister of Finance said, new institutions have now come to do business with Trinidad and Tobago, including the IDB which redefined its lending policies towards Trinidad and Tobago to the favour of this country.

We inherited the wage negotiations that are outstanding with the PSA. The Minister of Labour spoke about it, and spoke about the fact that they were offered 0-0-1 per cent. We tend to have very short memories in this country.

Hon. Member: Very.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: But the manner in which the public service was treated is something that we must not forget. We must not forget! So that when the public service settled for 5 per cent plus the other enhancements, in terms of the entire package, this Government did much more than that previous administration did, or failed to do, or did not want to do, but just left it in abeyance in that way.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Housing and the Environment would tell you how many unpaid bills to contractors he got—bills that were not paid long before us coming into Government, causing contractors to quit job sites, leave housing estates to the mercy of the weather, pilferers, vandalism and vandals. That is when the shutdown in the construction industry started. It did not start with the PP Government; that is when it started. We heard from the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs this morning—what he has done in order to resuscitate the energy sector and especially the new wells, and so on.

We inherited dilapidated schools with roofs that were caving in. A good example was the Charlieville Presbyterian School, the Riversdale Presbyterian School also. The Riversdale Presbyterian School was rebuilt in 34 days at a cost of \$7 million by the Minister of Education. The Charlieville school was rebuilt in 30 days. You never heard that kind of efficiency before this Minister of Education and the People's Partnership Government came into office. There are so many other things that we inherited that were part and parcel.

Let me not talk about the cost overrun at the hospital in Tobago. Let me not talk about what was also on that platform of the poor and vulnerable—almost 20 per cent of the population who were living as poor, almost 260,000 persons. Let me not talk about \$13 billion of taxes that had to be collected, and for which an amnesty was given. Let me not talk about the inherited debts at Petrotrin, which also had been sued for \$12 billion. Let me not talk about the Tarouba Stadium which was supposed to cost \$250,000 but is now close to \$1 billion.

All of those things form part and parcel of the platform which was handed to us. When the Leader of the Opposition said it was not a perfect platform, he was entirely correct, and I am detailing how imperfect it was, and from where we started to where we are today, because it is important for us to note that where we are today, the economy has turned around, or is about to turn around, or is turning around, and the IMF has predicted a growth of 1.7 per cent for 2012. That is competence; that is leadership in action!

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It has not happened yet.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In the midst of international turmoil.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It “aint” happen yet.

Hon. Member: Predictable.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the assertion that the Prime Minister is incompetent is a false assertion. To measure competence you must do so against the goals which a person is expected to achieve, and this Government in its campaign for 2010, and in the manifesto, clearly laid out what those goals were, and what we are going to strive to achieve, and we must look at those goals, and then we will see what was the contract of expectations between the Government and the people that resulted in us being voted into office May 24, 2010. And what were those goals?

The goals were very clearly stated. One, the stabilization of the economy; it was in decline. That was evidenced by negative growth which started in 2008 and was the first time in 17 years in the country—2008.

1.15 p.m.

Secondly, the stabilization of the financial system: we need to note that was a goal we set. We were threatened by the failures of Clico and HCU, jeopardizing the whole system, the lives and savings of thousands of depositors in these institutions. I think the Minister of Finance was too modest to say that he has paid out \$1 billion to over 2,200 depositors already in Clico. [*Desk thumping*] That is an achievement. To have done that and to be bringing back the system to growth while you meet those debts and commitments say a lot for the competency and the management competency of the Prime Minister and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Impacting upon national and personal security of citizens by aggressively dealing with crime and criminality. Mr. Deputy Speaker—Mr. Speaker, I do not

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know why I am calling you Mr. Deputy Speaker; my apologies. It is just that my eyes must be seeing the—it must be all the 23 hours. Serious crime, as reported by the police, is down by 25 per cent. It went down!

Positively impacting the quality of life of citizens by improving public utilities, sporting facilities and the environment, and I will show you how that has been done by the Ministers. Stemming rising unemployment due to a contracting construction sector, falling exports, particularly of manufacturers to the Caricom region. [*Interruption*] Yes, Member for Point Fortin, we understand the importance of the Caricom region. This is why we are putting so much emphasis on the Latin American region which has a market of 600 million people. This is why, because of how we have been targeting Latin America, in addition to Brazil having an Embassy here, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica; we now have Colombia opening an Embassy, Panama has an embassy here, and I have received indications from Ecuador that Ecuador wants to open an embassy here also in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Fantastic. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mexico is also—when we talk about the trips and travels of the Prime Minister, this is what we talk about. We talk about making Trinidad and Tobago attractive; making Trinidad and Tobago what it was destined to be: the platform into Latin America, the financial centre of the Caribbean and in this region, and at the same time giving our manufacturers the opportunity to enter those lucrative \$600 million markets.

Mr. Speaker, one of the goals was controlling food prices and, in particular, inflation in general. The seventh goal was transforming the health sector into more responsive, efficient and customer-friendly institutions. Another goal was improving the flow of traffic and public transport, and on that matter, let me say a couple of things: the Member of Parliament for Couva South will tell you that people no longer have to line up along the highway to get into Couva because of the extensive work done by the Minister of Works and Infrastructure at the Couva flyover. Today there is no traffic at the Couva flyover. [*Desk thumping*] You get in and out of Couva on the Point Lisas Link Road in a whiz, and that is because of vision also.

When you had all the money how come you did not do that? How come you did not put a bypass road from Kelly Village into St. Helena behind the airport, so that at St. Helena Junction the traffic would have been removed? Why did you not do that? You know why—because you were distant from the people, because you

were not concerned about people's needs, you were not concerned about people's time. This is the vision and action we have brought to governance and to run—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Changing people's lives.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Changing people's lives, the quality of life of people and, of course, creating a culture of service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let us take a clinical look at the performance of the Prime Minister and let us begin with the economy. As I said, when we took over, the country was already experiencing negative growth, but not only that, we inherited debts that we had to service, debts that we had to pay annually. We could not default on those debts; therefore, there was a reduction in the amount of money that we had in order to do the things that we would like to do.

Yet, despite all of that, with the brilliance of the Minister of Finance and the chairmanship of the Prime Minister in the Cabinet, we have been able to stabilize the financial system and begin to grow the economy. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, this expansion of the economy comes on the heels of a Government, as I said, which had inherited debts that had to be serviced, putting pressure on the funds available to the Government.

Now, a lot has been said about unemployment and the rates of unemployment in the country. What is the truth and where do you go to seek the truth? [*Interruption*] You go to the Central Bank official statistics in order to find out what is going on with employment in the country. I went to the Central Bank this week to find that out. The Central Bank official statistics show that unemployment for 2010 was 5.9 per cent; for the period up to June 2011 it was 5.8 per cent; and the forecast for 2012, given the growth that is taking place in the economy, is projected to be 5 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

It was the former Government that also said that 5 per cent in a society where they are offering employment represents full employment. [*Interruption*] So, we have done well to ensure that there has been no further deterioration in the unemployment situation in the country and the projections are now showing that 5 per cent will be achieved in 2012.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: In the rural areas there is a problem.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, all of these positive economic projections are not surprising, as we see physical manifestations of economic activity in this country.

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You talk about rural areas; I would like to invite you to go to Joyce Road in Chaguanas. Joyce Road is in the back of Chaguanas going down to Waterloo. In the space of one year and a half since we came into office, I have counted at least seven new businesses on Joyce Road—construction businesses and other kinds of business. I have counted in that area about 11 new large houses going up in that area. Today people will tell you it is still difficult to get a plumber, a mason and a carpenter to come to your house. [*Interruption*].

I want to take you to the Member of Parliament for Arima, Rodger Samuel's area, and look at what is happening, not only in his area but throughout the country, the expansion in supermarkets. In Arima, Food Basket has set up a very big outlet.

Mr. Roberts: That is in D'Abadie/O'Meara, right by Carapo Road.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: D'Abadie/O'Meara, right by Malabar Road; Naipaul Xtra Foods has also set up a big supermarket; in Endeavour a new supermarket has also been opened up, a very big one, despite the presence of talk about foreign investors not coming into Trinidad and people not having confidence in this country. [*Interruption*] McDonald's has returned to three locations in Trinidad and Tobago; SuperPharm has also been expanding with its last new outlet in Trincity. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: But the point I am making, Mr. Speaker, there is confidence in this economy; there is confidence in the business community in this economy. [*Desk thumping*] That is why people are investing in these businesses.

I give you another example, because we talk about what is happening in the economy. Now, people invest in an economy if they know that their jobs are going to be safe. People invest in an economy if they know that tomorrow they are not going to be let off their jobs.

You are going to be surprised at this: I spoke to the New Car Dealers Association, and do you know how many new cars were sold in this country last year? Let me start with 2009. In 2009: 12,115 new cars—I am not talking about roll on/roll off. I am talking about new cars. [*Interruption*]—2010 it went up by 205: 12,355; and in 2011: 12,965.

Mr. Roberts: “Whooo papa”! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: You know what has happened for January of this year? For January of this year we were selling 41 new cars per day.

Hon. Member: “Whoooo”!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: These are the figures given to me.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: And all the fetes were sold out.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: \$4,000 also to buy a ticket. [*Interruption*] Now, what does this say? I have a problem with the suggestion that we had a 1.4 per cent negative growth last year. I have a problem with that, and it has to be that we have to do the recalculations, because this says that there is money in the economy and that people are spending. Consumers do not spend if they do not have confidence. Commercial clients do not borrow if they do not have confidence. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to give you some data from the Central Bank Data Centre. In December 2010, commercial banks and non-bank financial institutions had loans outstanding to consumers of \$19,997,800,000; let us say \$19.997 billion. That is December 2010, but at the end of December 2011, when we were being made to feel that nobody was borrowing anything, that consumers were not spending anything, the amount outstanding to the same institutions had increased from \$19.997 billion to \$21,011,700,000. [*Desk thumping*] Almost by \$1 billion, there was an increase in terms of consumers who owed the banks.

With respect to incorporated businesses—so we talk about consumers on the one hand, let us talk about incorporated businesses on the other hand. In December 2010 the outstanding balance to banks was \$22,148,000,000; while at the end of 2011 it was \$23,242,200,000; again, it increased by just over \$1 billion.

So, the argument that there is no confidence in the economy is flawed. There is confidence in the economy. Our business people have confidence in the economy, our business people are investing. It might be that what has happened is that a new group of entrepreneurs has come in the society—I am talking about on Joyce Road and so on—and they are doing the borrowing now while other businesses are growing more risk averse. When you have the growth of this new entrepreneurial class in your society, then you have a very secure future.

That is why if you talk about Debe, if you go along the Debe Road where Lall’s Hardware is, you would be amazed to see how many new businesses have also developed in the Penal area and in the Debe area. All of this is true. You must look at the physical manifestation also of what is happening and go into the data and you would see that things are happening in this country, and it would happen even in a bigger way in 2012 because of the strategies of this Government

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and the leadership of Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, this is an expression of confidence in the economy and confidence in the leadership of our Prime Minister.

I want to give you another example of confidence and what is happening in this country. The Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's East referred to arrival and departure figures. I want to give you the global figures for Trinidad and Tobago. In 2008, there were 739,556 arrivals in Trinidad. Would you believe that? Just under one million people coming into this country—739,556—divide that by 365 and see how many you get per day arriving in Trinidad. In 2009 it dropped by 22 per cent to 567,569. But then the Government of Kamla Persad-Bissessar came into office and something dramatically happened with the international community and with Trinidadians coming back into this country.

Mr. Ramlogan SC: Tell me.

1.30 p.m.

It went up by 40 per cent to—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: “Oooh good!”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: —to 832,746. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Everybody wants to come back to Trinidad.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It did not drop in 2011, in fact it went up from 832,746 to 851,253. So since this Government came into office it stemmed the decline of arrivals in Trinidad and Tobago and the Minister of Tourism agrees with me that arrivals have gone up again and it is going to be bigger next year. Why is that happening?

Hon. Member: Confidence.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: People have to have some confidence in Trinidad and Tobago. So to make the assertion that crime is keeping people away, and the state of emergency is keeping people away in fact—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Who would say so, that was the biggest and best Carnival.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: That is right, the biggest and best Carnival. In fact people feel when they come to this country that they would also be safe.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And that is why they are coming; otherwise they would not have come. So despite all the travel advisories and so on that have been put up by countries, the people have been returning to Trinidad and Tobago in their thousands. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Divali and Carnival.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: This is not me speaking you know, this is the statistics speaking. We must also look at the fact that people are travelling from Trinidad and Tobago also. And to travel you have to have money.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: So that you will find for example, in 2011, almost 13,000 people more departed the country. So people are also traveling. The airplanes are filled. You cannot even get a midnight, red-eye flight to New York right now.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It is all filled up. Mr. Speaker, yes, there has been a contraction to the construction sector. But the construction boom was consistent with increased revenues from the oil and gas boom. The construction boom in any society, in any country, is not expected to last forever. It does not last forever. Nowhere it does. However, it is a lie to say; it is an untruth; it is a falsehood to say that this Government has not stimulated the construction sector.

I want to say that the Government has stimulated the construction sector with projects from the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, UDeCott, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Sports, the Ministry of Education—and I will show you. In the case of the Ministry of Housing and the Environment 4,500 houses are to be constructed in 2012, and the value of this project approximates \$1 billion to put in the economy.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Excellent man, excellent. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: The Chaguanas Library is under construction, and so too the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism has started the Mayaro—

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. W. Peters*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you very much, colleagues. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was saying the Chaguanas Library is under construction, the Mayaro Library is under construction, the Rio Claro Library is under construction and there is the upgrade of the Mayaro Hospital, I am told by my colleague from Mayaro and the Minister of Health—is well in tune. Then in San Fernando the Chancery Lane building is being reconfigured into a 300-bed hospital—[*Desk thumping*] which will be the first major expansion of the hospital in San Fernando in 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, I was telling you about the inspired leadership of the Prime Minister and the impact it has upon the performance of Ministers. In addition to already completing 29 early childhood education centres, the Ministry of Education has another 24 in various phases of construction and will start and complete by the end of this year, another 85. [*Desk thumping*] You know what that means? That means 138 early childhood education centres would be completed by this Government—plus the 22 that was built in nine years by the former administration. In nine years they built 22, in less than two years we would have built 138. [*Desk thumping*] So, construction work is going on.

Further, in addition to the completion of 11 primary schools by the Minister of Education another eight are under construction, as well as six secondary schools with four already completed. Mr. Speaker, that is a lot of schools. But you know, I want to take note of something—that the Opposition, when they were in office, did not complete any secondary or primary schools. And the overall injection of funds into these projects will amount to approximately \$800 million. So, \$1 billion by the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, \$800 million by the Ministry of Education; that is nearly \$2 billion going into the economy.

The Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs—you talk about, inspired leadership and inspired performance. They have already built in 2010/2011, 300 kilometres of agricultural access roads. No Minister, no Government has built in one year 300 kilometres of agricultural access roads. [*Desk thumping*] That has never happened.

Mr. Indarsingh: How much “they build?” Tell us how much “they build”.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Three hundred and fifty ponds were also dug to supplement the water supply for farmers. Now hear this, hear how the CEO demands—the CEO, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar—she says, “Minister you performed, I want to see better performance”. So in 2012, 250 kilometres more of agricultural access roads would be built, at a cost of \$200 million, by Minister Vasant Bharath.

Mr. Warner: “He building roads now? Minister, he building roads now?”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, I have taken time to talk about these construction projects because, as I said, I wanted to give the lie to people who are saying that we have killed the construction sector, and so on and so forth. That is not true.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of noise has been made in the country by the Opposition about the travel of the Prime Minister—the overseas travel of the Prime Minister. A lot of noise has been made, a lot of noise, but Mr. Speaker in terms of travel, I would like to share with you some statistics. In the years 2010, 2011 and so far in 2012—in two years and two months—the hon. Prime Minister has made 16 trips. But the former Prime Minister in 2005, departed the country 17 times, visited 19 countries and used a private jet on six occasions. In 2006, he departed the country 13 times, visited 16 countries and used the private jet seven times. In 2007, he departed the country 13 times, visited 15 countries and used the private jet five times. In 2008, he departed the country 15 times, 24 countries visited, private jet used 10 times.

Mr. Sharma: He has plenty free miles.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: You know why I am saying this to you? Because our Prime Minister—as the Minister of Finance so correctly put it, we have to travel because you cannot stay here in Trinidad and Tobago and think people are going to come and meet you here. You have to go out and market what you have. You know, if you make sugar cake and you have it in your kitchen, nobody would know you have it until you go out there and say, “I have sugar cake and this is what the sugar cake tastes like and this is what the sugar cake feels like”, so people can have an opportunity to assess you. When we go out there, we go out there to market Trinidad and Tobago and the results of those marketing efforts are already beginning to bear fruit for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, they made another point about how long the Prime Minister stays away. But they did not compare how long the former Prime Minister used to stay away. For example, in January 2007, the Prime Minister then travelled to Ethiopia, Tanzania and Jamaica. January 27 to February 7, he stayed away 11 days. And in all of the travels that I have here they varied. For example, to Washington he went in June of that year, he stayed six days; Uganda, seven days; USA, six days; Spain, UK, USA seven days; Germany and the United Arab Emirates, eight days; and then to the UNGA, six days.

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You know, you must be fair. You are comparing our Prime Minister who has gone out there on the task of marketing the country, bringing results to the country, bringing investment to the country; and these are also the statistics that I have here that tells you about what is happening with the former Prime Minister—and let me also take the opportunity to wish him the best in terms of his recovery. It did not cost a small penny to use those jets. For example, to participate in the Caricom youth summit, on the Summit of Youth and Development in January 2010, for four days, to transport the Prime Minister and his delegation the jet was leased for \$127,400. On August 03, 2009, to attend a meeting of Caricom for one day, aircraft was leased at a cost of \$124,740, right?

I am telling you all this because so much has been made about the Prime Minister's travels, but the objective behind the Prime Minister's travel is focus; it is meant to achieve certain goals and we are achieving those goals. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it will shock you, this one—August 25 to 26, two days, to travel to the Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica and Suriname aircraft leaves us at a cost of \$792,593.

Mr. Sharma: Say that again, say that again.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: \$792,593.

Mr. Sharma: What a shame.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It is shocking, is it not? It is shocking. So you have to understand when you criticize our Prime Minister—you know, let it be fair comparison and you will see, and then compare what she is achieving to what they are achieving. Put it together. I mean, there is still a big question mark as to the billion dollars spent on the Summit of the Americas and then the CHOGM that was held here. Can you imagine—how many recall—\$118 million to rent a cruise ship to put it in the port? How many houses we could have built with that? How many new hospital beds we could have bought with that? We could have done so much more for the poor and vulnerable in Trinidad and Tobago, but we were not able to do that.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the cruise ships, I have the figures here. The cruise ship cost was \$184.8 million for two cruise ships. For the Summit of the Americas it was \$125 million and for CHOGM it was \$59 million. Two cruise ships. And they were not even used. Hon. Mr. Mc Leod, as a Minister of Labour, might be wondering what could have been done for the workers of the country if that money had been utilized to create better environments for them to work, and put

better health plans in the workplaces and so on. This is the comparison you have to make because when we spend money we would say, what is the alternative use of that money in the country? And that is why you are seeing a government under Kamla Persad-Bissessar centring on people development.

I want to raise one more issue, on the matter of inflation. In 2010, the annual inflation was 10.5 per cent. In 2011, it was reduced by 50 per cent to 5.2 per cent. And for 2012, it is forecast to be 5 per cent; and these figures are coming from the Research and Policy Department of the Central Bank. My friend from Point Fortin, the Member of Parliament, made some comments about Caricom and the fact that Trinidad and Tobago has a responsibility to Caricom. Yes, we understand our responsibility. Yes, we indicated at the last Heads of Government meeting that Trinidad and Tobago is willing and ready to play its role in Caricom. Trinidad and Tobago understands that if Trinidad and Tobago is to succeed and grow, then the Caricom region must also succeed and grow because we understand the importance of the Caricom market to our manufacturers.

1.45 p.m.

Therefore, we are prepared to help to develop the Caricom region alongside the development of Trinidad and Tobago, but we must do so based on goals and objectives which serve our mutual interests. We, for example, told the Caricom meeting in St. Kitts last year—the Prime Minister told them that Brazil, through EMBRAPA, has offered a model farm for the Caricom region, and we said to them, “Please, let us establish the model farm in Trinidad, because we already have a faculty of agriculture and a school of tropical agriculture, and what have you. What we will do, in turn, is offer scholarships to the different countries in the Caribbean so they can come here and work in the model farms also to see how the model farms are developed, and get their degrees and then go back to their countries where we could further assist them in setting up model farms in their country, because Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the importance of food security in the region. That is vision, and that is the kind of vision in action that the Prime Minister brings to her job as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

You know, I have not talked much in public about foreign affairs, but do you know that for 2011 we held the post of Vice Chairman of CMAG, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group. The Prime Minister held the post of Chairperson-in-Office of the Commonwealth, and because of the Prime Minister’s performance and the manner in which she did her duties as chair in office of the Commonwealth, she was able to lift the profile of the Commonwealth, something

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admitted to by the Commonwealth Secretariat itself, which said that as prime chair in office of the Commonwealth, the Prime Minister lifted the profile of the Commonwealth, and in so doing, she lifted the profile of Trinidad and Tobago globally and in the Commonwealth.

As a result of that, I continue to hold my position as Vice Chairman of CMAG, and only two weeks ago was invited by the Commonwealth Secretariat, endorsed by Australia and Canada, to lead a ministerial delegation to the Maldives in order to look into the coup that took place there in the Maldives. [*Desk thumping*]

Trinidad and Tobago, a small country, because of the way that the Prime Minister has positioned Trinidad and Tobago and the way that she has occupied global space, the smallness of this country is no longer an inhibitor to greatness and to great things. [*Desk thumping*]

We also held, in 2011, the chairmanship of the ministerial committee of the ACS. Because of the way that our offices in New York and in Geneva have performed, we were able to canvas and get into office Justice Anthony Lucky in the Law of the Sea Commission; we were able to get Justice Anthony Carmona into the ICC, all because of how we have been positioned in Trinidad and Tobago, and the way Trinidad and Tobago is being seen now in the international community. It has made a difference, and it is the leadership of the Prime Minister which has made that difference. Let us go back to that and let us acknowledge that with humility, that it is the leadership of the Prime Minister that has done that.

So when they talk about the Prime Minister travelling on Commonwealth Day, as they mentioned, to Westminster Abbey, she did not go alone. She made sure that the culture of Trinidad and Tobago was showcased at the Abbey. So when it was broadcast, it was broadcast around the world to two billion people.

Mr. Sharma: Denise Plummer sang.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And Denise Plummer sang there. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember we were at the Commonwealth Secretariat that night and the Queen walked into the function, and Minister Cadiz was standing next to me, and she greeted the Prime Minister and then came across and was greeting Mr. Cadiz and then greeted me, and she said, "Your Prime Minister read that passage from the scriptures very, very well today." I said, look at how the Queen admires the competence of the Prime Minister when she stood there to read that passage.

Dr. Gopeesingh: She is a leader on the world stage.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Yes. She is a leader on the world stage and she is carving her own place on the world stage.

They talk about gender. The Member for Arouca/Maloney talked about gender and the manner in which the Prime Minister deals with gender. It was this Prime Minister who initiated action that has brought about a comment from President Obama when he spoke at the UNGA, because it was the Prime Minister from this small country, because of her vision, because of her leadership, she was able to bring together women leaders of the world, including the President of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff, the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton from the USA; Helen Clark, and the high-level representative of the UK to the EU Parliament, Catherine Ashton, who is going to visit Trinidad and Tobago in April.

She brought them together in a room that had about 600 persons, on the margins of the UNGA, and had a declaration signed so that women will have greater participation in political decision-making and political activities, and President Obama endorsed that when he spoke at the UNGA.

Our Prime Minister has picked up a cause, a global cause, for the rights of women to participate in politics. Every leader must have a cause. What was the cause of the former leader? We know that our leader has a local cause, a national cause, but at the same time she has a global cause, and because of that global cause, Trinidad and Tobago would be able to occupy a rightful space in the global context and bring attention to Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, in order to combat crime, we must provide decent and attractive alternatives to engage our young people, and one such area of activity is sport and the development of sporting facilities across the country. We talk about rural under-development, but in order to deal with rural under-development you have to deal with the building of rural towns, and you can start with sport; you can start with education. Our Government is changing this in terms of sport under the leadership of Mr. Roberts; and just to tell you that he is completing 16 recreation grounds and will start the development and refurbishment works on 64 more before the end of April at a cost of \$134 million—money into the economy again.

Nine regional centres will be built—including one in Clarke Road, Siparia, and one in Penal—at a cost of \$523 million. The Member of Parliament and the Minister of Sport will tell you what those are going to contain at some point in time. But you see, I just wanted to mention that, because when we talk about crime, we are attacking crime in a holistic fashion. We are using sport; we are

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using education—the preschools—we are using the national mentoring programme. You must not talk about our strategy of crime only as policing. It is a total package that we are using in order to deal with all facets and aspects of crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity and to say that from day one the hon. Prime Minister—like the venerable Broderick Crawford, if you remember TV's *Highway Patrol*—swung into action by signing the financial warrant to pay CEPEP workers after she was taken on an aerial tour of communities that suffered flooding problems. She hit the ground from that day, and by hitting the ground on that day she set the performance benchmark, the tone for all Ministers under her charge, and the Ministers have responded in a very, very significant way.

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

The Minister of Justice (Hon. Herbert Volney): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, long has been the last 24 hours and we are all very anxious here to put the final nail in the coffin of this Motion that is totally devoid of any substance and which we shall defeat momentarily. But before we do that, I want to reflect with the hon. Members present on this Motion. You know, a Motion of this nature is of great constitutional significance. This has been spoken of by my colleagues, in particular the Minister of Legal Affairs, who has spoken earlier in the debate, and being one myself who has had in an earlier incarnation the opportunity to preside over Motions, albeit in a different place, in a different estate of the Constitution, I can say that the judgment, quite clearly, is that this Motion is nothing short of an abuse of parliamentary process.

It is something that should be condemned by all right-thinking citizens of our country. It is something that the hon. Leader of the Opposition will have to pay a very high price for. It is something that this nation will not forgive the hon. Leader of the Opposition. For, in the process, what he has done is, he has traumatized all right-thinking citizens of this beloved nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

In coming to that judgment, I ask some very simple questions that the man in the street will be able to understand when one comes to assess the Motion of No Confidence in the Prime Minister. Where a Leader of the Opposition is the saltfish in the accra of this Motion, where is the saltfish? It is an accra without saltfish.

Mr. Roberts: Oh, no, that is a sin!

Hon. H. Volney: It is a burger without beef. It is a hot dog without the sausage. It is “doubles without channa”. This Motion is worthless. It has been a phenomenal waste of our time in this honourable House.

Do you know the kind of serious bits of legislation that have been held up because of this Motion, and the fact that all of us are here debating this Motion for over 24 hours? Look at Mr. Dookeran, look at Mr. Mc Leod—elders, icons—*[Laughter]*—of this Parliament—

Dr. Moonilal: Let us just say icons.

Hon. H. Volney:—men of distinction in their respective fields: economist, trade union leader. Look at the hon. Attorney General who would prefer to be at home with his young wife and young children; look at Dr. Khan, he has to go and see about the sick of this nation. Please, Leader of the Opposition, do not bring this kind of Motion ever again because, not only will this country be unforgiving, but it will be the start of the end of your time as Leader of the Opposition and of the People’s National Movement.

Now, I will tell you something. There are many of us in this House who once supported the party of Eric Williams. I speak for myself. I had a background where I once supported the PNM. I voted. I was not a member, but like hundreds of thousands of Trinidadians and Tobagonians, we have seen the light, and the party that you all continue to—and the supporters of the traditional PNM continue to live in the shadow of the days of Eric Williams and the leaders of the past—that has gone, because what you lead is not the PNM again. It is your PNM, and I tell you it is a matter of time if you continue leading this party as you are doing before you are no longer the leader of the party that you presently lead. So I ask you, if you like to be the Leader of the Opposition, cease and desist with this irresponsibility in the House of the people. *[Desk thumping]*

2.00 p.m.

On the other hand, look at who you have attacked—Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar. Have you ever touched the lady’s hands, how soft they are? By bringing this Motion do you know what you have done? You have alienated yourself from the whole country. You are alone, *[Desk thumping]* you and 10 others in this room are alone. Not even your party supports this, starting from Louis Lee Sing, the Mayor of Port of Spain.

Miss McDonald: “Forget he, his days numbered.”

Hon. H. Volney: Please, you occupy a very high constitutional position Leader of the Opposition, do not be a pretender to the throne, do not be. Be an aspirant, raise the bar. Let people see you as a possible alternative Prime Minister. Right now you have done yourself a disservice. You have done your party a disservice. You have done the country a disservice. You have traumatized this country by this Motion. And, you know what you have done? You have strengthened the base of our party.

You have brought it back together if there was ever any shifting of our base. You can see from the number of people who have attended our meetings, that this party—this, what you call coalition Government—would be here for a very long time. So, do not continue to live with your colleagues on this front Bench in a fool's paradise and continue to just dream of pie in the sky. It is not going to happen.

Now, look at Mrs. Persad-Bissessar. I stand here, I do not have to defend her, after that prosecution of the indictment by the hon. Member for Tabaquite, the indictment against this irresponsible Motion, I do not have to make any case. You are already guilty of wasting our time. [*Desk thumping*] You are already guilty. This has no basis, it is unfounded, it is vacuous, it is frivolous and vexatious.

You know, in a court of law, I would have condemned you to cost for bringing a Motion like this. [*Desk thumping*] But, I am not in the court of law again. Suffice to say, I know, perhaps, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar, the hon. Member for Siparia like you do not. I did not know her before 2010. I knew her by seeing her on television. I had never even known where Rienzi Complex was. I had no part in politics. But, when I used to watch on television and see the likes of the Member for Diego Martin North/East being abusive to the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla—not this one, his father—I felt the impulse, the compulsion, to give up my job on the Bench of this country and come out and put a final nail in the coffin of the PNM.

So, that from my day with my snake, which represented Patrick Manning, Member for San Fernando East and the PNM, it was just a matter— I said on that day before 10,000 people at George Hill Park in St. Joseph, that the days of the PNM were numbered and it came to pass. And trust me, as I was prophetic then, I am prophetic today: the way you all are heading, you all would not be out in the cold for 10, you would be out for 15/20 years. So, unless you want to see your colleague next to you still in Opposition with grey hair, do your party and yourself a service by never again bringing this kind of Motion in this House. [*Desk thumping*][*Laughter*] —Yesterday, Friday—I have the Legal Aid Bill that

needs to be debated. As we speak the court is backed up with lawyers waiting for increased fees for them to start appearing for people. That is being backed up because of this. As a matter of fact, in the Electronic Monitoring Bill that was here in this House being debated—because the hon. Member for Chaguanas West referred to the waste of time—three years of the PNM between 2007 and 2010—the Member for San Fernando East got up and spoke for the first time in parliamentary debate in this House since I have been in this House, in this honourable Chamber. He got up, he has never been himself since—and we wish him well. We want to see him come back because it is just a matter of time before he moves from that chair to the chair where you are, the way you are going. So take note, take notes, hon. Member, take notes as the hon. Speaker would tell you. Take notes.

So, the Electronic Monitoring Bill to revolutionize the way that we deal with penal reform, as an aid of parole; all these initiatives are coming into this country. We have heard the hon. Member next to you, as is her wont to do in every bit of legislation, “Ooh this legislation is flawed.” The hon. Member is like a stuck record. Everything is flawed. The PNM never brought it, but once we bring something that is new, a fresh breath of air to our country, a change from the failed ways of the PNM past, it is flawed.

You see, one by one we go through the process: we get the Opposition in the House saying we do not agree; we vote against it. We go to the Senate where good sense prevails and then it comes back to the House. Over and over this has been happening. I ask you, hon. Member for Diego Martin West, if as Leader of the Opposition you start spending more time in the House rather than outside of the House, if you start speaking in the House as Leader of the Opposition rather than going to the cameras when they are waiting outside for an interview, you would again regain whatever respect this country had for you.

So please, do not bring this kind of Motion against our Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] Do not ever do it again. You see how our speakers are all lined up, we could take you until tomorrow morning. Everybody is here waiting to drop it; to wet you. [*Laughter*] But, everybody wants to go home too. Everybody is tired. Look at Mr. Dookeran, he is half asleep and Mr. McLeod is half awake. [*Desk thumping*][*Laughter*] They want to go home. Do not do that again. Do not attack our leader. She has performed, and this whole country knows she has performed. She has brought dignity to the office like never before. So, do not do it again. Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to make a short contribution, particularly to deal with some of the misleading issues that have been presented in the House from yesterday evening at 1.30 p.m., now almost 25 hours later.

The first issue is, why are we here? The question of what Motion did the Member for Diego Martin West bring? That Motion dealt with the issue of competence, performance, sustainable employment, management of our officers, governance and the economy. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, can I have some quietness please? Today's newspaper, in the *Newsday*, "Reshmi changes her name: Rowley's eggshell." The whole nation was waiting with bated breath for almost two weeks. If a person brings a Motion of No Confidence, you expect somebody to have something that is very strong and very compelling that the population must listen to and look forwards to hear.

It reminds me of when the hon. Prime Minister, who was then Leader of the Opposition and Political Leader of the UNC at that time, brought a Motion of No Confidence against Mr. Manning. Mr. Manning, the Prime Minister, knew at that time that there were about three or four major issues that were going to confront him. And, he had a coup on his hands as well. One of the major issues was the whole issue of the church, the Lighthouse, being appended to the NAPA and being paid for by UDeCott as being a part of NAPA. That was just one. And that was a major contribution. [*Crosstalk*]

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you have something like this that the Member for Diego Martin West brings that has no substance and no merit and can only look toward assassination of somebody's character by the change of a name—what the change of a name has to do with a Motion of No Confidence in the Prime Minister? That is a legitimate right for anyone to change their name, particularly when somebody has been persecuted, as the Opposition persecuted this young lady over a period of time.

So, if he believes that bringing a Motion like that would cause the Government to resign, that was the first failure. Nonsensical! It was the worst performance I ever saw from the Member for Diego Martin West in my life in politics, which is about 17 years. As my colleague just mentioned a while ago, it was one of the saddest moments that I have seen from a Leader of the Opposition. When he is trying to put himself to the top, to try to become a Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, he has failed miserably.

And, what is most important in that statement that he made—the Member made false, misleading allegations that Resmi Ramnarine is working in a Ministry of the Government. False, misleading allegations. I have seen the *Trinidad Express* report of today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, March 03, 2012, and it reports:

“The *Express* has been reliably informed that Ramnarine is employed at the Ministry of Education.”

This is a categorical lie. It is a malicious lie. It is shameful that neither the head of the political desk nor anyone from the *Trinidad Express* saw it fit to call me and verify the information, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They failed to practise the most fundamental ethics of journalism, which is to verify the information and report the truth. I want to make it categorically clear that no one by the name of Resmi Ramnarine or Shashi Rehka ever worked or now works in the Ministry of Education. My lawyers would be demanding an immediate retraction from the newspapers and we demand an immediate retraction from the Member for Diego Martin West for coming and misleading this House. He misled this House, [*Desk thumping*] malicious untruths and misleading statements in this House.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the time has come for a return to reasonable journalism and ethics in this House. If someone, as the Leader of the Opposition, could believe that he could come to this House and make misleading statements as he did, major untruths, and expect the population to swallow that and want to remove a Prime Minister by that type of thing, I feel very sad for him. It is one of the saddest days in the history of our country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, when you want to be Prime Minister, you have to put yourself in a different frame of mind and you have to build a character. You have to be able to move to a state where people would begin—your own colleagues would begin—to respect you and believe that you could really do it. I want to ask the Member for Diego Martin West: what does he believe that people think about him? What does he believe that his colleagues think about him? I ask the Member for Diego Martin West to answer those questions. They have been asking us to answer questions; I want to ask him to answer those questions.

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Let me proffer some answers to you about what people feel and what he may know about how people feel about him. I want to quote from the *Hansard* of October 21, 2009. This is what his former leader said:

“The minute you oppose my good friend he gets very, very angry and if you oppose him strongly, he becomes a raging bull. That is what this Government is not prepared to accept. That is what it was. We just were not prepared to accept that. Mr. Speaker, you do not know the trouble I see.”

That is his former leader.

“You do not know the trouble I see. I have had to live with that for 12 years. I took it in silence. I took it in silence. I did not complain to anybody. I took that for 12 years in silence, but last year I had enough of it.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, *Hansard*, October 21, 2009. This is what somebody who is aspiring to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has had said about him by his former leader. He had to take a torture from the Member for Diego Martin West for 12 years. He went on to say:

“I have with me here a copy of the *Guardian* of yesterday. Look at it. This is the front page of the *Guardian* of yesterday. Look at it. There is a photograph of the Member for Diego Martin West in full flight. This was Monday. This is the photograph. Examine the picture. What do you see? Examine it. Tell me what you see, Mr. Speaker.”

His former leader is speaking.

“Look it there. If you cannot see from that distance I would bring it to you, but I do not want any answers. It is a rhetorical question. Let me tell you what I see. I see hate. I see bitterness. I see acrimony. I see animosity. I see a man completely out of control. Completely out of control, Mr. Speaker. That is what I see.

That problem is not a new problem to me. I was aware of the tendency for the hon. Member to go out of control since 1987.”

Hon. Ramlogan SC: “Nah boy, he need help.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 13 and 9—22 years. His former leader telling him that for 22 years, he has been seen to be going out of control.

Mr. Sharma: He should have given evidence on the teacup.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, this is what I am asking the Member for Diego Martin West to ask himself before he aspires to be a Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: He needs anger management.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes. Even when he is now Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Deputy Speaker, his former leader said more and it continues:

“When he cannot have his way his method is to bully.” [*Interruption*]

Hon. Ramlogan SC: His method is to pelt a teacup.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It goes on:

“That is what it is. His method is to bully you. That is what I fought against. That is why his appointment was terminated. We do not tolerate bullying in the secondary school system and we are not tolerating bullying in the Cabinet. We are not tolerating it. If the Member for Diego Martin West wishes a Cabinet in which bullying is the order of the day, he is going to have to form that Cabinet himself.”

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Never!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And this is the type of Cabinet that he wants to form now. He wants to be Prime Minister; but never in his life will he ever have the opportunity to form a Cabinet. [*Interruption*] So, he wants to have his own Cabinet.

Then the same Member for Diego Martin West—Do you remember when we launched the laptop issue? Do you remember what he said? In his reply to the 2010/2011 Budget, Dr. Rowley said and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, “...the Minister of Education has a laptop for you. He thinks you are a ‘duncy head’ first former.”

He called the children “duncy head” because we were giving them a laptop.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Disgraceful! “We go pelt ah teacup!”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: In some other instances after that, now that he is the Leader of the Opposition, this is what he goes on to say. The *Express* editorial, November 01, 2010, Rowley condemned by *Express* editorial for statements on Hurricane Tomás and women in leadership.

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“Opposition Leader Dr. Keith Rowley was wrong on two counts in his comments on the Prime Minister’s handling of the government response to Hurricane Tomás. Firstly, Dr. Rowley, speaking on Saturday, said in closing schools and government offices early the previous day, the Government had overreacted to what he described as ‘a cloud’.

That ‘cloud’ in fact became a Category 2 hurricane that hit Barbados and the Windward Islands...”

So he called things a cloud when it is a hurricane, and many more issues like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

He has no ability to even think about moving himself from Leader of the Opposition to being somebody in government once more and to lead a government. He made false allegations against the AG. He attacked the independence of the Judiciary and they condemned him. So, on that issue, I think he has, in fact, played himself out and has really failed miserably—all these articles.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Then, on the procurement issue, he has failed miserably again, together with his colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, when the *Express* condemned both of them for moving out of the procurement piece of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament. [*Interruption and crosstalk*] I do not have much time but I can deal with that at another time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal now, for a short while, with some comments made by the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Those comments basically tried to indicate that there was something unusual going on with the Education Facilities Company Limited. You quoted three areas—[*Interruption and crosstalk*] You gave your side of the story and there is always another side of the story.

Mr. Imbert: Sure.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I will give the side of the story that has been given to me and you have given your side. I had indicated that these were some problems that we had and I mentioned it to the hon. Prime Minister. The hon. Prime Minister told me immediately, “go and deal with this, Minister, and get the truth to it, and if something is wrong, we would have to deal with it”. That is the competence of the hon. Prime Minister and a Prime Minister who does not shirk her responsibility. [*Desk thumping*]

The Lakshmi Girls' high school's auditorium—this is our understanding: the tender was opened to 18 contractors. Four were eventually examined further with prices. We have quoted the prices: Moosai's \$15 million; Envirotec \$14 million; Civstruct, \$13.4 million and Thermal Impact, \$12.3 million. All this was brought to the attention of the hon. Prime Minister and she instructed me to go and get to the base of this matter.

The Management Tenders Committee recommended Civstruct, however, the board was not provided with the evidence that Civstruct had provided the financial capabilities to fund the project. Civstruct never did any previous work for the EFCL, and hence the evaluation of their technical capabilities was, solely, a subjective one since the acting CEO was a former employee. The board looked at technical and financial capacity and the best company was Moosai's, however, the best value for money was Envirotec.

Mr. Imbert: No way!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: A letter of award was proposed. To date, no letter of award was given to any contractor since the Minister was written by Civstruct, and the hon. Prime Minister instructed me to investigate the matter.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: “Yuh see wha ah mean. Yuh get yuh answer right dey.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The second issue is textbook and award to ZAS. ZAS has done work for the EFCL in the past. It is a registered company and so tendered for work under the PNM. ZAS was awarded, since they tendered, 100 per cent of their items. Their price would obviously be higher than other tenderers who submitted partial bids. The EFCL would consider a 100 per cent bid preferentially.

Now, the public tender of textbooks is for 5 per cent. Mr. Speaker, 95 per cent of the textbooks are awarded since certain booksellers represent foreign suppliers only and hence, the Ministry of Education places these directly. So this ZAS thing was for 5 per cent of the books.

Mr. Imbert: What about the director?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Now, a director's fax number was used by ZAS. Saudia offers printing, faxing and copying services to the public. Any contractors, including ZAS, use these public services.

Mr. Imbert: But he is the director of the company.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You claimed that the EFCL employees reported the fraud. The EFCL director is not a director or in any way associated with ZAS.

Mr. Imbert: You go ahead and believe that!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: This is what I have been told. Bruce Electrical was the third one and was awarded a contract for electrical work on a project manager instruction in 2009. That was during the PNM administration.

Hon. Members: Ooooooh!

Hon. Ramlogan SC: “Is the PNM give Bruce the contract?”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Clifton De Coteau is not involved in this contract. The contract was awarded before we, as Ministers, were appointed. Bruce Electrical was eventually asked to rewire the entire school because they were already mobilized on the job. The work was evaluated by an independent quantity surveyor and EFCL paid on that advice.

Now, the audit of EFCL’s procurement and finance: the hon. Prime Minister directed the hon. Minister of Education to do an audit. There was a call for the audit. EFCL is a public company and does its business with transparency and accountability. Each year, the auditors give a clean bill of health by PKF Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has been already contracted to do audits into the EFCL.

Mr. Imbert: Let them know the result.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So, you have given your side and this is the side from the EFCL. The investigations are going on, the audit is going on and the final determination would be made on that.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to complete my short time by responding to some statements from the Member for Port of Spain North/ St. Ann’s West. I saw, yesterday evening, a person who I had a tremendous amount of respect for, as a former principal, and a former educator for more than 30 years. But, somewhere along the line, I began to lose the respect for her. I believe that the hon. Member should begin to re-examine herself because what I saw coming out there from her statements, it smelt putrid and it smelt offensive.

There were subliminal—I do not even want to say the word because it pains—racist statements coming out from there. It was disguised racist statements when she began to speak about the 39,000 Guyanese coming into Trinidad, deliberately and mischievously entered the element of race in a student’s residence in Caroni. Because a student’s residence was put as Caroni, you begin to deliberately and mischievously put that for half an hour—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: PNM style!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: For half an hour of her contribution, she spewed venom and filth—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Nobody was listening to her.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: —and disgusting assertions came from her. It was one of the most difficult times that, in my 17 years in politics and 11 years in the Parliament, I have had such an unfortunate situation. It did not speak very much about her. So, I began to lose a lot of respect. She even disrespected the teachers saying that they know very little about IT and the teaching of IT and the infusion of curriculum in the schools.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I had come prepared to speak a lot about the education system and so on and to tell this country what we have done in education. In a short one or two minutes, the Ministry of Education has already had its strategic business plan done in 2010. We have a business strategy report. We have a five-year action plan and we have 16 priority areas which we are moving purposefully to implement. They are as follows: laptop, the ECCE, the universal Early Childhood Care and Education, continuous-based assessment, movement of the SEA exam, continuous school-based management, teacher training, infrastructure development, human resource management, information systems, organizational restructuring, institutional strengthening, literacy, numeracy—all these things, in about 16 areas.

Permit me just a few minutes to close. I will speak more about our work in education at a subsequent time. We are going guns. We are transforming the society for social mobilization and transformation.

In closing, I want to quote from an article of Friday, March 02, 2012, from the *Express*—an editorial, basically.

Kamla strong winner of public confidence.

Whether it is personality or principle, she stands tall above the rest. No confidence motion an affront to public dignity.

The loaded inventory, tangible accomplishments and the rich visionary plans, projections and provisions for the future, particularly the ordinary citizen, all suddenly articulated with the clarity and confidence of empowering purpose were a huge magnet for public confidence and quite importantly for the first

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time in the 50-year history of our nation—I am quoting—we can safely say that so far we have seen a Prime Minister devoid of the deadly pestilence of arrogance. Irrespective of the various strengths and virtues, we have never had a Prime Minister with such remarkable humility and ready willingness to admit to errors than Mrs. Persad-Bissessar. Never! This is a very rare gift which this nation must cherish. Not only is Persad-Bissessar willing to acknowledge genuine mistakes and take swift meaningful steps to correct same, but unlike all her predecessors she sincerely resents the maximum leadership model and is distinctly not spiteful or vindictive to rivals or detractors inside or outside of her party or supportbase. Whether it is personality or principle, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar is a super-confidence winner.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I personally, on behalf of my 15,000 resident voters of Caroni East—four-fifths of the amount of voters who were in that constituency—they have asked me to convey, through this House, our sincerest appreciation and gratitude for the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister. They wish her continued success and strength and may God continue to bless her. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It seems like only yesterday I started this Motion and we, very efficiently, have come to the point of winding up.

Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that the Government has reacted in most of the ways that we have seen. But, the one thing that the Government cannot take away from us and from me in particular is the opportunity afforded us on the side of the Opposition and the Office of the Opposition Leader in particular, to file a Motion as it has been filed at our discretion and for reasons best known to us. For those who believe that it was a waste of their time they were always free to leave. This Parliament is not a jail. The Member for St. Joseph gave me a schoolmaster's scolding and I am sure if I was a little closer to him he might have taken off his belt buckle and attended to me. But, that is not really the serious side of the Motion.

I started by saying yesterday that I was not really talking to my colleagues in here, largely because I anticipated how they would behave, how they would defend and how they would vote. I also mentioned to you that, in holding the Government to account, through this Motion filed against the Prime Minister, who is ultimately responsible for the Cabinet, I called the population's attention to how public business is being administered under the stewardship of the Prime

Minister. All that was said in here by Members of the Prime Minister's team would give you the impression that the Opposition was the only voice in the country that shared the point of view that we expressed with respect to the right to bring this Motion.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, what Dana Seetahal SC said in today's *Express*, with respect to this whole idea of bringing a vote of no confidence. I also took note of the fact that the Member for Chaguanas West, unlike his colleagues, many of whom had their hyperbolic expressions about a waste of time and frivolous and vexatious and, of course, we are to be told how much of a judge the Member for St. Joseph was, and frivolous and vexatious, and I was almost made to pay cost. The Member for Chaguanas and maybe one or two others did say that it was in fact an integral part of the parliamentary process. Just for the record and for the members listening, the public, Dana Seetahal SC, an eminent lawyer in this country, in her article today on No Confidence Motions quotes Rodney Blazier, an authority, according to her:

"...writing on constitutional practice, sees its significance as obliging the Government to defend itself, explain its policies, and justify its actions to its own backbenches, to the opposition parties and through them to the country as a whole'.

If for no other reasons, therefore, this debate is relevant to our country as we assess a Government approaching two years in office....

The right to bring a no-confidence motion in a government or its leader is a tool that an opposition may use to call the government to account."

Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what this Motion sought to do, as I said before we came in here, and what Dana Seetahal SC is saying now, quoting an eminent authority. It is against that background that you have the fulminations of the Member for St. Joseph and the chidings and those who believe that all they had to contribute was to say how much of a waste of time it was. For me, some parts of it were even a learning experience.

I do not know who paid attention to the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs this afternoon because, in presenting the Motion, I paid particular attention to our need to be clear and for the Government to clarify certain very important issues, with respect to what was happening in the energy sector and the effects of negative comments that were being made about the procurement process attending the largest project likely to come to Trinidad and Tobago, if the SABIC project does.

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The young Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs came here this afternoon and he allowed me, unlike the arrogance or tomfoolery of some of his older colleagues, to question him at length, and he provided a significant number of answers, which, if those answers are to be taken with the candor he gave and the accuracy that he said he is giving, would have clarified for a lot of people, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but around the world, what the very important issue was in Trinidad and Tobago and how the Government sees it and what this story is, according to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. For some people, that is a waste of time. But, we simply say we want the Government to account for its stewardship.

There is another side to the story about the attitude and response to the Motion. This is today's *TnT Mirror*, and it talks to some of my colleagues up front. It says:

“Talking bull”

That is the headline. It states:

“After almost two years in office, it is legitimate that any Opposition party should wish to enquire into the performance of the Government and such enquiry should be treated with the respect it deserves as a provision of the Constitution.

The use of the heavy resources of the State to suppress the views of the legitimate Opposition should have no place in a democracy. The Constitution did not contemplate giving any Government the right to decide when the Opposition should file such a motion and the public should reject the PP's demonstrated contempt for democracy. A further affront was the suggestion by Leader of Government Business Dr. Roodal Moonilal that Government was contemplating having the last word in the debate, in violation of the Parliament's Standing Orders and established tradition.”

Of course, that is another issue for a debate, but we go forward.

“It makes no difference whether these Constitutional violations are accomplished by force or through the attempted manipulation of public opinion by the commandeering of all media resources; it represents reprehensible anti-democratic instincts which would not be countenanced in any self-respecting country.”

Those are the view of others, not the views of the PNM, not the print of the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, let me go straight into the Minister of Finance because he stayed for a long time to be able to tell us what he told us many times before. He accused participants in the Motion of being constipated. But if there was any constipation in this debate it was the stuck record of the Minister of Finance who came once again and gave us his story again. All I could say to the Minister of Finance, is that is your story and you are sticking to it. [*Desk thumping*] A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. There is nothing that we can do that will change your mind and vice versa. What we are hoping is that things go well for Trinidad and Tobago and all of us, all our boats would be lifted by it.

However, when we look at other views, not the Opposition's views, or your views, which I would not say are self-serving, I always say they are rose-tinted. Maybe it is good to have a rose-tinted glass if you are looking at an economy like Trinidad and Tobago because in fact it is not as bad as you say it is—when you were talking two years ago.

I am quoting from the *Economic Bulletin* of January 2012 of the Central Bank. You do not get more current than that; looking backwards with data up to the third quarter of the last year. It reads and I would not read much of it:

“In Trinidad and Tobago, latest available statistics show that economic activity continued to slow in the third quarter of 2011, with real GDP declining by 2.6 per cent...This decline was mainly the result of a 5.6 per cent contraction in the energy sector...”

2.45 p.m.

So, Mr. Speaker, if the most recent and up-to-date information from the Central Bank is saying that up to the third quarter, and it ends—that is June, right? Last fiscal year, calendar year—[*Interruption*]—September, right? If up to that point the Central Bank is identifying a 2.6 per cent decline, everybody knows that the fourth quarter was ruined by the state of emergency, as reported in the annual reports of companies which are now reporting. So it does not matter how the prose flows from the Minister of Finance, the last year is not as he is saying. He is putting the best possible light on it, but I want the people to understand what the Central Bank has said: Data up to the third quarter, 2.6 per cent decline.

In other words we are going downwards, and we in our common sense know that the last quarter into December was ruined by the state of emergency. So that means no turnaround was taking place then. We are now into the first quarter of this calendar year: January, February, March; we will wait to see what happens then. The Minister of Finance is not going to get us to accept his blandishments.

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[DR. K. ROWLEY]

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Before this Motion was debated yesterday, I guess the editor of the *Guardian* was writing, and today's editorial, Saturday, March 03, says:

“Wrong confidence debate taking place”

Because they may have been influenced by their own propaganda, their own supply, that the Motion as presented by me, the content, would have been about “rah-rah and mark buss here, and mark buss there”—and I do not mean you, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about—what do they call that—even before it was done, this article written for today's publication was saying the “Wrong confidence debate taking place”. What should take place? Listen to what it says:

“In a significant sense, while a parliamentary debate on the motion of no-confidence was guaranteed to stimulate the interest of the population, the Opposition would have been on firmer ground if it had focused its attention on the T&T economy.”

As you may recall, Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what I did because I did say there were two major planks of the Motion, insofar as it relates to the Government coming into office on the issue of fixing the crime situation and the economic situation.

In that context I went on to deal with the economic aspects and the energy sector in particular, raising some very pertinent issues which nobody has addressed, with respect to our concerns about some matters down at Point Lisas where matters of gas pricing, viability of plants, the threat of American shale gas in the medium-term, and all those kinds of things could have been brought into the debate by the Government Members if they chose to contribute in the reporting way. But instead, Mr. Speaker, they chose to do otherwise the editorial goes on to speak about:

“...the local economy faces new threats and old weaknesses.”

Mr. Sharma. “Read de whole thing.”

Dr. K. Rowley: It speaks about global financial uncertainty as one of the reasons for the problems that we are trying to face down—treating with in Trinidad and Tobago now. Part two—so, one aspect of our difficulty is the global situation beyond our control, but listen to what they said the other part was:

“But the other contributor to the lack of confidence felt by local and international investors in T&T was due to the strong words meant to bad-talk the T&T economy issued by government spokesmen in the period immediately before and after the May 24, 2010, general election.”

Namely, those in Government, their “bad talking” of the economy damaged the confidence platform in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we had been saying before I have said it here many times, and the editorial in the *Guardian* is saying it now. It goes on to say, and I quote:

“Comments such as the previous administration left an empty Treasury”—you heard that in the debate, here—“and a totally mismanaged economy were not comments that engendered confidence by those local or international investors who were poised to make investment decisions. In a real sense, the issue of confidence, which was shaken by the global situation and by the comments of well-placed government spokesmen, has taken much longer to stabilize than many would have expected.”

In other words, we used our mouths to make a bad situation worse. That is what the editorial is saying in the *Guardian*, and the Government stands accused of not doing for us the best that it could have done. That is not the PNM talking, those are the captains of industry expressing their views, and those views are précised in that editorial.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that was surprising to me, maybe I should not say surprising. The other thing that formed a feature of the response from the Government was the fact that I became the issue. If you cannot deal with the message you slaughter the messenger. Man, and did they try to slaughter me. It had all kinds of attempts—some came with wire, some came with rope, some came with cutlass and they even brought a class clown to make it humorous. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker: You cannot call a Member a clown.

Dr. K. Rowley: Who would own up to it?

Mr. Speaker: You cannot refer to a Member in that way.

Dr. K. Rowley: If you can identify one for me—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: No, no, I thought you were referring to a Member.

Hon. Member: Standing Order 36(4)!

Dr. K. Rowley: I have been here a long time, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: Was it a Member of yours?

Dr. K. Rowley: Let me go to my friend from Chaguanas West. He spent most of his time giving us an analysis of the reason for this Motion. In fact, before I go to him, let me dispense with something else, because they are coming from both sides.

My friend from Oropouche East spent much of his time telling the country that the Government, or he, had made this amazing discovery of new information, that there was some conspiracy on my part with some of my colleagues in 2010, where I met in Barbados with some people to overthrow the Manning administration and whatever. Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of those who are listening out there and who may have been influenced by that—because if the purpose of that was to incite PNM people to believe in foolishness—let me say it categorically. I have been to Barbados a number of times in recent years and I go there fairly frequently. I have not met in Barbados in any memorable period with anybody from Trinidad and Tobago politics. So that is absolute baloney—*[Interruption]*

Miss Cox: Make-up story.

Dr. K. Rowley:—Phooey, “kalinda wash”, absolutely no truth in that. So we could put that to bed; that was meant probably to send a message to some persons who want to blame me for the PNM’s fall.

Dr. Moonilal: You were there on March 26.

Dr. K. Rowley: I do not know, I have been there very many times. The Member for Chaguanas West had another theory, and it was that in the absence of our colleague from San Fernando East, who is recuperating in Cuba, that I took the opportunity to try to rally the forces. That is a good kind of interpretation if you do not know the facts, and he went into detail. So I want to put him at ease seeing that he is so concerned about the PNM’s well-being.

Hon. Member: I could say so.

Dr. K. Rowley: And for the benefit of those who also spoke about the absence of consultation, let us discuss some PNM business. Contrary to what you all have been saying about the PNM, you all do not know anything about PNM business so why do you not just stay out of it! *[Desk thumping]*

Dr. Browne: Correct!

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I have 11 other Members on this side in the PNM.

Hon. Member: Ten.

Dr. K. Rowley: Eleven! One is away ill. [*Desk thumping*] I wish him a speedy recovery and I am sure very soon he would be speaking loud and clear. I consulted with all 11 of my colleagues—[*Desk thumping*—every single one. I do not know who is taking this position about who I should consult with and who was not consulted. Obviously, there might be somebody who believes that because I did not consult you, there was no consultation. I would not waste more time with that.

What struck me, Mr. Speaker, was the ability of my friend from Chaguanas West to rise to the occasion. I distinctly recall many years ago I was taking issue with him over a company called CONCACAF that was building some stadiums in Trinidad and Tobago under some questionable procurement circumstances. And I had reason to say—and I did say—that FIFA was a mafia. Boy, oh boy, he was so upset. He came here and said that statement by me was so upsetting to him, he had to go to Zurich or Geneva or wherever it was and apologize because I had said FIFA was a mafia.

I sat here today, Mr. Speaker, and I heard him say that there is some story in the papers about some money that did not go to Haiti, somebody says, and they are ascribing to him some misconduct with respect to the money. He gave his side of the story; he told the writer to stay out of FIFA politics because FIFA politics is bigger than anything Kissinger has ever seen in the whole American politics, because FIFA politics is the kind of politics where that kind of slander, that kind of statement could be politics of the day in FIFA. Is that not a mafia? Was I not right when I said FIFA was a mafia?

Today, he might be agreeing with me because if they could put his name in that situation, expose you to that kind of ridicule as par for the course, then I am pretty sure he will agree with me that FIFA is a mafia. And, of course, he told us he spent 30 years there, and I am sure with his intellect he would have learnt a lot.

Mr. Speaker, one understands the actions of all the Members on the other side, because the Member for Chaguanas West laid it out for us in great detail today, from the beginning to the arrival in office of the Prime Minister. He used the word which encapsulates everything; he said: Kamla Persad-Bissessar is an investment. They made an investment in her, so you know something—I want the country to understand that when you make that kind of investment you have to hang around for the dividend. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Cox: “Till death do us part boy”.

Dr. K. Rowley: So do not expect those who have this investment to protect, to put your interest—the people of Trinidad and Tobago’s interest—first, if it in any way threatens that investment. That is why we can now understand why the people around the Prime Minister pretend not to know the difference between right and wrong—they are protecting their investment. [*Desk thumping*]

3.00 p.m.

In his excellent contribution from day one, through Ramjack-G, right up to the point where the Member for Siparia was sworn in as Prime Minister, did you notice that the Member for Chaguanas West did not go beyond her arrival into the office of Prime Minister? He took no issue with the Motion because the Motion was about her stewardship as Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

I congratulate her and I congratulate him. I remember when that Ramjack-G thing was going on, I met him outside the lounge one day and I said to him: “You really figure you could move Panday?” He said to me: “Watch me.” He was confident and he did it. It was a fantastic job from thought to delivery into the office of Prime Minister, but this Motion has nothing to do with that. I am not interested in that. It is interesting history, which now the public knows; we learned something and it becomes part of the folklore.

The Motion begins to be interesting when the Prime Minister begins to discharge her responsibility. Dana Seetahal said in her advice to us—that is legal advice—that what we are doing here is holding the Government to account and that account started May 24 to now. Again, all those who spent all this time about the PNM—of course there were reasonable comparisons, you must compare one with the other; but all those who felt that what they were dealing with was an assessment of the PNM and holding the PNM to account were wrong.

To me, Mr. Speaker, the most disappointing of all the contributions was that of my colleague, the Member for St. Augustine. [*Desk thumping*] I do not know if it is because he is the COP leader in a UNC seat that he has become such a hypocrite. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: If you are talking about collective hypocrites, that is no problem; but I would ask you not to direct that language to one Member of our honourable House.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I am sure you were not here when he spoke about vultures and “corbeaux: because you would not have allowed that, would you? Is there a ruling that the word is unparliamentary? Is that the ruling? I do not want to go against the ruling.

Mr. Speaker: No. I am just saying if you are making reference to one Member in that way, I would ask you to use more elegant language.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, the choice of elegance should remain with me as long as I am being parliamentary. If the word is unparliamentary, I would not use it at all. I would not challenge the ruling, but if the word is parliamentary and I would like to be inelegant, I want to be inelegant. Sometimes “corbeaux” are inelegant.

Mr. Speaker: May I suggest, for purposes of what I am advising, that we refrain from using the word hypocrite as it relates to a Member of this honourable House.

Dr. K. Rowley: Time is valuable. I will move on. What I expected from him is the promise of new politics but instead of giving the population the promise of new politics, he sets out to give us a talking-down about “don’t play with allegations”. What does that mean? If the Prime Minister is doing something which is unacceptable to the population, who do you want to raise it? The priests in Mount St. Benedict? There is a role for the Opposition.

I even heard one Member ask me if I ever felt the Prime Minister’s hand and how soft and nice it is. That is not for me. If you get to feel the Prime Minister’s hand, that is for you. I am not concerned about the Prime Minister’s skin colour, skin tone or softness. It is not of any concern to me. When I want to feel soft hands, “ah feel muh wife own”. [*Desk thumping*] One got the impression that some people felt it was infra dig; they took umbrage at the idea of this Opposition’s effrontery to file a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister.

You know, Mr. Speaker, what the logical extension of that is, and it is lived in some countries? It is called insulting the monarch or a Zimbabwean. If you have the temerity to disagree and insult Mugabe, “yuh” dead. This is one end of that wedge and Mugabe took it to there. How dare you want to file a vote of no confidence in our Prime Minister? If you are in love with the Prime Minister, I respect her; but this thing about “How dare you file a vote of no confidence?” only makes you all look like “lick-spigots” and lickspittles. You cannot be serious.

A vote of no confidence is an integral part of the parliamentary process and it gives the Government the opportunity, as the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs did today—the Minister came here and he did well in explaining the energy aspect of things. [*Desk thumping*] One or two other Ministers tried to, but they were hell-bent on taking umbrage.

Lack of Confidence in Prime Minister
[DR. K. ROWLEY]

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Mr. Speaker, before I forget and before I run out of time, let me deal with this matter that seems to always come up—something called Landate. I have never used the Parliament floor to defend myself against personal attacks. Never! I have done it in the court and I have done it outside; but because Members of the Government have chosen to use the resurrection of something called Landate, which they believe holds some dread for me, as part of the Government's defence in a vote of no confidence, I crave your indulgence, once and for all to put on the record—because they brought it on the record here—this story about Landate.

What is Landate? Landate is a piece of land in Tobago owned by my wife, where she paid a contractor to put in a road. That is all. All the talk about building this and building that never occurred. It was a piece of land where you put a road.

In 2003, an official who is now a big official in the COP, new politics, a fellow called Ganga Singh, in collaboration with somebody called Barrington Thomas—I will tell you who Barrington Thomas is. This is “The Independent Voices”—paid advertisement, and in there is the “UNC Change for a Better Future” and you see Barrington Thomas here. Barrington Thomas was a UNC candidate in Tobago, a convicted felon, well qualified to be a UNC candidate. He is the sole and singular citizen in this country who went before a commission of enquiry to make allegations against me.

Ganga Singh, who raised it in this Parliament, was invited to come to the commission of enquiry. He never came. The only person in this country who has been making that allegation against me was Barrington Thomas. So I was the subject of a commission of enquiry and an Integrity Commission investigation. I subject myself to the laws of this country. Next thing I know, the commission of enquiry is winding up without having called me before the enquiry.

I had to send my lawyer to the enquiry to demand that I be allowed to come before the enquiry to be examined and cross-examined by lawyers, friendly and hostile, to put this nonsense to bed. I did that. Whereas UNC Ministers were running from commissions of enquiry; some never appeared before it; some went to jail over it, I had to demand to appear before the Annestine Sealey Enquiry. The process took its place.

Listen to what Annestine Sealey signed under affidavit in the High Court of Trinidad and Tobago. Case CV2005-00148. This is the written statement signed by Justice Annestine Sealey. The Member for Fyzabad now called the name there for some reason.

Rev. Thomas—because convicted felon Barrington goes around as reverend—Rev. Thomas’ evidence was not merely inconsistent; it was shown to be a pack of lies. That much was obvious.

That is the written testimony of Justice Annestine Sealey that was placed in the courts of Trinidad and Tobago and her lawyer, Mr. Douglas Mendes, speaking during that court matter—and this was published in the *Trinidad Guardian* on November 02, 2006—Mendes had this to say:

The testimony of Barrington Thomas had already been totally destroyed and his credibility ruined.

So, in that scenario, that was the outcome of the commission of enquiry insofar as this Landate story is concerned. Would you believe that even after that, I still had to face the machinations of the Integrity Commission, which took gossip from UDeCott and elsewhere and tried to have me prosecuted?

At the end of that process with the Integrity Commission—[*Searches among papers on desk*] There is a letter I must find. I want to put on the record the conclusion of the—I am looking for—I brought this thing here. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I just cannot figure out where it went. I am looking for a letter written to me by the Integrity Commission in which the commission, after all the carryings-on—I cannot figure out why this letter is not here; it is supposed to be here. Could you look and see if you find a letter from the Integrity Commission for me?

The Integrity Commission, after it was forced by the court to conduct a thorough investigation to completion, wrote to me, at the end of all the carryings-on, at the end of all the investigations and it was published in the newspapers. In fact, before that—Ah! Thank you very much. This is what I was looking for.

It is dated February 01, 2008—after I had to go to court to deal with the allegation of one man who has been described as I just told you. This is the conclusion of this famous Landate, February 01, 2008 addressed to me:

“Re: Investigations into alleged breaches of the Integrity in Public Life Act, 2000 by The Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley M.P.

I refer to the matter at caption and to our letters dated June 26, 2007 and July 17, 2007 in which the Commission advised that as a result of information that it received it appeared that you may have conducted yourself in a manner that was in breach of your duties under the Integrity in Public Life Act, 2000...

As a result of further investigations into this matter”—this is what the court had ordered them to do—“the Commission is now of the view that there is no

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longer any basis for suspecting that you may have conducted yourself in a manner that was in breach of your duties under ‘the Act’ and I have been directed to advise the Director of Public Prosecutions of this decision.

This investigation is now at an end and the Commission thanks you for your co-operation.”

3.15 p.m.

Hon. Member: For now.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, if one cannot be exonerated by a commission of enquiry where the commissioner says that the single witness making the allegation told the enquiry a pack of lies, and by an Integrity Commission which had itself forced by a court to investigate and reinvestigate, and come to this conclusion, how then does one get exoneration in Trinidad and Tobago? And why are Members of Parliament, especially the Attorney General—who now is still taking taxpayers’ money—pursuing Landate?

Let me tell all of you something: Landate holds no dread for me and my family. [*Desk thumping*] And in this matter, it cost taxpayers \$900,000 in legal fees and \$120,000 in penalty, which they paid to me, and an Integrity Commission that resigned in disgrace. If you all want to continue with landate, continue, especially outside.

Mr. Speaker, let me get back to the matter before us. The matter before us is the Prime Minister and her stewardship. The Motion says that we have issues about her competence, her encouragement of wrongdoing, and actions which have been inimical to the country’s interest which fell to her to treat and she did not treat in the country’s interest.

Let me just run down quickly a few of those items, examples. It falls to me, reasonably, having filed this Motion, to tell my colleagues in here, if I choose to but certainly the population, why I came to the conclusion that I should have no confidence in the Prime Minister. It is not because we did not support the Government as a new Government. As a matter of fact this new Government got a bigger honeymoon than anybody else in Trinidad and Tobago. The honeymoon included us voting for a budget brought by the Government, cooperation in a number of ways. So when we come after 22 months and say we have no confidence in the Prime Minister, it falls to me to give some examples as to why I have come to that conclusion. Let me do that now.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Competence: the Prime Minister is head of the National Security Council, she is Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Prime Minister approves leave for the Commissioner of Police to leave the country on a Friday evening knowing that the deputy commissioner is out of the country. So with the deputy commissioner out of the country—took him nearly 10 days to come back—with the commissioner out of the country, the Prime Minister never consulted with the Commissioner of Police because he told the country he did not know about any state of emergency. Having given the commissioner leave on Friday evening, by Sunday night, the Prime Minister declared a state of emergency. If that is not incompetence, it is reckless. [*Desk thumping*] I need not go into the details of the state of emergency, that was debated a little earlier on.

The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago decides that she is from Siparia, she is now Prime Minister, and she takes it upon herself without any initiation from the regional University of the West Indies—the Member for Siparia decides that the best thing to do for the University of the West Indies is to build a legacy of a law school in her constituency. The University of the West Indies—well if it is not in the constituency, in her neighbourhood, in Debe.

She decides to build a law school in Debe, put a law library in Debe. Mr. Speaker, we are a small country, Trinidad and Tobago is a small country. Are we going to have two state-funded law schools on this island? The answer is yes. How many private law schools on the island? Many. What was the priority in a period of stringency for the Prime Minister to want to build a university in her neighbourhood?

I have no doubt that lawyers are good people and professions are good to be had, and the buildings—but is that a priority for Trinidad and Tobago at this time? It is an abuse of prime ministerial authority. Abuse! [*Desk thumping*] That is only being done because she has the authority as Prime Minister to direct the Cabinet. The university and the Cabinet could not speak truth to power and tell the Prime Minister this is not a priority. I will tell you for sure, it was not initiated by the University of the West Indies.

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Mr. Speaker, many awards that we get have no monetary value. You get an award, you get a cup, you win a prize, you could hang it up on a wall, or you go, you get a title. Senior counsel has value to a lawyer. If you are senior counsel, by being given that title, you are being given something that you could make economic benefit from. The Prime Minister, with no good reason, no serious justification, took it upon herself to give herself Silk. That, Mr. Speaker, was an abuse of the office because only prime ministerial authority could have made her senior counsel. That was an abuse.

Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister came into office, she met Trinidad and Tobago with a leadership role in Caricom in a critical period. Now more than ever, as we talk about diversification, and whatever, there can be—the first milepost in diversification in Trinidad and Tobago is to ensure that we dominate the Caricom market, and we grow it, and we keep them whole, so they can buy Trinidad and Tobago's products. Those products guarantee jobs here in Trinidad and Tobago for local manufacturing businesses.

In a jiffy, the Prime Minister insulted one group and another group. One was, we are not an ATM for the Jamaicans, and they set about to start to want to boycott our products; we had to deal with that. St Lucia wants some help, you tell them, quid pro quo, give me this to get some help, embarrassed us. Most importantly, in her prominent celebratory mood, this Prime Minister chose to go and celebrate her anniversary of coming into office and forgo a trip to Guyana—or was it Suriname, wherever the Caricom meeting was—where the agenda item was the Single Market and Economy.

We are advised, Mr. Speaker, not only did she not turn up, but there was no representative from Trinidad and Tobago. That meeting took a critical decision which—I am sure if a Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister was there, knowing how important the Caricom market is to us—I would have been surprised if any Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago would have agreed to shelve the initiative of the Single Market and Economy.

I do not have the time now to go into the details of the effect of that, but the bottom line is that we have ceded our leadership role in Caricom. Caricom is now on its deathbed as an effective regional marketing agent. Across Caricom now, people are saying that Caricom has never been as ineffective as it is now. The one bright light where we could have saved ourselves in Caricom—the single market and Economy—in the absence of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, whoever was there took a decision to shelve it because our Prime Minister gave priority to go into a fete in Trinidad to celebrate. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: I would have saved it.

Dr. K. Rowley: No, well she might not have saved it, but at least she might have made the intervention that was required to bring leadership. I am accusing the Prime Minister of ceding Caricom leadership. [*Laughter*] Ceding it. Trinidad and Tobago was a leader in Caricom; in fact, more so than Jamaica, and we have more to lose because our manufacturing sector has more invested in it and, therefore, it was a reckless act on the part of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, in this crime period, the Prime Minister encourages the Attorney General to lead a charge about hanging as a response to crime. And what does she do? She invites into her Cabinet an avowed abolitionist—[*Desk thumping*]*—*who she will not be able to get to vote for any Bill. Bills are coming to the Parliament to be voted upon. While she wants to hold a rope to the neck of the Opposition Leader, she invites voluntarily into her Cabinet, gives Cabinet rank to a person who says that she is an avowed abolitionist. What kind of thinking is that? People under your control who are abolitionist you pick them for your team, but you want to tell the Opposition how to vote. [*Desk thumping*]

She chose not to deal with the recommendation from the Minister of Works, or whoever else, about the CAL chairman. She chose, instead, to break the portfolio into two and she looked around the whole country for somebody to take up the portfolio of Transport, and of all the 1.3 million of us the only person she could choose as Minister of Transport is a gentleman whose only claim to fame is divisiveness. He made a reputation—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please. I have ruled earlier on, Leader of the Opposition, that a Member who is not from this House, a Senator, we should not really be making reference to another Member, and especially imputing improper motives.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I move on. The Prime Minister, in the raging exposés of the Clico experience—I mean, the Minister of Finance, if he had the time tonight he could have given us all the stories about what the Clico development meant, and who did what where we are seeing in the enquiry.

3.30 p.m.

In the middle of that, the Prime Minister wants to appoint a Minister of Planning and the Economy, and who does she pick to appoint as the Minister of Planning and the Economy for Trinidad and Tobago? A former director of part of

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the Clico empire who made his name as a member of the audit committee in a company that almost crashed our economy, and accepts no responsibility for it, and tells us that it is only when the ship was about to hit the rock, he went like Nicodemus in the middle of the night to seek a private meeting with the Governor of the Central Bank to tell them that we are about to crash. That is the person who the Prime Minister picks to be the Minister of Planning and the Economy for Trinidad and Tobago.

What is it with this Prime Minister and picking people? A good leader is judged largely by the people you select. [*Desk thumping*] At another day, at another time and at another place, you may find no argument with me on that [*Laughter*] but, unlike me, the Member for Siparia, the Prime Minister, apparently does not accept and will take no responsibility for her selections. I know if I had mentioned Reshmi, they would say I am calling it too often, but that is the pinnacle of the irresponsibility. The Prime Minister, having selected that Minister of Finance—

Mr. Speaker: I want to appeal to all Members, the Hansard reporters have indicated to me that they are having difficulties in recording speeches and statements, so I ask Members to really give the Leader of the Opposition your complete attention, and assist the Hansard reporters in recording properly. Continue, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. K. Rowley: Having selected the person to become Minister of Planning and the Economy, you will find that we are going to dispose of a billion dollars of State assets at Invaders Bay, and the Minister of Planning and the Economy is saying that there are no procurement issues with that.

While he is saying that, the whole of Trinidad and Tobago knows that these bodies: the Association of Professional Engineers, the Trinidad and Tobago Contractors Association and the Trinidad and Tobago Society of Planners, Surveyors and Architects, have come together as the JCC and put pen to paper to take issue with the Government's illegal act of trying to dispose of a billion dollars worth of prime real estate at Invaders Bay.

The Minister of Planning and the Economy, who is driving this process, tells the country that there are no procurement issues, but he also tells us that something has gone to Cabinet, and the Cabinet has taken a decision. That means that the Prime Minister knows about it. The Prime Minister knows about this objection. She knows the questionable record of the man she has hired. He told us the Cabinet has taken a decision. I am sorry that the Attorney General is, maybe,

not in a position to say whether, in fact, he has received legal advice which confirms what everybody is saying—the JCC and the Opposition—that the action with respect to the procurement process at Invaders Bay is illegal, and if it is illegal, why—

Mr. Ramlogan SC: Will you give way so that I can clarify? I would like to inform that the Office of the Attorney General did, in fact, seek legal advice, and the legal advice is that the process employed with respect to the Invaders Bay, thus far, is perfectly legal and is within the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Dr. K. Rowley: So, we have that on the record. In other words, he has got legal advice that says that a Ministry could proceed to carry out procurement process without the Central Tenders Board Act being observed. [*Crosstalk*] It is on the record. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He said “thus far”, do not misinterpret him.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I said “thus far”.

Dr. K. Rowley: Look, listen, look—[*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker—[*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are putting words in his mouth.

Dr. Moonilal: “You tried a smart thing.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Withdraw that remark, please.

Mr. Roberts: Withdrawn, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Let us maintain the dignity and the decorum of this honourable House, please, and show respect for each other. Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the “thus far”. That makes it more laughable, thus far. The same approach is being taken with the procurement for a rapid rail from Port of Spain to Arima where the Minister of Transport, famously hired by the Prime Minister—I have just questioned his hiring—is saying publicly that this is not a procurement process. A procurement process starts here and it ends up there.

We take issue with the Minister saying that what they have invited from the public and run by the Ministry is not part of a procurement process. We are saying he is wrong, and we are saying that it is an attempt to control the process outside

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of the requirement of the Central Tenders Board Act. If he proceeds thus far, like they were at Invaders Bay thus far, we could end up with another illegality when they reach as far as they want to go.

Mr. Speaker, if we are accepting this kind of procurement arrangement at Invaders Bay—a billion dollars of real estate; the rapid rail, billion-dollar project; I want to draw to your attention a very important development on the horizon, and that is the Trinmar matter which has been raised by the union, the OWTU. The OWTU has raised the question about Trinmar. I do not know if you know, Mr. Speaker, that Trinmar's lease is coming up at the end of the year. The question is, the Government is going to have to take a decision on the future of Trinmar.

If this Government is allowed to practise procurement and disposal in this questionable way or this illegal way, thus far—suppose this Government proceeds to treat with the Trinmar acreage by way of process in the same way, then there is the potential for Trinmar acreage to be opened up to new operators or owners. I want to take a PNM position here now on Trinmar, and our position is this: that Trinmar is to remain whole and in the hands of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, Mr. Speaker, as the gas market begins to look less rosy, the time is likely to come when oil will become king again, and we need to maximize our oil production and our ownership of oil acreage, and Trinmar is our best oil acreage. We are not prepared to trust this Government and its processes that are questionable, and get up one morning—the same way you got up one morning after two years or more of crying down rapid rail, denouncing it, and we see invitations for a rapid rail. [*Crosstalk*] It is same thing—mass transit.

We do not want to wake up one morning and see that Trinmar is in the same position as the rapid rail, light rail or whatever you want to call it. We do not trust this Government and we would like the Government to make a position public as soon as possible, so that the concerns of the OWTU and all of us who would like Trinmar to remain in the State's asset base know that this is a non-issue. Right now, it is an issue and we do not trust the Government.

The process being used at Invaders Bay, which is dispensing of the State's assets, could easily be made to apply to Trinmar and the Government is so boldfaced. They have done other boldfaced things because they are saying, "If we want to do it, we can do it and if you do not like it, go lump it." If they chose to do that with Trinmar then we would be hurt. Mr. Speaker, I would like the Government to respond to that.

The Prime Minister, acting in the capacity as Prime Minister, was instrumental in using her Cabinet to make an illegal appointment to Director of the FIU, and came here and defended it to the hilt. So she has made a career of defending wrongdoing as Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

In fact, my friend from St. Joseph, who did not have his hat this evening—the old, long pointed hat—told me in that debate, “You are a geologist, do not get involved in lawyers’ business.” Wrong!—the illegal appointment of the head of the FIU—but the Prime Minister held her ground all the way, including the use of her prime ministerial veto to maintain her illegal appointment. If I have no confidence in the Prime Minister, that is a good reason not to have confidence in her, [*Desk thumping*] because she has shown not to act fairly to want to act illegally with her Cabinet, and she does not care who she hurts.

The Prime Minister is also open to “vaps”—do you know “vaps”, V-A-P-S?—and she likes celebrations. She likes the Santa Claus role. She likes to play “mama mia”, to give and bring things. I had an aunt like her. [*Laughter*] I use to love when she comes home, because she is always bringing something; she is always bringing something.

Dr. Moonilal: You are not her favourite nephew.

Dr. K. Rowley: So she goes to San Fernando or wherever it was, and makes an announcement to the crowd’s delight. I am sure half of them did not hear what she said, but it was part of the jollification. She announces: all pensioners—not all, I do not want to be wrong—pensioners will get their WASA bills and their T&TEC bills paid. And I said, “What madness is this, does this lady know what she is talking about?”

When she said pensioners—she took the adulations and the accolades—free water, free electricity, but by the next morning—that was the night—you had to have the Minister of Public Utilities jumping up to backtrack the Prime Minister to say, “No, no, it is not pensioners.” It is those few pensioners who are deemed to be mendicants or under the public line in some way, and who are already in a poverty support programme, those are the ones who will get support for light bill or T&TEC bill.

That is not what the Prime Minister said; that is not what she even meant, because the way she presented it with such great glorification: “Pensioners getting water rate paid, pensioners getting T&TEC bills paid”, it was her intention to do it across the board, but by the next morning, it had to be corrected. Sanity had entered and certain things had worn off, and it now turns out to be only for those pensioners who are already in a support programme.

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So it is that kind of “vaps”, Mr. Speaker—that is the kind of thing that causes me to say, we do not have any confidence in the competence of the Prime Minister [*Desk thumping*] because no competent Prime Minister would have got up and made a position like that and had to be corrected within 24 hours.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister also has a habit of wanting to encourage wrongdoing, if it serves her purpose. My friend, the MP from Mayaro, got up in this House when I raised the matter of the \$2 million payment to artistes. I gave way for him to speak and he said it was not a campaign promise; it was never mentioned in the campaign. It was only when they came into Government they decided that for 2011, for that year they would give a fillip to the artistes by giving them this one-off \$2 million. The Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism put that on *Hansard* here.

The Prime Minister was there. The Prime Minister must have known that that was not true because the record will show that that offer was made before the election and it was made by the Prime Minister herself. And rather than correct him or correct the record, she allowed the Minister to put that on the record, and like the pension, pensioners of today feel that they are being treated in all kinds of ways. They are waiting for this money they were promised. Some were told to put money in a bank and wait for payments to be made. They are paying bank charges on their little “cacada”. People are waiting for the Government to commit itself and give them what was offered in the pension arrangements. That is not being done. I sat here in amazement and watched a Minister say that on *Hansard* and the person who said it took no umbrage.

I have two minutes left. I want to correct something, Mr. Speaker. On this occasion, I think I must do this. I owe the Attorney General an apology. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, I was keeping my file here. You know, I came to this House—and I crave your indulgence for an extra minute just to correct this when my time comes.

I went to the House in the other place one day and I told the Parliament that I went to New York and on my visit to New York, I met with some nationals at the Mission—I think I used the word Mission, and in conversing with them, a couple of them said to me that the Attorney General—and Attorney General was my interpretation—they said Mr. Ramlogan had been there to New York and he had made enquiries about the racial composition of the Mission and there were objections to that on the grounds that, one, I did not go to New York, and two, I did not go to the Mission, and three, nobody told me that.

The Attorney General responded by saying he did not go to New York, that he had never been to New York—I think that is what he said—and that he never said that. I would like to correct the record, Mr. Speaker, because it needs correction on both sides. I had the matter investigated and I had my files waiting to go to the—contrary to what was said here today, that I escaped—

Dr. R. Moonilal: Privileges. I said it.

Dr. K. Rowley: I escaped the Privileges Committee. I had my two witnesses: the Member of Parliament on my right here, the Member for Port of Spain South, and on my left the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. They were present with me when this was said to me in New York.

I got my investigation to—let me tell you what the record says, and I have here an email which I would like to read into the record.

Hon. Member: Do not get yourself in more trouble.

Dr. K. Rowley: This email, and I want to read this, Mr. Speaker. It says—I am reading here an email addressed to my secretary, who had been in touch with this person.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: From whom? Who is the person?

Dr. K. Rowley: I will tell you. This email is from Dr. Harold Robertson. He was the person in Washington. Let me read the email:

With utmost respect, it may be useful to begin by noting that Trinidad and Tobago operates four diplomatic offices in the USA. These are T&T Embassy to the US Mission in Washington; T&T Consulate in New York; Consulate Miami; T&T Permanent Mission United Nations, located—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up, but I will give you a few seconds to just wind up.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

—Lexington Avenue; the consulate in—let me read it, this is what he is saying:

It is possible that Dr. Rowley may have had some interlocution with members of staff who might have attended his public meeting held at Medgar Evers on Friday, November 5th. I can state with certainty that Dr. Rowley and his team attended a breakfast function at the [*Inaudible*] on the morning of Saturday 6th...

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So I was in New York.

...during which Dr. Rowley and myself engaged in a private tête-à-tête in the course of which I recall mentioning to him the gist of a conversation which I had with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Suruj Rambachan...

[*Crosstalk*]

Let me finish.

...in the course of which the Minister—

[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, if you can just wrap up now. You are already a minute and a half behind time, just wrap up.

Mr. Roberts: Say sorry; no mistake. You lied.

Dr. K. Rowley: What I am trying to say—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, could you withdraw that, please?

Mr. Roberts: Withdrawn, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: And please, please. Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, what the email I have here shows is that: Yes, I was in New York; yes, the Attorney General had been in New York; it was not the Attorney General Ramlogan who had said that—it was not—it was the Foreign Affairs Minister Rambachan who had raised with Dr. Robertson the question of the ratio of Indians in the office, and that is all I am saying. And I was prepared to go before the Privileges Committee with my witnesses and Dr. Robertson's position to clarify this matter.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: That is not an apology. Shame.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. In accordance with Standing Order, 34(2) of the Standing Orders of the House, I wish to conclude the debate on this Motion. And if I may, Mr. Speaker, because the hon. Member for Diego Martin West raised something from the *Mirror* newspaper at the start talking about who will close the debate and

about democracy, and so on, and breach of Standing Orders, the Standing Order is very clear. It says:

“A Minister or a Parliamentary Secretary may conclude a debate on any motion which is critical of the Government, or reflects adversely on or is calculated to bring discredit upon the Government or an Officer thereof.”

So this Motion falls squarely within Standing Order 34(2) and in accordance with it, I will close this debate.

Mr. Speaker, further, there is precedent in this very House, by the Government of which the hon. Member for Diego Martin West was a member, and in 1995 then Opposition Leader Basdeo Panday—the *Hansard* will record it, Sir, and I will not argue with you on it. You quoted from the *Mirror* about who will close the debate.

Dr. Rowley: No.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: In 1995, the then Opposition Leader, Basdeo Panday, moved a No Confidence Motion in Prime Minister Patrick Manning. There again Mr. Manning concluded on June 15, 1995. On that Motion being closed by the Prime Minister and not by the mover of the Motion, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West voted. So he was present and is well aware of this precedent.

Again, in 2008, September 12, a Motion was moved by Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj in then Prime Minister Manning. Mr. Manning closed it instead of the mover of the Motion and, of course, the votes were taken. I do believe the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, and many of us who were in the House, voted. So there is precedent for this. I just want to clear that up as we move forward into this debate.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion, in my respectful view, has brought forth a lot of debate from both sides of the House, and so I want to thank all Members of this House for their contributions yesterday and today.

Mr. Speaker, if I look as though I am wearing the same clothing as from yesterday lunchtime, I am wearing the same clothing, because like everybody else in the House, we have been here from yesterday, 26 and a half hours and we are wide awake. I want to thank all Members for their dedication and for their contributions to the House. [*Desk thumping*]

I do not think any of us got any sleep, so this is really the work of parliamentarians. This is historic, showing that this Motion was taken very

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seriously to be done with the urgency with which such a Motion deserves. So I thank all Members.

To my own matadors on this side, I want to say your contributions were well researched and informative. I thank you for your overwhelming support and I thank you as well for the depth and comprehension of the contributions you made in the debate.

Mr. Speaker, where do we begin? It would take me quite some time to answer the allegations—and I will say baseless allegations—being made by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and other Members on the other side, and so what I will attempt to do is to put them into categories so that I can deal with them in the limited time or the time constraints which we have under the Standing Orders.

Firstly, let me respond to a few of the matters raised by the Member just in his winding-up here. The hon. Member has the audacity to talk about persons picked by my good self as the Prime Minister. He talks about picking people, and so I would ask him to remember, and I did so, and he admitted I may be right, that the hon. Member was the person who picked the mayor of Port of Spain as his alderman and as his mayor.

Dr. Rowley: Would you—

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: You had two bites at the cherry, I have only one. You spoke at the beginning and you spoke at the end.

Dr. Rowley: In the spirit of the debate—

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Not in the spirit of what happened during this debate, Sir. You see again, how do we believe this Member? He first said that I may be right. Now when I say no, I am not giving way, he says I am wrong. It is in the same way the hon. Member accused the hon. Attorney General of certain actions and behaviour and very, very serious allegations, imputing racist activity on the part of the Attorney General. Then he comes here today and says, “I was wrong.” And then he says, “Well, okay, it was not the hon. Attorney General, it is somebody else now, Minister of Foreign Affairs.”

If he was wrong on the first occasion, I respectfully submit he is wrong on the second occasion. We cannot believe him. Look, he demonstrates it again today when he says, firstly, “You are right,” and then he immediately withdraws it and says, “You are wrong.” We cannot believe the hon. Leader of the Opposition, in my respectful view. He says one thing today and another thing tomorrow. He blows hot and cold.

So at one time his former leader was the greatest hero on earth, but when he got fired, his former hero became his worst enemy, and he did everything he could to bring down his former leader and the Government of which he was once a part. That is the person; that is the character we are dealing with. And when he talks about picking people, he was picked by the Member for San Fernando East, the then Prime Minister. And hear what this Member had to say, his leader, the *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, October 21, 2009—and some others have already said it, but let me remind this honourable House:

“I see hate. I see bitterness. I see acrimony. I see animosity. I see a man completely out of control.”

These are not my words. These are the words of the man who picked him; his political guru picked him to be a Member of Parliament and picked him to be a Minister, and these are the words that are being said about him by the person who was his picker. He was the “pickee”. [*Laughter*] Then the quote continues:

That is the portrait of the man who could not get along with others in his own political family.

The quote continues:

And he wants to lead the nation?

The hon. Member for Oropouche East read the newspaper article quoting where the Member for Diego Martin West told some children, in fact, that he is ready to be Prime Minister.

Some persons may say he is the “wannabe” Prime Minister, and we will deal a little more with that in terms of how you get there; what you do to end up there. You certainly do not end up betraying your own family. That is not the way to do it. You do not betray your family in the way that he betrayed his political family.

But the Member for San Fernando East again, same *Hansard*, October 21, 2009 said:

“The minute you oppose my good friend, he gets very, very angry and if you oppose him strongly, he becomes a raging bull. That is what this Government is not prepared to accept.”

Those are not my words, not our words. And what we have seen happening here, Mr. Speaker, we have seen—yes, he said he had enough. For 12 years, he had to put up with this kind of behaviour. So that is where we are talking about the persons being picked. The man, as I said, who was his picker is the man who complained bitterly about him.

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So I find it very ludicrous for him to come here today to be speaking to me, speaking to us about the persons picked by us. His own hon. Senator in the other place, I am advised, was a director of CIB and yet he comes here to speak about the Senator, the Minister of Planning and the Economy, as being with that group as well. So it is okay for him to be the picker and pick Mr. Lee Sing, or to be the picker and pick someone who was involved in CIB as his Senator, and then he comes here to deal with someone picked by us.

I have every confidence in my Ministers and I deal with the issues as they arise on a day-to-day basis. I will return to that. So I am saying the whole issue of “pickee” and “picker”—I was saying to members I thank you for your contributions, and so on, and let us say now, at the end of the day, what did we see here? At the end of a day and a night, 26 and a half hours, what was to be the much anticipated bombshell turned into what some have termed eggshells.

In fact, the hon. Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism said it became a conch shell. In my respectful view, it became a blank shell, a cracked shell and they all became shellshocked at the end of the day, his own Members—blank shell.

Because, what has happened? When we heard the vacuous contributions coming on that side, the rehash, rehash and rehash of the same things, and not just rehashing what had gone in the past, but each of them getting up and rehashing the same points, the same things over and over and over—same issues, Mr. Speaker. What has the nation been put on pause for? That is what the Opposition Leader has come to? Is that what he has come to? Is that what the PNM has been reduced to?

Mr. Speaker, in a sense, there is very little to answer in this debate, and the Ministers and MPs have done very, very well in that regard. The only thing, I respectfully submit, which has come out of this frivolous and senseless exercise, and the wastage of Parliament’s time, is that the Leader of the Opposition has shown that he cannot restore confidence in the party he successfully sought to betray in his quest for power. That has come out in this Motion. That has come out in the contributions.

We all came here with great anticipation to hear the revelations that he and the others would make. Instead, we got what Mr. Lee Sing said, and I quote again from his letter. He said, he predicted, Mr. Speaker, a crushing defeat in which he said the PNM would, in his words, “not only be outgunned but also outmatched”. That clearly has happened here as every speaker on this side demolished the

arguments that they brought. [*Desk thumping*] So at the end of the day, the only person in whom no confidence was expressed has been the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the very man who brought this Motion to the Parliament.

Let us examine some of the things that he said and let us look at the limbs on which he premised his Motion and his presentation, and we will see that at every stage of the contributions, not an iota of evidence, not an iota of evidence was provided to this House. Instead, what we had were spurious and wild allegations. So, when he talks about gross incompetence; the failure to stimulate the economy; unwillingness to act in the best interest of the people—and what I find really amazing is when the Motion claims that there has been “encouragement of wrongdoing in the conduct of the national affairs of Trinidad and Tobago”. Not an iota of evidence; not a shred of evidence.

It is all well and good to make allegations—and we have seen in this House and in other places allegations are made—but unless they are substantiated with evidence, then they are baseless, without foundation, totally frivolous, vexatious and without merit—doomed to fail. This Motion was doomed to fail at the start, as many Members said, and I will come back to some of those allegations and ask: where is the evidence?

When you come with a Motion of No Confidence, you are coming, as our Members said, you are coming with a very serious Motion; you are coming to unseat a Government; you are coming to have a Prime Minister resign or be forced to dissolve the Parliament or to have the President dissolve the Parliament. In other words, you are seeking to unseat a Government, and you cannot do that without evidence. And you cannot come into the Parliament and continue to make wild allegations.

They are on fishing expeditions and expect that they will succeed. But then the Member, even after the Motion was filed, had started to “back-back”, had started to back-pedal, and today again he continued in that vein, “Well, you know, we didn’t really come to do ‘X’ or ‘Y’, we just came to get an accounting of the stewardship of the Government.”

That is not what a Motion of No Confidence is about. A Motion of No Confidence is designed, the aims, under section 77(1) of the Constitution to do what? To remove a sitting Prime Minister and/or to remove a sitting Government. What evidence has been provided here, to say that it is sufficient to remove a sitting Prime Minister and/or to remove a sitting Government? I am saying, none—spurious allegations coming to this House—none.

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Imagine somebody stands here and says, “You know what, fire the Prime Minister with this Motion of No Confidence.” Why? Because there is some issue in boxing; some boxing issue, so fire the Prime Minister. Motion of No Confidence.

Every trivia: somebody changes a name, fire the Prime Minister; no confidence in the Government. Somebody is driving his wife’s car, the wife is an MP, and the car has a sticker on it, fire the Prime Minister. No confidence in the Prime Minister—spurious, ludicrous and no evidence to substantiate the limbs put in the Motion.

We can decimate every one of these systematically, as has been done by the Members on this side who spoke, and so the raging bull was gored and gored over again by the matadors on this side, by the MPs and the Ministers.

So early in his presentation the hon. Member said, “I expected a reaction from the Government. What I did not expect was panic. I expected a reaction from the Government. What I did not expect was panic.”

Let us deal with those two issues. The hon. Member did not clarify what he meant or did not tell us what was the reaction he expected. He told us what he did not expect. So, I do not think—having not explained that, it is clear to me, given the track record and the history, that the hon Member thought our reaction would be that we would cower in fear; that we would become petrified; and that we would do the foolish thing that they did when they were faced with the No Confidence Motion I filed in 2010, and that is, dissolve the Parliament and call elections.

Mr. Manning called that election in 2010 when I filed the No Confidence Motion in him, and you will recall he dissolved the Parliament on the day just before the Motion was to be debated in the Parliament. So, we can only surmise that there were two reasons: one is what the hon. Member for Oropouche East has disclosed, that there was a conspiracy for a palace coup; and/or secondly, that he was petrified to face the revelations that were to come in the Motion; on those two grounds.

So the reaction this Opposition probably expected from us is that we would run and hide; that we would be frightened; we would live in fear of revelations they may bring in the Parliament or that there will be a palace coup on this side. Hon. Speaker, as somebody said, that and a green donkey you will not see. There is no palace coup in the People’s Partnership. There is no conspiracy of a palace coup in the Partnership. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I have no such fear. I have no fear of anyone but God. I am not afraid. I have always said that my hands are clean and my heart is pure, and so I am not afraid of any one of them and of the revelations they may come with, trumped up or otherwise. I am not afraid. I have said it before and I say it again today, I will take on any one of you, any time, any place, anywhere. I am not afraid; I am not afraid.

The reaction they expected did not happen. It did not happen. And, Mr. Speaker, it is clear we did not panic. At no point in time did the Government Members panic, whether it was when the Motion was filed; whether it was while we were waiting throughout the Carnival period for it to come up, pending. And then, even in these last 26-plus hours, whilst we were here debating, at no time did we panic; at no time did we panic, Mr. Speaker.

We took this Motion of No Confidence with the seriousness that such a Motion deserves. We said that we were put here because of the people's power. We sit here in this Parliament and as a Government only because of the power of the people. We did not land from the sky. We did not propel ourselves on our own flight. We were put here on the winds pushed forward by the people's power in our country. So, the only thing that we should do before we could come back to this House to defend this Motion was to go back to the people; go back to the people.

I have always said again, "Vox populi vox dei", the voice of the people is the voice of God. And when I say we put God first, you will understand what I mean. We must always go back to our moorings. We would always go back to the base from which we came and that is the base of the people's power and that is what we did during the week. We went across the country; we held meetings at very short notice and we interacted with the people of this land and everywhere we went, the support was overwhelming, overwhelming.

Let us thank all those who showed that confidence in this Government, who came out in their numbers, Mr. Speaker, through rain and sun, night and day, the thousands who came out and those who have been sending the texts and the emails and the BBMs, and the telephone calls, and so on. We want to thank them very much because, as I said, we could never be sitting here or in Government without the support of the people. We thank them very much. [*Desk thumping*]

So, armed with the renewed mandate, if we want to put it that way, armed with a renewed mandate from the people, we came into this Parliament to hear the revelations that would substantiate the allegations in a Motion of No Confidence.

4.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, as I listened—I want to say I listened to the entire debate, whether I was in the Chamber or outside the Chamber. Thanks to the technology, I can listen and hear in my office upstairs. Thanks to you, hon. Speaker for providing that facility for us in the office.

I listened to the entire debate and at times I felt like Alice in Wonderland, and I stood in my shoes and I wondered. As it continued, I wondered and I wondered even more because all that was revealed was the mumbling, the fumbling, the jumbling, the stumbling and the bungling of the hon. Leader of the Opposition throughout what was, perhaps, the weakest presentation in history, on one of the most substantive Motions which can be brought to this Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

To the Members of the Opposition, I say you must have held your heads in embarrassment and frustration. I empathize with you. I empathize with you, but then I listened to you, Members of the Opposition, and all I witnessed was more of the same mumbling, fumbling, jumbling, stumbling and bungling as you did not substantiate, with evidence, the allegations contained in your Motion.

Mr. Speaker, at times they fabricated issues; they provided no evidence to support their allegations, and so, listening to the debate I said, I stood in my shoes and wondered because I found it impossible to determine exactly what was the basis for the Motion of No Confidence. As I said, there was not an iota of evidence. There was not a shred of evidence to substantiate these allegations—very serious allegations—which were made in the Motion itself as filed. Let us look at some of the reasons put forward by the hon. Member for saying that he was seeking to substantiate the Motion. Let us look at some of those.

The hon. Member, Leader of the Opposition, spoke about crime. He talked about the dismantling of the PNM's security infrastructure, and we have heard that ad nauseam; ad nauseam in this Parliament for the past two years—dismantling of the national security infrastructure of the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question in anyone's mind that that PNM's national security infrastructure for fighting crime failed abysmally. [*Desk thumping*] Failed. Failed. [*Desk thumping*] So, why do you want us to keep something that was an obvious failure? How do you know it was a failure? Just look at the crime statistics over the years under the PNM. Was it going down? Was the crime going down? It was the exact opposite, it was going up. It was going up. [*Interruption*] Yes, as the sons and daughters of our land were being buried. That is what was

happening under the PNM; more and more of them, as their blood was being spilled on the soil of this land. Crime kept going up and you want us to keep that infrastructure which allowed for the crime to go up.

Let us look at the statistics; I am not making this up, the numbers will show it. Serious crimes and murders, let us take murders: When we demitted office from the last administration, 2001, there had been 151 murders; 2002, 179; 2003, under the PNM, 229; 2004, under the PNM, 260; 2005, under the PNM, 386; 2006, under the PNM, 368; 2007, under the PNM, 395; 2008, 550; 2009, 509; in 2010, 485. Why? Because the People's Partnership had come into office. In 2011, it went down to 354. [*Desk thumping*] Every murder is an abomination; every single one is a pain for us in this country and we will do everything we can to continue to bring these numbers down. It is clear; the trend is clear that under the People's Partnership we have started to bring the murders down. [*Desk thumping*]

The same is clear with the serious crimes. Under the PNM, again, in 2003, 16,890; 2004, 16,387; 2005, 17,989; 2006, 19,565; 2007, 19,040; 2008, 18,739; 2009, 21,933; then look at 2010, dropped to 20,126. By the time we got to 2011 down to 15,000. [*Desk thumping*] They say we are dismantling the infrastructure; why would we keep that when the crime rates were going up? Why would we keep it? And, with that dismantling that you are so bitterly complaining about—so bitterly complaining about—we are seeing decreases. That, of course, coupled with other initiatives in national security and in the social sector.

Mr. Speaker, it is an oxymoron, in my respectful view, that you can say that you had these units operating to uphold the law; purporting to say they are being paid to uphold the law—to enforce law and order—when they themselves were illegal. They were illegal, according to the laws of this land; the SAUTT and the SIA—the SIA, which was found spying illegally on people, and also illegally established. Those are the things we are disbanding because—why? They are against the law of the land. Why would you defend something that is lawless? Why would you want to uphold and keep something that was lawless? In addition, of course, the crime rates were going up, under them. They were not going down.

Yes, we disbanded them. We are dismantling them. They were paying huge sums to foreign officers who were all retirees. You had all these retirees and were paying them. You were demoralizing the local police force because, guess what? You were giving these elite, unlawful, illegal members of that unit \$5,000 bonus on top of whatever salaries they were getting. Approximately 710 persons in SAUTT; \$1.8 billion was spent from the inception; \$400 million per year and you were starving the regular police service, who were out there in the line of duty—

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Minister Sandy spoke about it—out in the frontline putting their lives at risk. You were depriving them of that \$400 million per year; instead, putting it into this elite force of 710 persons; a police force of over 6,000, you were taking this money and pumping it into this illegal force.

Why should we keep something that was not working? Why should we keep something that was illegal? That is what we have seen. The results—that coupled with other initiatives—we have seen crime dropping; the rates are lower. Murders I have mentioned. I have mentioned the serious crimes. Burglaries and break-ins fell: 5,765 in 2009, down to 4,221 for last year, a 26 per cent drop. [*Desk thumping*] Woundings and shootings: 689 in 2009, fell to 535 in 2011, a drop of 22 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] I have spoken already of the murders and serious crimes. Narcotic offences fell by 12 per cent between 2009 and 2011. So, crime is falling.

The hon. Member for Laventille West made a most strange statement when he said that it would naturally fall, anyhow. [*Laughter*] A natural fall. [*Interruption*] Sorry, a natural flow. In other words, let us take that, first, at face value. The first thing is that the hon. Member has admitted that the crime rates dropped; they were reducing. [*Desk thumping*] So, they are speaking from both sides of their mouths because, some are saying not reduced, the hon. Member has admitted that there was a natural flow, it reduced. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, still speaking on this issue of crime, we heard a lot of hype about the state of emergency. I really would like to point out that if the then Government, Members on the other side, had implemented the constitutional weapon that they had in their hands, that is to say, a state of emergency—we did not subvert the law, this is a weapon given by the framers of the Constitution to us in the country to deal with situations such as those that we were experiencing when we established the state of emergency. Should they have utilized that weapon we may not have been where we were in 2010, where we are still now, trying to dig ourselves out of the hole of criminality into which they plunged us.

I want to quote, Mr. Speaker, from the *Newsday* of Tuesday, July 12, 2005. First of all, let me back up a bit on this issue and say, should they have utilized the constitutional weapon, we may have been better off as we saw when we instituted the state of emergency; people would be alive today. Many more would have been alive today. We may have started to arrest the criminality from since then.

First of all, you would recall that many persons had been calling for the state of emergency. Many commentators and persons in the business community, lawyers—

Hon. Member: The Ken Gordon committee they had established.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Ken Gordon committee that they had established to help put suggestions in the fight against crime—and others—had asked, “Use this constitutional weapon; use the weapon.” They refused, Mr. Speaker. We would have to find out why and, maybe, we can track back their pattern, their modus operandi—that they wined and dined with the elders, the criminal elements and so on. Maybe that is why they did not want to do it.

Hon. Member: Community leaders.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Community leaders. Maybe that is why. Their friends and family in those communities; the elders. That is why they probably did not want to go after them.

So, I come back to that point, the *Newsday*, July 12, 2005:

...just four days after the worst bomb attack in London since World War II Trinidad experienced its own yesterday afternoon when a device exploded on lower Frederick Street, Port of Spain injuring 14 persons, two of whom are listed in critical condition.

You recall that bomb explosion in Port of Spain. Was that the one where the then Prime Minister said he knew who Mr. Big was?

Up to today we could never find out from him who was Mr. Big and why no action was taken against Mr. Big. That is not the issue right now; that is part of it, but the other part is this: I am advised that emergency powers regulations were drafted following upon this bomb incident. They were drafted; they were ready to call a state of emergency after the bombings because they drafted the documents; had them ready in the Attorney General’s office but they were too afraid; or they were reluctant to do it because they did not have the courage to do what was necessary to take the hard decisions. [*Desk thumping*] They did not have the courage. [*Desk thumping*]

That is why, as I say, I would come back to this point. I have been willing to take hard decisions; they may not always be popular decisions but, when it is necessary, when it has been necessary, I will take hard decisions in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

So, we have talked about the state of emergency on several occasions in this House; we have dealt with many of the issues they have raised, but I wanted to bring that new piece of information to this Chamber.

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Again, in terms of national security matters, the hon. Members raised some other matters, but hon. Minister Brigadier John Sandy gave a comprehensive account of the initiatives in crime fighting, and I would not want to repeat that except to say I endorse the comments that the hon. Minister made.

4.30 p.m.

Let us turn now to another issue and this has to do with the allegations made by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, which was the supposed “bombshell”, turned out to be an eggshell, conch shell, and then a spent shell, completely.

Dr. Moonilal: Empty shell!

Mr. Roberts: Empty shell!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: It was an empty shell, as well. It was the allegation that a young lady had changed her name. I have never known that there is something illegal in changing your name. It is a legal process through a deed poll.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you know normally at this time we break for tea. Having regard to the importance of this exercise, I would seek your indulgence to suspend the tea break and we go to the completion of this exercise. Do I have your agreement?

Assent indicated.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the House. Allegations were made that somebody changed their name and as I said, show me where there is any illegality in that. Minister Warner told me that he himself has used a deed poll. That does not trouble me too much about somebody changing their name. I cannot see how that means that you have no confidence in me because somebody changed their name. [*Laughter*] It is nonsense, it is ludicrous and it is foolishness.

What worries me is the scurrilous allegation made to tarnish my character—in an attempt to tarnish my character on something that is a total falsehood, and that is to say the hon. Member said that if for some reason I was being blackmailed. Mr. Speaker, nothing is further from the truth. I am not now nor have I ever been blackmailed in my life. There is nothing to blackmail me with. As I said before, and I will do it again: my hands are clean, my heart is pure. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me put paid to that ludicrous allegation, again, made without an iota of evidence. So persons can come and stand here under the cover of parliamentary

privilege and make these allegations without substance. That is why the hon. Member did not go outside and make them, you know. That is why the hon. Member used the cover of parliamentary privilege to hide under the cloak of parliamentary privilege because should he go out and make these spurious allegations, you know I have court clothes.

Dr. Moonilal: “He would lose he shirt on he back if he do that.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: You would not escape with making these statements outside the Parliament. That is why when the hon. Member was talking about, it is not the AG and it is another Minister, and so on, made these statements in New York. That is why I am saying the time is running out and he is begging for extra time. Say it outside! If you are convinced it is true, make your statements outside and face the consequences where Members would have redress in the courts of law and in the justice system of our country.

The hon. Member spoke about the economy, which was another limb: a failure to stimulate the economy and create sustainable jobs, and so on—no confidence in the Prime Minister, fire the Prime Minister because of the economy. Mr. Speaker, I have seen, I have listened, not an iota of evidence to substantiate the allegation which was in part (b) of the Motion. The hon. Minister, Winston Dookeran, has given us a comprehensive review of the state of the economy, and if I may quote not from the hon. Minister but from the latest brief received from the Central Bank dated March 02, 2012. This brief was sent to the Minister of Finance from the Central Bank yesterday, and I quote:

After an extended economic slowdown that lasted three years, some evidence is emerging that the economy has begun to turn the corner. Commercial bank credit to the business sector has expanded steadily since mid-2011 as the Government’s capital programme gained traction. International reserves remain high, there have been additions to the Heritage and Stabilization Fund and the public debt is still at comfortable levels.

Does that sound like an economy on the downslide? Does that sound like an economy that is sliding and falling?

We have said that this Government, under the Minister of Finance, that we have been able to stabilize the economy and we are poised for take-off. This is not me, this is not the hon. Minister Dookeran, this is not one of the Members sitting

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on this side, this is the report from the Central Bank. This is the brief from the Central Bank sent to the hon. Minister. It continues:

The financial sector, meanwhile, exhibits stability and there are important legislative enhancements in train to further bolster regulation and supervision of the sector. A modest recovery is anticipated in 2012, although the uncertain state of the international economy poses a downside risk.

This is the truth! This comes from the Central Bank. But here you are, you are stabilized and you are poised for growth, modest it may be. I think the Member spoke of what is happening in Greece—one of our Members here.

Hon. Member: Minister Dookeran.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Minister Dookeran. The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs spoke of it first and perhaps you did—what was happening in Greece and the downslide and other countries of the world. And here we are, this small nation, to some a dot on the map, holding its own; a little sardine in a sea of sharks. And why? Because of this Government: the Partnership Government and the Minister of Finance.

So, limb on economy? No evidence to substantiate that limb that we have failed to stimulate the economy and to create jobs. The hon. Minister Dookeran dealt with that. With respect to energy, again, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has dealt with that so I will not repeat, and I endorse, he was excellent. I endorse the statements that he made. [*Desk thumping*]

There are some matters I would want to deal with that were raised in the debate today. Let me just get this out of the way so that we can use the time otherwise. One limb of the Motion was that there was a consistent unwillingness to act in the best interest of the people. My Ministers here have talked about some of the things we have done, the achievements. We have been doing it over the past several days as well, so if time does not permit I will not detail those except to endorse what the Ministers have said, and to say that in every sector we have acted in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago given the circumstances in which we found ourselves. That limb, in my respectful view, again, falls by the wayside. The evidence is just not there to substantiate it. So, what do we do?

We come to the allegations. It is said that the just exercise of power—
[*Interruption*]

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of this House. Mr. Speaker, it is said that the just exercise of power is the hallmark of good leadership. In my respectful view, the Opposition has abused their power in this House by making spurious and unsubstantiated allegations, as I said, not an iota of evidence.

Several allegations have been made today by Members opposite. How do we deal with these? As a lawyer I am aware that we cannot take allegations as gospel, on face value. Indeed, that was what the hon. Member for Diego Martin West was complaining about when allegations were made against him in the Landate matter, that he had to be given due process, that you had to hear his side, the other side. That is how we operate in a civilized society. A person cannot just run up and say, "look, you are a thief" and that is it. As a leader I must take that one allegation, that one statement or two, and say, "okay, right, you are guilty", take your neck off, put you in jail. That is not my job. It is not my job. So if allegations—

Mr. Warner: Not us neither.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—No, well it cannot be my job. It must not be the job of any leader; we deal with due process. This is a society governed by the rule of law, and there must be due process where every side must be given a chance to be heard. [*Desk thumping*] So when you make allegations, how do we deal with them? They have to be investigated; there are two sides to every story. Indeed, there are some who say there are two sides to every allegation—there is that from the plaintiff, there is that from the defendant—and then there is the real truth. So you take it from both and that is what the system of justice seeks to do: you hear the contending sides and you sift out what is the real truth.

There have been many allegations in the past, and I want to remind you because this is why it is dangerous for anyone in a position of power, of authority, to rush out headlong to act on the basis of mere allegation without investigation and substantiation of those—that will be incompetence. That will be when you would have a chance to say you have no confidence in such a leader. You must act with due process within the rule of law in our country. As far as I know, and I know we are, we are a democracy committed to the rule of law and to justice.

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I remember in this House in my own case, I remember outside of this House allegations brought by Members of the PNM, Members of the Opposition. There was the allegation with respect to the head of the FIU, which was again mentioned here today, and how I acted and did not act. I exercised a constitutional veto; a veto power vested in me under the Constitution. I did not invent that, again created by the framers of the Constitution because they saw in their wisdom that this was a power to be given to the Prime Minister. Should we disagree with it, then we have to change it, but until it is changed, it is the law of the land and we must abide by the law of the land.

So, they brought a complaint to the Integrity Commission—they talked about it today but they do not remember; they conveniently will not remember what became of that complaint to the Integrity Commission. They brought to the Integrity Commission the complaint made by the Leader of the Opposition. He said that he had made a complaint that I had breached the Integrity in Public Life Act in some way because I exercised the veto power with respect to the appointment of the head of the FIU.

Coming today to mislead us again. Coming here to say that I interfered with the public service and appointments in the public service. That is not interference, that is the legal power I have under the Constitution. I do not have the letter with me because I did not expect him to raise it again today, but I was able to pull up the newspaper report, the letter that the Integrity Commission sent me on this matter. This is the *Newsday*, January 20, 2012, and I quote:

“THE INTEGRITY Commission yesterday told Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar she did not breach the Integrity in Public Life Act when she vetoed a recommendation by the Public Services Commission (PSC) last year to appoint Michelle Ann Austin as Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU).”—Cleared. [*Desk thumping*]

So allegation, allegation, allegation, no evidence, but when you are cleared they still do not come back and let people know; they stick to the old, they repeat it, they repeat the allegations, they repeat the untruths and they continue to do it in this House. I sit here and you know we cannot go through every word they say, but if you were able to do that you would see how many untruths they keep repeating in the House, they keep repeating ad nauseam in this House. I am just using some of them as examples.

The second one: allegations against me, again, all over in the public domain about my stay at a private home. Again, a complaint to the Integrity Commission,

what happened? Cleared by the Integrity Commission, no breach under the Integrity in Public Life Act—no breach. [*Desk thumping*]

4.45 p.m.

They then made a complaint about the contract granted to the Gopauls. No contract was actually awarded to the Gopauls. [*Interruption*] We will come to that in a minute. They again complained to the Integrity Commission. Guess what happened? No breach of the Integrity in Public Life Act on my part. So the allegations are made. [*Desk thumping*]

It is not sufficient to hang a man on an allegation; I come back again to due process and hearing the other side. On every occasion we responded immediately. We have done the requisite investigation of allegations made. We reported the findings to this House. Even sometimes when I think I may know the answer, I do the investigation; that is due process.

Look at what happened in this House: a most scandalous assassination of my character was attempted, when the former Prime Minister stood and displayed photographs of my house. You remember that? Do you remember that?

Hon. Members: Shameful!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: When we brought the Motion of Privilege, when I brought the personal explanation, “he run”. He would never come to the Committee of Privileges. For six months he did not come to a single meeting, when it was very clear that those allegations were spurious and without foundation and without evidence.

When you talk about encouraging wrongdoing in the conduct of national affairs, this is what you said I did; so fire me. I encouraged wrongdoing. Give me one instance in this House where you have shown evidence that I encouraged wrongdoing. Not one single example; not one single piece of evidence that I encouraged wrongdoing by officers. Not once did you say that, I told Minister X or Y to go and do this, do that, do the other, and keep it quiet.

Remember those scholarships under the hon. Minister? Give the scholarships but keep it quiet, written letters. No evidence whatsoever, but you come to this House. Fire me, because I encouraged wrongdoing, but you cannot give me one shred of evidence. That is abuse of the parliamentary privilege; character assassination in this Parliament, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I will show it up; no evidence.

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In fact, contrary to the allegations, my history has proven otherwise when it comes to wrongdoing. I am different from the Prime Minister they had before because when allegations of wrongdoing came to him, he did nothing; he did absolutely nothing. There were allegations with respect to airport contracts. You recall that? Minister, you recall that? What did I do? I encouraged it? Did I encourage any possible wrongdoing there? I stopped the contracts, pending investigation. I had them investigated when that allegation was made.

When there was a conflict of interest—and Minister Ramadharsingh has explained the difference between what happened with former Sen. Mary King—what did I do? Do you think that was an easy decision to take? But here we are, you stand with crocodile tears pouring, saying that I fired her because she was a woman. There was evidence that she made admissions. How could I stand in the face of that? It was a hard decision, hon. Member, so do not try to hide it under the rug. [*Interruption*] It was the Member for Arouca/Maloney I think. Fired her because she was a woman.

Your party is the party that would never put a woman to act as Prime Minister, much less elect one. [*Desk thumping*] You talk about women and that you care for women, what have you done? What has your party done? Tell me, what has the Leader of the Opposition done? What are his plans, programmes and policies for women and children in this country?

Hon. Members: None!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: In 20 months, what are his plans and programmes to fight crime in this country?

Hon. Members: None!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: In 20 months, what were his plans and programmes to stimulate the economy and grow jobs?

Hon. Members: None!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: All the things you accuse me of, you have no plans and programmes for any one of them. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal lifted up the documents to show you the *Medium Term Policy Framework*, the manifesto we started with, the budget statements. [*Crosstalk*] There were five documents. And you tell us we do not have plans and programmes? Those documents are laid in the Parliament, but as usual you do not read them.

Every contribution coming from the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney, “You have no plans. This Government has no plan. This Government has no policy.” If you pick up the *Hansard*, every single contribution ad nauseam, is a rerun; yet we presented those documents. But in 20 months never once has this Leader of the Opposition articulated his position and policy with respect to the sectors or the national economy as a whole or to the country.

Today is the only day he took a position about Trinmar.

Hon. Member: By accident.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Today he articulated a PNM policy position. *[Interruption]* On the hoof, yes. Where is your plan and programme for the energy sector? Where is it? *[Crosstalk]* You do not have any, but you accuse us.

Dr. Rowley: Do you want to borrow it?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Not at all, because whatever you had they all failed, so I do not want anything from you.

Hon. Member: “Keep that far from we.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Far from my record showing encouraging of wrongdoing, the opposite happened. I talked about the dismissal of former Sen. Mary King when there was evidence of a conflict of interest.

When I had to—*[Interruption]* Tell us about now? I am talking about now. What do you think I am talking about? That did not happen in the PNM time; that happened under the People’s Partnership, under this Government. It happened now. We are talking about now.

When we had to do the Cabinet realignment, it was not an easy decision, but we did it. When we took the decision for the state of emergency, we did it for the protection of the national interest. When allegations were made about PURE, we ordered an investigation to be done. We did not run and say, “You are guilty or you are not guilty”. We did the investigation.

Now allegations are being made about MTS—I have reached to now. I heard the hon. Minister, the Member for Chaguanas West—*[Interruption]* yes, about MTS and the cars. I said that I heard about it.

Mr. Imbert: *[Inaudible]*

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Why do you think it is you? *[Laughter]* You think it is you? *[Laughter]* I think you are becoming somewhat paranoid, hon. Member. *[Laughter]* *[Crosstalk]*

On the other side allegations were made with respect to cars and MTS. I am advised by the words of the hon. Minister, the Member for Chaguanas West, that no such thing took place. So again, an allegation that had no basis, that had no foundation whatsoever in truth, based on what has happened.

It did not take place, but you stood and said, “Look at what you have done. You are corrupt and you cannot control your officers. Fire the Prime Minister, no confidence.” Guess why? Because some person on the MTS board rented his own cars—but it turned out it was totally false. So you send these alarmist bells into the population, and you repeat them and repeat them and repeat them. Then you say, “Do you know what—unending series of something—fire the Prime Minister, no confidence.” Totally without evidence.

We come again, allegations about EFCL. The Minister has indicated that it was being dealt with. So we did not sweep it under the carpet. Where is it evident that I encouraged wrongdoing there, in MTS or anywhere else? And so the EFCL matters—as I said there are always two sides to a story, there are two sides to an allegation; both sides have to be investigated before you can come to the truth to make a decision. That matter is under investigation. So then, where is the wrongdoing? The Minister said that. What have I done to encourage any possible wrongdoing, based on that allegation?

A number of the issues by Members here, as well as by the hon. Leader of the Opposition again today, had to deal with procurement processes. Several of them raised by the Member for Diego Martin West had to do with the procurement process. Let me just premise what I am going to say further with this: when we began in this House discussing the proposed procurement legislation, the Opposition refused to participate in the discussions. That to me was totally ironic because many of your complaints and concerns had to do with procurement issues, and yet you refused to deal with them.

Let me remind you of your history. At no point in time in the history of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, or of the former Trinidad and Tobago, has the PNM ever brought any anti-corruption legislation to the Parliament; never, never, never. [*Desk thumping*] It was the NAR that brought integrity legislation and the Prevention of Corruption Act, and those were amended thereafter, when the party I belonged to formed part of the Government. No time.

Here we have the opportunity to bring procurement legislation, which would help to deal with all these issues we are talking about with respect to procurement in the state enterprises, state agencies and Ministries. And what do you say? You

wash your hands; you want no part of it. It is my view that you have no commitment to fighting corruption in this country. [*Desk thumping*] It is my view that you intend to leave it like that, because many of you in the Opposition have friends and family who would be locked up tomorrow morning, should that legislation be put in place. That is what is happening.

In the 12 more minutes I have, I really want to deal with something on procurement. This is the Leader of the Opposition when he spoke:

“Mr. Speaker, when I say the Prime Minister encourages wrongdoing”—so I am encouraging wrongdoing; again, no evidence of it—“we had a public exposure in this country of the Commissioner of Police procuring an item or an asset. I am not debating whether it is good or bad to be used.”

He was speaking here of the plane, the famous or infamous plane; the plane that you dubbed the toy plane.

When this came to my attention, again I am saying, far from encouraging wrongdoing, when these things come to our attention—listen, every single item, of every single Ministry, of every single state enterprise, of every single thing in the world, will not come to your attention, anybody’s attention, all at the same time, all on the same day, at the same minute, to all be under your purview at the exact point in time to be dealt with. So when they come to your attention, what do you do? That is what is important. As I said, the just exercise of power is the hallmark of good leadership.

So when this came to our attention, I requested reports from the Minister of National Security, through him the Commissioner of Police, and I asked for those to be sent to the hon. Attorney General. First of all, we did not sleep on that, we worked on it. I have now received the opinion which has been prepared by the Solicitor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

In this report, the conclusion found that the issues which arose, based on the facts that were disclosed—and according to the hon. Attorney General, “thus far”; always in law it is on the facts disclosed at that point in time. The issues arising were:

- (1) Whether the explanations given by then Acting Commissioner Ewatski to the Minister justified the use of sole tendering procedure used in this transaction.
- (2) Whether there is merit to the view expressed to the Commissioner by the Minister, do his actions in this matter fail to take into account the

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specified provisions under the Central Tenders Board Act, and if so whether such failure amounted to a breach of law.

- (3) Whether based on his interpretation of the law, as set out in his letter dated February 07, 2012, the Commissioner has not failed to take into account relevant legislation.
- (4) Whether the Commissioner of Police is an accounting officer, within the meaning of the financial regulations, and if so whether his actions in this matter were in keeping with his role as accounting officer.
- (5) Whether the handover documents provided to the Commissioner on assumption of his duties gave accurate guidance on applicable procurement procedures and if not whether there is any impact from the provision of inapplicable guidelines under the provisions of the TTPS.

I will not go into the background facts because these have been bandied about in the public domain. So those are the issues based on the facts that were put forward in the public domain.

Time would not permit me to read the entire thing, but I am sure it would be made available. But the bottom line is this: once there are exceptions under this Central Tenders Board Act as to when you could use a sole selective tendering process, the circumstances of this case were not one of those two exceptions. *[Interruption]*

You may be a good lawyer yourself, you are agreeing with the Solicitor General. So, the conclusion is from the Solicitor General—*[Interruption]* Well, let us see who is the better lawyer. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant is saying that he is not in breach, and the Member for Diego Martin North/East is saying, “Yes, he is in breach”, so let us see what the Solicitor General had to say.

5.00 p.m.

On the review of the documentation presented, and the relevant provisions in the legislative framework governing procurement—
and again it is a procurement issue—

the conclusion that must be drawn is that the TTPS, by the actions of the Commissioner, acted without authority in the procurement of the Zenith Air Scout Surveillance Aircraft at an estimated cost of \$902,772.

The supposition of the Commissioner of Police, that as accounting officer he was authorized to act for the CTB in procurement, resulting in engagement of a

contract valued up to \$1,000,000, was unfounded. Only as a permanent secretary could he have had such authority, not in his capacity as accounting officer.

The commissioner, as the law now stands, has no authority to enter into procurement transactions of any dollar value without adhering to the existing CTB Act provisions. The provision of the Constitution at section 123A has no impact on the legislative framework under the CTB Act.

Moreover, as accounting officer, the Commissioner of Police is required by law to ensure that financial expenditure for the TTPS is duly authorized.

He was required therefore to ensure that the CTB procedures were applied.

He may, therefore, be found to have failed to carry out his duties as a public official in this transaction.

How am I encouraging wrongdoing? When it is an allegation is brought to us—[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: So you are voting against the Motion? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: Or vote against the Motion. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Prime Minister only has six more minutes to wind up so allow her to do that in peace. Hon. Prime Minister, continue.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and Members. I am saying I have given some of the examples. Time would not permit me to give others where, when allegations are made, brought to my attention, we take the steps to do what we can. Do not rush. What do you always tell me? You say—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: “Hurry dog eat raw meat.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: “Hurry dog eat raw meat”—Member for Diego Martin West is always saying. [*Interruption*] That word I will not use. [*Crosstalk*] Oh, your former leader? I am saying we take the steps when the allegations are made. You come to the Parliament and say, “Fire the Prime Minister, I have no confidence in the Prime Minister”. You do not stop to make sure that there is due process. No accounting! This Motion was to fire me. This Motion was to get me to resign or to dissolve the Parliament.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Their backbencher.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is what this Motion was designed for, so let us not fool ourselves on that. What are we going to do with this? It has already

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been sent to Police Service Commission [*Desk thumping*] which has jurisdiction over the workings of the khaki officers. As I close—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Warner: You have four minutes.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: In the four minutes I will try to wrap up. I am saying the first limb of this Motion accuses me of gross incompetence.

Hon. Member: It has failed.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: It has failed. Not an iota of evidence to substantiate this allegation. How is it that we have achieved so much? Ministers have been talking about achievements. How is it that we have not acted in the best interest? Is this sufficient to say, “Fire the Prime Minister”, “no confidence in the Prime Minister”? As I said, did they bring this Motion because somebody changed their name? Did they bring this Motion because the MP’s car was driven by her husband with the sticker? Did they bring this Motion because of some issue with the boxing board? Did they bring this Motion and say, “Fire the Prime Minister”.

Guess what they were saying? No funding for the police for some unmarked rental cars. They were saying, we got rid of the foreign officials at SAUTT. “Fire the Prime Minister, we have no confidence!” We terminated, dismissed a Minister for conflict of interest—“Fire this Prime Minister for doing that!” Crime has gone down—“Fire the Prime Minister for doing that!” Billions of dollars in foreign, direct investments coming into this country for the first time in a long time—“Fire the Prime Minister, no confidence!”

Dr. Moonilal: What is wrong with that? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: We settled this year, the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs has spoken to you of it.

Dr. Moonilal: They were happy—[*Interruption*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They already concluded negotiations for the money coming in. In fact, the Member for Diego Martin West was very happy with the contribution. [*Crosstalk*] We have managed to settle wage negotiations that were outstanding under the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Three years.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Three years under the PNM. “Fire the Prime Minister, we have no confidence.”

Mr. Speaker, in the two or three minutes left, I just want to reiterate my commitment to the development of Trinidad and Tobago, to share with you that my commitment and that of my Government is to build a new and diversified economy, one where the main driver would be a knowledge-driven economy, based on knowledge and innovation. We will continue, and must continue our good work for the development of human capital. Why? Because our human resource in this land is the greatest that you can find. Our people are exceedingly talented.

So, we will continue developing and maintaining adequate security, health and infrastructure. We must do this together with economic transformation and human capital development. We must plan and build for everywhere. How disturbing it is that the Member for Diego Martin West would get up, as Leader of the Opposition, and say, “Why are you putting a university in Debe, Penal?”

Dr. Moonilal: Ohh!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Why? What do you have against the people from Debe, Penal? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: What?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Why do they not deserve tertiary level education?

Dr. Moonilal: Why?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: He said it was because of demographics. What does that mean?

Mr. Sharma: “It have Indians living there.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: [*Interruption*] First of all another falsehood, another lie. [*Crosstalk*] I am sorry, a falsehood, another falsehood. The hon. Members say that that is in my constituency. Not true! Not true! [*Crosstalk*] You continue to mislead people and to tell untruths.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work to build a just and equitable society, despite their rantings and ravings, where every creed and every race will find an equal space and a place. We will continue to work so that regardless of your geographical space—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: An equal place.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—we will build—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: We do not believe you.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: We will grow—[*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*] I do not believe you—and in fact, when you get up to say, “You have lost confidence in me”, whoever on earth believes that you ever had confidence in me? [*Laughter*] You wanted my job from day one! [*Desk thumping*] Who on earth will believe you had confidence in me! [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: How could you lose what you do not have?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: How could you lose what you never had! [*Desk thumping*] And you know, with due respect, in the words of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, “All ah dem is hypocrites!”

Hon. Member: Yes. [*Laughter*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: With these few words, Mr. Speaker, as I say—[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

Miss Cox: Unparliamentary language, Mr. Speaker!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: [*Crosstalk*] I said “all”, like the Member for Diego Martin North/East said, “all”. I want to thank you all very much. [*Crosstalk*] In my view, this Motion failed, it was dead in the water from the beginning, and it will be defeated by the Government today.

I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Wake up.

Miss Cox: “Mash up the people desk.” [*Laughter*]

Miss McDonald: My grandmother taught me, “time longer than twine”.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Members, Member for Port of Spain South and Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, I need to explain this process very carefully because I know we were here for a long time, so let me explain where we go as we come to the end of this historic debate.

There is an amendment that was moved, seconded and debated. That is the first matter that will be put to the floor. The amendment that was moved by the hon. Member for Oropouche East. That is the first matter. Once we vote on that, if you vote in favour of the amendment and the Opposition votes against it, it carries because there is a majority, it therefore will be part of the recital. And I will read

the entire Motion including that recital. Then I put the entire Motion to the floor. Those in favour of the entire Motion will vote in favour, those against will vote against, and then you can take a division thereafter. So I just want to make that clear. I will first put the question on the proposed amendment. The question is that the Motion be amended by inserting the following recital—

Miss McDonald: Mr. Speaker, just a slight clarification, please. This amendment that the Government proposed, would it change the substantive?

Mr. Speaker: No. The substantive Motion remains as is.

Miss McDonald: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Which is the text: “Be it resolved that this honourable House express lack of confidence...”. It will just be part of the recital.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, again, just to make sure that we are not setting precedent that could be queried later. The amendment is not required to change the substance of the Motion, so if this amendment passes, as it could with the Government’s majority, and we are now going to vote on this amendment, which, in my view, would change the substance because the be it resolved remains the same, what are you asking me to vote on then?

Mr. Speaker: You are voting on the Motion.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, but if that amendment is inserted it will change the substantial tenor of the Motion, but the last section of the Motion say, “Be it resolved”, because the be it resolved and the amendment cannot go together.

Mr. Speaker: No. I think you have it wrong. I have explained the process. Let me just go it over slowly. There is an amendment that was moved during the debate—

Dr. Rowley: I know.

Mr. Speaker:—by the hon. Member for Oropouche East. That amendment was seconded, it was properly accepted and debated. You rejected the amendment. The Government debated their amendment. There is an amendment before the floor; now we have come to the end of the debate. So my first task is to put the amendment to the House, but your substantive, the text of the resolution—which is, “Be it resolved that this honourable House express its concern and lack of confidence in Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar”—will be there, okay? So let me just go through this thing further.

Dr. Moonilal: You are properly defeated.

Mr. Roberts: English is a difficult language for some.

Mr. Speaker: [*Crosstalk*] I am putting the question, please.

The question is that the Motion be amended by inserting the following recital immediately after the first recital and it reads:

“And whereas the Prime Minister and her historic People’s Partnership Government inherited an economy in decline, a culture of wastage, raging and rampant crime, debilitating corruption and a style of arrogance in leadership which led to a disconnect between the people and the Government.

Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: So we will now put the entire Motion before this honourable House. May I have silence, please.

Be it resolved:

That this honourable House express its concern and lack of confidence in the Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

5.15 p.m.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 11 Noes 29

AYES

McDonald, Miss M.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Cox, Miss D.

Hypolite, N.

McIntosh, Mrs. P.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Browne, Dr. A.

Thomas, Mrs. J.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

NOES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Hon. K.

Warner, Hon. J.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

Sharma, Hon. C.

Mc Leod, Hon. E.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Seemungal, J.

Volney, Hon. H.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baksh, Hon. N.

Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.

Ramadharsingh, Hon. Dr. G.

Ramadhar, Hon. P.

Khan, Hon. Dr. F.

De Coteau, Hon. C.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

Samuel, Hon. R.

Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.

Roopnarine, Hon. S.

Ramdial, Hon. R.

Partap, Hon. C.

Khan, Mrs. N.

Question negatived.

APPRECIATION

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): If I may crave your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, just to thank you for the time. I know the effort and the energy, along with the staff of the Parliament, security officers and all those who have been with us—what is it?—27 and one-half hours. That is indeed dedication to duty, so can we thank staff, speaker, security and all those who have been working and, of course, indeed, the Opposition Members.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, March 09, 2012 at 1.30 p.m., and on that day it is the intention of the Government to debate two matters: Bill No. 10 on the Order Paper, an Act relating to the protection of children and for matters related thereto.

Matter of Privilege

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting this Motion for the adjournment, may I seek your indulgence.

Earlier on in the sitting as you recall, the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West raised a matter of privilege under Standing Order 27 subsection (5). I have looked at and considered the submission made by the Member for Diego Martin West and I wish to issue the following statement:

The issue raised by the Member for Diego Martin West, if it did indeed occur, is cause for the intervention of this honourable House. Members of this House must be free to go about their legitimate business in this House and its precincts without being intimidated, harassed or molested in any way, either by another Member or by any other person.

I therefore rule that a prima facie case has been made out for this matter to warrant investigation by the Committee of Privileges, and I so rule. [*Desk thumping*]

Appreciation

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Appreciation

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question for the adjournment, I would like to join the hon. Prime Minister by taking this opportunity to thank you, Members of this honourable House, for the dedication you have shown by remaining for this debate, this full and historic debate on this very important Motion.

I am also obliged to thank the staff of the Parliament, the security personnel, including the Parliament police, the staff from other agencies who lent their assistance to our Hansard reporters. We had to borrow staff from the Supreme Court to help us in this marathon session, as well as members of the media. You have all demonstrated your commitment to duty and your professionalism, and I thank you all on behalf of all hon. Members of this House.

I understand this is the longest sitting in the history of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.24 p.m.