

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 25, 2012

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

[*Mrs. Gopee-Scoon laughs loudly*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, I really do apologize. I do humbly apologize.

Mr. Sharma: That is your normal behaviour.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members: the Member of Parliament for D'Abadie/O'Meara is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House; Mr. Jairam Seemungal, Member of Parliament for La Horquetta/Talparo, Deputy Speaker, is also out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House, during the period May 25—31, 2012. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

MR. JUSTICE WENDELL KANGALOO**(SPEEDY RECOVERY OF)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on your behalf, I have conveyed to the hon. Chief Justice, our collective wish and prayer for the speedy recovery of Mr. Justice Wendell Kangaloo.

PAPER LAID

Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of the Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Police Complaints Authority for the year ended September 30, 2004. [*The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]

UNREVISED

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

National Ramleela Council (Inc'n) Bill

(Presentation)

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following report:

Report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a private Bill for the incorporation of the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I ask the indulgence of the House for a deferral of questions No. 96 and No. 97 on the Order Paper. We ask that they be deferred until the next Sitting of the House

Mr. Imbert: You did that the last time.

Mr. Warner: We are copying you.

Mr. Imbert: What is wrong with you all?

Mr. Warner: We are copying your style.

Percentage of Salary Increases

(January 2006 to March 2012)

96. Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Could the Minister state what were the percentage increases in basic salary for workers at Petrotrin, TSTT and T&TEC for each year over the period January 2006 to March 2012?

Chief Executive Officer or Equivalent Office)

(Total compensation package as of April 12, 2012)

97. Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Could the Minister state, without naming the office holders, the total compensation package, inclusive of salary and all allowances, as of April 12, 2012, paid to the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent office in the following State Enterprises/State Companies/Statutory Authorities:

- i) First Citizens Bank Limited;
- ii) Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited;
- iii) Tourism Development Company Limited;
- iv) Government Information Services Limited;
- v) Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited;
- vi) Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago;
- vii) Caribbean Airlines Limited;
- viii) Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission;
- ix) Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago;
- x) Airport Authority of Trinidad and Tobago;
- xi) National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago;
- xii) Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEMS
(DISMANTLING OF)**

[Fourth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [January 27, 2012]:

Be it resolved that this House take note of the systematic dismantling of the national security systems and structures in Trinidad and Tobago and call on the government to cease this action and to take steps to put in place an effective national security system which would have the effect of securing the borders and, by extension, the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago, to bring about a reduction in crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The following Members have already spoken: the mover of the Motion, Member for Laventille East/Morvant; the Hon. Minister of National Security; the Member for Diego Martin North/East; the Member for St. Joseph; the Member for Laventille West; the Hon. Member for Oropouche East; and the Member for Diego Martin Central. The Member for Diego Martin Central had six minutes. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: He is finished.

Mr. Speaker: He is finished. Thank you very much Leader of the Opposition. So, the debate resumes.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communications (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you most sincerely, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, let me take the opportunity to extend best wishes to the East Indian

community and, of course, Trinidad and Tobago, on the marking of the 167th Anniversary of Indian Arrival Day.

I am very pleased to join this debate and to speak on this Motion that was proposed by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. I join this debate on the matter of security, at a point when Members on the opposite side have in fact opened up the debate to go beyond matters of security and focused overall on the performance of Government as a whole, over the last two years. This was particularly done so by the Member for Diego Martin Central. If you glance at his contribution, you would see that he made comments about everything about the Government, about labour, about broken promises of the manifesto, about health. Anything under the sun is included in his contribution if you go back and look at *Hansard*. I give notice, therefore, that I would be responding to many of the things he said, in terms of the performance of the Government.

Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important that we examine the inheritance, in terms of crime, that the People's Partnership Government inherited on May 24, 2010. I say so, not by any means to put up a fence of excuses for the performance of the People's Partnership Government, with respect to crime, but I think that one has to understand the context of the performance of the People's Partnership Government in this area of citizen security and, of course, by extension, national security.

Citizen security in fact is something that is being debated very hotly across the Americas and lastly at the Organization of American States, citizen security at the General Assembly took prominence—as the distinguished Member for Point Fortin would recall—in that General Assembly debate. Therefore, it is of great concern to us also in Trinidad.

So, this is by no means putting up any fence of excuses to the matter of the People's Partnership Government handling of citizen security and crime. I think it is important to understand the performance of the Government in, terms of the context in which the crime is occurring and where we are now from where we were on May 24, 2010.

As I say this, allow me to quote from the speech of the Hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, which she delivered last night at Mid Centre Mall, where she spoke on the matter of citizen security. I wish to quote her:

“My friends, in the very critical area of public safety and national security, I have heard our opponents saying that we have not addressed crime!

They asked what has the Government delivered!

I can tell you that what we did not deliver was funding for criminals and criminal gangs. What we did not do is say that the victims of crime were merely collateral damage. What we did not do was spend hundreds of millions of dollars in blimps in the sky that could not fly. Limp blimps.

That is what we called them. Limp blimps.

Now before I give an account of what aggressive measures the government has taken on crime let me say I am not satisfied with where we are in our war.”

The Prime Minister was not afraid to say that the People's Partnership Government is not satisfied with where we are in the war against crime.

“Successful battles have undoubtedly been scored but the war is far

from won.”

However “in the two years of being in office we have demonstrated that there is the political will.”

Mr. Speaker, I think that is part of the differentiation between this administration and the previous administration, in that this administration is showing greater political will and greater political strength or strength as a Government as a whole to tackle, aggressively, the crime situation.

This was evidenced in the very courageous decision to declare a state of emergency last year and something that is a very difficult decision to take, but we had the political will to take a decision, no matter how much the decision is criticized. Let me also say, it was a decision that bore fruits at a time when the crime was escalating to proportions that were unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I will give you statistics later on this afternoon, in terms of how the crime has been decreasing, that is serious crimes as a whole. But, if I may give you some quotations from the Prime Minister’s address, she said:

“Serious crimes reduced in the areas of robberies by 27.4 %, kidnapping reduced by 57.1 %, larceny decreased by 34.4 % and burglaries decreased by 19.7 %.”

These are figures from the police statistics for the year 2011.

To quote the Prime Minister:

“So when” people “say what we have done with crime, remind them that we took tough decisions, that we have demonstrated our willingness and deep commitment to doing everything possible.”

I will address what we are doing now, but I want to go back to what is the inheritance. What did we inherit? When we came into office what was

there in the society, in terms of the inheritance? Firstly, there was lawlessness at all levels of the society. Even today, people are lawless.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is a fact.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: This morning I was driving to San Fernando to open an exhibition of student art that was done by students from several secondary schools in the country, to reflect the international year of African presence.

1.45 p.m.

Just after the Ste. Madeleine flyover, there was this white vehicle, a small SUV, driving down the highway, no “D plates,” demonstration plates, and no number plates, and driving merrily along the highway, with not a police vehicle in sight, by the way. So here was a person you could not tell, if he was a criminal, who was driving a stolen vehicle, or someone just driving a vehicle along the roadway, but no way of identifying this vehicle whatsoever, that is a form of lawlessness in the society.

Mr. Speaker, but even at the level of traffic—basic things in the society were wrong, discourtesy to each; disrespect to each other and there was a breakdown in value systems. The Minister of Education will tell you the situation he inherited in terms of violence in schools, today it has come to the surface and we are talking about it as bullying. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Three thousand, five hundred suspensions in one year.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: You hear the figures? Thirty five hundred suspensions in one year, this situation did not arise overnight, and also you had the birth and the emergence of gangs in schools. Students thought that to have a gang in school was good, and where did they get that kind of a feeling from? They got it from mimicking what was happening in the

society. So that values in the society broke down, certain things that were happening that went unchecked, and you got the balloon effect also into other areas of national life, but particularly as it related to student behaviour in schools, and the mimicking of the gang culture in the school population.

We inherited serious drug trafficking, including the fact of Trinidad and Tobago being a transshipment point for drugs. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And you know that is a global situation?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, it is a global situation and I would not deny it is a global situation. But while Colombia and Mexico were dealing with their gangs, and while they were dealing with their drug problems, Trinidad and Tobago was not putting in the kind of effort we needed. We were not collaborating with the Colombians, so that when they took action and decided to break up the gangs, and when the movement of drugs and gangs came more and more to this part of the world, we should have been collaborating with them, as I will show you we have begun collaborating with them now. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: We have always been collaborating with them.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Apart from these aspects of the inheritance which we had, apart from this part of the inheritance, we also had a culture which I want to describe as a culture of deference to the criminals, where people in this society lost the will to fight back against the criminals, because of their own personal safety, and because of the threats that were being made on their lives. It is not unknown and I can say that witnesses were shot down and shot dead before they even arrived to give their statements in the court, that people were threatened and they pulled out from the cases, they disappeared, they were not appearing in the courts. You had

many situations where police men were not turning up on several occasions in the courts also. So you had a culture of deference that had developed to the criminals, where people lost the will to fight back.

Mr. Speaker, you remember the years when people also just preferred to pay a ransom so that they could get their families out. Part of this criminal situation which we inherited, you saw during that time massive migration of people from this country, and the migration took place especially in the age group 18 years—25 years, which meant that the trained, knowledge people of this country were going away and leaving the country, this is part of what we inherited.

I am not saying, Member for Point Fortin or Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West that you are totally to blame, but the fact is, you were in charge at that point in time, and being in charge you were then responsible. And I have started my contribution here today by saying that I am not running away from the responsibility to deal with crime. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*] I have said that. I am not running away. We have, unlike you, gone forward to the population last night and said we are not satisfied with the way crime is being handled so far. You have never done that. [*Crosstalk*] You never had the courage to admit that you failed miserably in dealing with the criminal situation in this country. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Tabaquite. We cannot have several debates taking place at the same time. I do not think the Member for Point Fortin has spoken as yet on this Motion, so, may I ask you to take notes rather than engaging the Member who is on his feet. And he has gotten the permission of the Chair to speak. So, Member for Point Fortin, I urge you to

observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c) respectively, and allow the Member to speak in silence, okay. Hon. Member for Tabaquite, continue.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was making the point, that the mark of a government is the willingness of a government to be honest with itself, and to be honest with the people. This Government campaigned on several values, but three values, firstly, the value of openness and honesty with the population; [*Interruption, crosstalk and laughter*] secondly, the value of transparency; and thirdly, the value of public accountable. [*Crosstalk and desk thumping*] Last night was a perfect example of public accountability. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Report to the nation.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: The one thing that the people of Trinidad and Tobago—and especially the 35,000 who gathered there last night—will admire about this Government, is its ability to communicate what it has done, and where it has fallen short to the population. This is not a Government that waits until five years to go back for a vote, this Government is saying judge us period by period as we go long. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Year by year.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: This Government is a Government that is introducing in a public way performance management and performance appraisal for each one of the Ministers—[*Desk thumping and laughter*] in a public way. The Prime Minister declared herself as the CEO of the Government, and last night she made it clear that she is going to call in each one of her Ministers, and do a performance appraisal of the Ministers and after that, depending on whether she is satisfied or not, make changes

necessary. That is public accounting! That is openness! That is transparency, in terms of the Government, something that is a new aspect of governance, where the public is being seen as an important stakeholder in the process of Government as it were. [*Interruption*] I am giving you aspects of the inheritance, but that is not all.

We talk about parenting in this society. Parenting in many homes has broken down. In fact, just like we once spoke about absentee landlords under the plantation system, we may even talk about absentee parenting also. It is very sad, that children are often left in the hands of people to take care of them during the day, who have no skills in parenting, and one is not, therefore, sure of the kinds of values that are transmitted to those children, or the kinds of environments they encounter during the day which would leave impressions upon their very impressionable minds at a young age, and thus affect how they begin to think and, as a result of that thinking and belief, behave in the future.

I am beginning to make a case to show you that fighting the crime is not just about policing, arms, guns, ammunition, police cars, police stations, and so on. It is perhaps much more fundamental than that. It has to do with how we deal with the minds, the belief systems and the values which translate into behaviours of people as they grow up in the society. So parenting is something that has to be tackled in the society, if we want to tackle crime.

And last night in terms of looking at the breakdown in family values, the domestic violence that exists in families, the kinds of situations that result in people having difficulty managing their families because of poverty, the single mother syndrome which is so prevalent in this society

now—it is an important thing we cannot ignore. You cannot ignore the fact also that in one home you have one mother, with five children for five different fathers, that is also a breakdown in value systems in the society. I am not here to tell people what is right or wrong for them to do, but I make my own judgment of what I consider should be acceptable or not acceptable. When you have that kind of breakdown in the society, when the very moral fabric of the society is threatened by a breakdown in value systems, then you are going to run into serious trouble in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this is why one notes with admiration a point made by the hon. Prime Minister when she spoke last night, that in terms of the development of children, and the development of young people as a whole, the Government on June 11, 2012, the nation will turn a new chapter in the history of education. And I want to take the opportunity to congratulate my Cabinet colleague and the Member for Caroni East, Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, for the excellent work he has been doing in transforming the education system, and this is going to be evident by this particular programme, which will be launched on June 11, 2012, the Character Education and Citizens Re-development Programme in all primary schools. And that is where it is going to be introduced, in the primary schools where it matters upon the impressionable minds of young people. You cannot just wait and hope that people will develop good character. You cannot make the assumption again in this world and in this country generally, that because there are parents in a home it necessarily means you are going to have good character development. You cannot make that assumption again, because a child is subjected to so many different influences.

The Prime Minister noted last night, that it is not an overnight thing

that it is going to be introduced. It took one year of planning with consultants and sponsors to introduce what will, without a doubt, be a most transformational, educational initiative, or the most transformational educational initiative ever launched in Trinidad and Tobago. Very correctly, you know, the Prime Minister gave an example last night where, in fact, Shanghai and Hong Kong, are also introducing Character Education and Citizens Re-development Programme, and remember, those countries are very, very good in terms of being leading educational countries, producing very, very good people, and even they are recognizing the benefits of teaching children from primary schools the benefits of a sound moral education.

What has happened, is that we have tried to leave citizen's education and character development to the churches, to the mandirs, the mosques and to the home; you cannot do that. Six to eight hours of the child's life is spent in the school environment and, therefore, you must have citizen development and moral education side by side with the curriculum, and I think this is a tremendous advancement, visionary advancement in terms of Dr. Gopeesingh and the Government of Trinidad under the People's Partnership Government. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Prime Minister, not me.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: We have to raise in this country if we want to deal with crime, we have to raise people who are emotionally balanced. We have to raise people who can know the difference between right and wrong—Member for Arouca/Maloney—who can choose between right and wrong. We have to raise people who can care for each other. We have to

raise people who can love each other, and these are things that you can teach to children at a young age. These are things that you can do.

It is always interesting to me that you might have a very poor family, but you might have some of the most rounded children coming out of those poor families. You know why? Because sometimes in those very poor families you still have parents who despite their challenges, they live human values driven lives and they make all attempts to teach their children what is the honest and decent way forward.

2.00 p.m.

Not that parents in richer families do not do it, but I always admire poorer families who achieve that because despite their trying circumstances they did not revert to a life of crime; they did not teach their children to be dishonest; they taught them to be honest, upright citizens and to deal with their challenges.

Mr. Speaker, you have to deal with these matters if you want to deal with crime. You have to ask what the root of the criminal mind is. How is the criminal mind shaped? How is the criminal mind developed? Side by side with that, we must talk about the environmental influences. This is a Government that is dealing with the environmental issues that affect young people. For example, part of the problem in the society is that young people feel they do not have opportunities, and the Government is moving to give people opportunities in several ways.

The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development which deals with entrepreneurship has a programme to groom entrepreneurs in the society. The Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education has decentralized so many of its programmes across the country, including,

in the constituency of Toco/Sangre Grande, particularly in Sangre Grande, setting up a branch of COSTAAT where, I understand, 800 students are now registered in programmes—children who may never have been able to come into Port of Spain to COSTAAT because they just could not afford to come in.

So we are taking the opportunities to the people where they are and giving them alternatives in terms of the development of their potential, so that they can make something out of their lives rather than think that they have to turn to a life of crime or other kinds of activity. I think that the Government deserves every commendation for this kind of decentralization of the educational opportunities for the development of people overall.

So, Mr. Speaker, you have to deal with opportunities for people also in dealing with the crime situation. The Government has been doing that with great success and the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education has gone on a very aggressive programme of decentralizing so that these opportunities are available to all and sundry closer to where they live so that they can avail themselves at lower cost of these opportunities to develop themselves.

The other thing that was happening in this society which we inherited was that this society was becoming very angry. People were very angry with each other, with less patience—an inability to settle differences without violent confrontation. These matters also have to be handled. We have to train people in alternative dispute resolution. We have to train people how to settle their problems without putting a knife or dagger into the heart of the other person.

These matters have to be dealt with. People think that fighting crime is only about policing. It is not only about policing. It is about much more than that. It is about community development and raising the consciousness of people that there is another way to deal with problems.

Long ago, if there was a dispute between children in a community, the parents would get together with the kids and they would talk it through and one parent might even encourage his or her child to apologize to the other child; they would shake hands there and they would be taught how to resolve conflicts. That spirit has been lost and part of what this Government is doing is trying to bring those initiatives that worked back into the society so that we can effectively deal with interpersonal conflict.

As I say that, I have been looking at the kinds of games children play. Let me prefix what I am saying by saying that I am not talking about censorship. I am not talking about that. I am simply putting on the table something I think is worthy of consideration.

When they go to these arcade games or, generally, the games people play—I do not know if my friend, the Member for Arouca/Maloney plays any arcade games, but when you look at the games they are playing, everything is: Kill! Destroy! Kill! Destroy! You realize that? You realize what is happening? Shoot down! Kick! Seriously, what are we doing to the minds of kids? Finish off! Really, what are we doing? We must give consideration all around to all of these several things that are happening to the impressionable minds of young people. Mr. Speaker, I am very serious about it because I have concerns about how these games affect the thinking and the behaviour of children.

The other matter that has to deal with fighting crime is the examples

we set as elders in the society ourselves. This society is not short of role models. There are many, many good role models in this society; but we have to give an opportunity and provide the institution for these role models to really influence our young people in the country. We have to provide the institution.

In this regard, one has to admire the work being done by the hon. Minister of National Security, especially in terms of the community outreach programmes in his Ministry and, above and beyond that, the National Mentoring Programme which the Minister has introduced in which they match mentors with mentees. It is a very important development in the society and, just to let you know, in the National Mentorship Programme, 29 facilities have been approved for use as mentoring centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago and formal matching of mentees and mentors took place in February 2012 and the programme is up and running.

Apart from that, Mr. Speaker, everyone in this society talks about the lack of father figures in the home, about the absentee fathers or about the visiting fathers. The Minister of National Security and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had the inaugural fatherhood fair, entitled Father Bring Your Son and Come. It is coming back this year. It was held in June 2011; it will be repeated this year.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, while the contributions in this debate are focused on matters of dealing with crime after it has occurred, I am talking about a preventative, preemptive approach which this Government is taking in the context of dealing with crime, making sure that we have upright, young citizens in the country.

Another programme of the Ministry of National Security is the

National Adopt-a-School Programme geared to providing avenues for young people within several schools to participate in constructive developmental activities and to focus on initiatives to be implemented during regular and after-school hours. This includes motivational talks and guidance counselling sessions—the NASPRO Programme.

Mr. Speaker, the panyard initiative, which was conceptualized as a nexus between the panyard and youths, to help young people develop life skills and social skills, through mentoring via the steel pan, is being done in eight communities at the moment where there are young people at risk and vulnerable.

All of this is important. Just let me say, as I go along, that at the level of the prison services we are dealing with rehabilitation. A rehabilitation programme at the prison service includes healing through—Hear!—inmates poetry competitions; inmates' art exhibitions, the carnival competition, caring for ex-offenders and the Angel Tree Programme; all of these are programmes of the Ministry of National Security. From time to time, you see on television reports of these programmes and the families speak about the transformation that is taking place in members of their families who are in prison and the difference they feel when they visit them before they went there. I am using all these examples to point out, in no small measure, that we are in fact attacking the criminal situation at the base and from all angles.

So the role models: we are providing opportunities to make use of role models in the society and I take the opportunity today to thank the many church leaders in the country who have been doing the yeoman service of getting young people together and putting them through life skills training, human values training as well as providing other kinds of material support to

them so that they can reconstruct their lives and live more fruitful lives.

In my own constituency, I pay tribute to Pastor Mansingh, who has been dealing with young women who are HIV cases; with young women who are still going to school but they have children to take care of; with young women who have no place to stay. I pay tribute to these people who have given their lives of service because this, too, is a contribution dealing with the crime situation in the country; where people would not turn to alternative lifestyles, but would know that in the society there are those who genuinely care; who reach out with a helping hand; who pull them back from the brink and who say to them: “we love you”. Sometimes that is what people want to hear in the society—that they are loved; they are cared for and they are appreciated and that someone will pull them back from the brink. That, too, is dealing with the crime situation in our country.

There is something else I want to allude to, which I think is important in terms of dealing with crime. When you look at the past administration—it seems now that people do not want to hear about the past administration, but sometimes you have to revisit the past—and you look at the culture of wastage and corruption that existed, that culture of wastage, excesses and corruption led to the general perception that it is okay to also be corrupt; it is also okay to indulge in excesses. Young people were affected by that and there actually was an impact on groups of people in the society who looked for the easy way out because the wrong examples were being set by people at the top.

During the last oil boom, there were excesses. Money flowed like a dose of salts and that led some people to get the wrong impression about what life was all about. They developed the wrong values. Today, we hear

about people who are crying out: I want this; I want that. Nothing is wrong in wanting. It is the role of Government to provide, but it is the greater role of Government to provide an environment, opportunities for people to succeed.

We have to ask the question: from where did the “gimme gimme” culture come? From where did the life of dependency on the society come? Where did it come from and why does it persist? For the sake of political expediency and for the sake of staying in office, the former administration, for many, many years, kept people in a state of political dependency for their votes rather than empowering them to lead dependent and self-sufficient lives. [*Desk thumping*]

2.15 p.m.

And insulted their human dignity. And it is taking years for people to break out of that cycle of dependency and to become self-sufficient and independent. This is why I say again, that “hats off” to the People’s Partnership Government; and “hats off” to Mr. Fazal Karim the Minister of Tertiary Education for moving the YTEPP programme across Trinidad and Tobago. Also, we are opening new OJT centres including one to be opened in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

It is also a tribute to him that he has set up what is called the workforce assessment centres. We have good carpenters, good masons, we have good mechanics. We have good people in this country, we have capable people in this country. But what we are now doing to them is giving them a new dignity by certifying them and saying, you are an excellent carpenter. [*Desk thumping*]

About 1,600 of them have now been licensed; never done in the

history of this country. What does that do? It gives people new dignity, it gives them new self-esteem, it makes them feel good about themselves. When a person has a sense of value which is not imposed from outside but comes from within because they know they are valuable and have potential, that person inspires others in the society.

So the programme is not just about certification but providing the opportunity for people to inspire others in the society also. That is the new society that we are building; emotionally balanced people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well done Suruj!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, this is the new environment. There is a term that is often used “new politics”, this is part of the new politics we are engaged in. The future! We talk about the future belonging to the youth; well, we are doing something in the society to show that the future belongs to the youth.

The challenge in this country is to secure the country by reconstructing the minds of people. Mr. Speaker, the most important and powerful thing in a human being is the mind. What the mind can perceive the hands can create, but it is the mind that perceives it. Anything that is created physically is first created in the mind. Similarly, it is the power of thought that leads to behaviour. If we have to change people, and change to deal with crime we have to change the belief system of young people in the society. That is why again I refer to the character development and citizen redevelopment exercises in the primary school.

We want to see again children inspiring children. We want to see again in the schools, love and care and not bullying, and not gang cultures. Mr. Speaker, we are committed as a Government to work towards that, and

to work towards that very hard, and to make sure it is achieved. That is part of the legacy we want to leave as a Government because those young people will be the people to govern this country in the future. If we do it right then they would be able to usher in a golden age of governance, when they come to govern this country, Mr. Speaker.

We have to move people from dependency to self-sufficiency. We are doing this in several ways. In the URP programme the Minister of the People, and Social Development Dr. Ramadharsingh, Member for Caroni Central has done very, very good work in terms of URP Social. Two hundred mothers, for example, are now able to work and take care of their children with cerebral palsy. They do not have to turn to a life of crime, they do not have to depend on criminals to feed them and feed their children; they do not have to turn to a life of prostitution, et cetera. Now, they are able to feed themselves and work hard, that is a new dignity. That, too, is preventing crime. So when they ask what we are doing; I am showing you how we are reconstructing the social fabric of the society by using the same programmes. We are giving new meaning to URP Social.

Mrs. Goopeesingh: It is the same.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, in agriculture the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs by the end of the year will have 1,000 persons who worked in the URP now working in agriculture; being more productive, contributing to the higher goal of food security.

When people have a purpose in life people become passionate about life; “passion does not drive purpose, purpose drives passion”. And what we are doing is giving people a purpose in life which will drive their passion in order to make this country a better place because then they would want to

make a value added contribution through productive endeavour to the well-being of the society and their fellow citizens.

This is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. And food security has been set out as one of the important goals of this Government. And the Ministry of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs has taken steps in this direction. Not only has he done that, but 50 graduates in agriculture have been hired by him for the next year and this is will be an annual programme he says. They have been sent to agricultural organizations and farming organizations and his Ministry where they can now develop upon the skills and training they got at the university and also contribute new techniques to the farming community. That was never done before, Mr. Speaker.

Those young people, we are dealing with their hopes for a better future, when, perhaps, they thought there was no hope. But this Government is dealing with these matters in a very significant way. Not by just speaking but I am showing you the programmes, and the numbers that are associated with this transformation.

Mr. Speaker, we talked earlier about building communities. It is important if you have to build communities, that you also do so by providing the facilities to build communities. There are two significant areas in which physical facilities are being provided;

One, through the Ministry of Community development, and secondly through the Ministry of Sports.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by

30 minutes. [*Mr. E. McLeod*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank Members on both sides.

Community Development and community centres; the Minister of Community Development and the Ministry and the Government have commissioned 12 community centres in Gulf View, Marac, Waterloo, Union Claxton Bay, Malabar Phase 4, La Gloria, Hindustan, Bon Air West, Ste. Madeleine, Sisters Road, Second Caladonia, Duranta Gardens, and a homework centre at Mango Rose. The reason I am calling out all of these places is to show you the geographic distribution of the Government in terms of its equitable distribution of resources.

And in 21 other communities, community centres are in progress, Ortioire Mayaro, Palo Seco Los Charros, St. John's Village, Palo Seco Settlement, Roystonia, El Dorado, Samaroo Village, St. Augustine South, Calvary, North Manzanilla, Carapo, Cocorite, Vessigny, St. Helena, Matlot, Chatham, Gasparillo, Point Fortin Civic centre, San Fernando North, Harmony Hall.

Mr. Speaker, may I take the opportunity on behalf of myself and the hon. Member for Pointe a Pierre, to thank the Minister of Community Development, where he has taken two community centres in our areas, the Springville Community Centre—which was dilapidated—and the Macaulay Community Centre. If you go there today, they are air-conditioned community centres; new stage, new furniture, new kitchen, new toilets, in places that—Mr. Speaker, you held meetings there at one point in time, you

would know the conditions of those places where you could not even use the toilets. Today, they are refurbished and they are excellent places for community development and community meetings. Thank you, thank you, Minister Nizam Baksh. [*Desk thumping*]

And this is what we are doing, we are giving people places of pride where they can take their young ones on evenings and share a cultural evening, and speak to them and liaise with them. We need that. We need to encourage conversations between parents and children, between children and children, between elders and children in the society. The community centres are going to be places where these kinds of activities are going to taking place in order to achieve that. So there is a tremendous set of activities taking place in the Ministry of Community Development to keep people away from the crime line. If you want to move them from the crime line you have to give them an opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Ministry of Community Development, meals are provided to some 100 persons daily through the transformation development centres which provide societal support for poor and needy persons. So while you empower them through YTEPP, and while you give them other schools at least you are giving them a meal today so they do not have to go and do what is wrong to get a meal. So, it is a holistic programme. You see, this is a thinking Government. We think and we execute. And we think holistically.

Hon. Member: Eh heh?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Because we want to shape a new society. That is the vision I am showing you. If you do that and shape that new society—a

society of opportunities, a society of fairness, a society where people believe and know that they are going to be treated equitably, you will be able to deal with some of the root problems of crime in this society. And that is the vision of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, unlike an administration which had a vision but had no action and ended up hallucinating, this Government is engaged in vision and action which gives you reality. [*Desk thumping*] We are not hallucinating. We are not engaged in just sitting down and writing thick books, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is getting into programmes of action that can benefit the community and benefit young people in the society in a most profound way.

In terms of sporting facilities, the hon. Minister of Sport is engaged in the refurbishment of over 94 recreational grounds in the country right now, where they would be provided with the basic facilities. It is not just about building the big stadia, it is also about giving people in the communities—where they can go on a Sunday evening and witness a good cricket match again. These facilities now have lights that they can play cricket and football at night time. Mr. Speaker, very soon communities will be outfitted with badminton courts, and with table tennis boards, and with play parks for children so that community life can be returned in all its glory and significance to Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, when I was the mayor of Chaguanas together with the corporation we put down five play parks in Chaguanas—[*Crosstalk and Laughter*]

Dr. Rowley: “That is why Jack cho yuh out”.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And today, it is always my joy to drive pass

Pierre Road, and drive pass Caroni Savannah Road and see on an evening—and this is what makes it even more interesting—fathers come with their children, so their children can take a ride and play for an hour, an hour and a half, in those play parks. That is a very serious thing to me.

So when we talk about affecting crime, while the debate has focused upon the police cars, all that has to go on—the Government has given over 200 new cars, I believe to the police force—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: And repaired hundreds.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And repaired hundreds, in fact 1,400 and some have been repaired over the last two years. The Government has been on an active programme of ensuring that the police service is well outfitted. The Government is launching the building of several new police stations in the country that is going to come soon.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, so all of these things are being done in order to ensure that people are empowered away from a life of crime. Even as I say that, we have to do other things. We have been collaborating with international organizations and with other countries that have really good experience in terms of dealing with crime, and one such level of cooperation is security cooperation between the Republic of Colombia and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

When we attended the Summit of the Americas, the hon. Prime Minister and her delegation held bilateral talks with the President of Colombia, and in those discussions the Prime Minister indicated that we had problems with the gangs in Trinidad and Tobago, and two weeks after that a high level delegation of security authorities from Colombia visited Trinidad

and Tobago, and had a meeting with the Ministry of National Security to assess some of these areas that are important to us.

In fact, if you know Colombia, you know what is happening there. Colombia has developed specific training programmes for its armed forces, which can be provided to Trinidad and Tobago and which they agreed to provide in terms of air, sea, river and land interdiction, kidnapping reduction, dealing with nocturnal operations, air mobility, telecommunications and intelligence, but we also know that Colombia has been very successful in dismantling gangs, and we have to dismantle gangs here in Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, we must go and look to the countries that have the experience, the technology and the capability, and the Colombian authorities are willing to do that, and we are going to collaborate with them further in this area.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is not a new phenomenon.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, there are other things that are being done. We know that we have a problem with our polygraphing capacity, we know that, and in our deliberations last week between Caricom and Mexico, one of the things we know is that Mexico is very good in terms of its polygraphing capacity, and they have decided that they are going to help us to develop our people to deal with polygraphing, which is an important area in the fight against crime. So we are building capacity by engaging in bilateral relations with countries who have developed the technology and who have the experience, and that is going to prove worthy to our advantage as we go along.

So not only are we looking at what we are doing locally in terms of

the holistic development of young people; not only are we looking in terms of the transformation of the police service, but we are also looking at what we can do by bilateral arrangements in terms of fighting the scourge of crime and criminality in the country.

Mr. Speaker, in that regard, it is also important for us to note that part of the drug trade and so on has to do with money laundering, and this Government has set up a financial action task force, and we are going to be dealing with money laundering. We are passing laws. We have a package of legislation—I am going to give you one of these documents to read later on—that has been passed in the country by this Government that will help to fight all of this.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: In 2009 we passed those laws.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: All of this will be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, it seems that it irks some of my erstwhile colleagues on the other side to hear of the achievements of this administration in terms of how we are moving to deal with the reconstruction of the society and to deal with criminality in the country. Sometimes they do not want to hear, because perhaps it hurts their heart to know that within two years this Government has been doing such things. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the Anti-Gang Bill despite what deficiencies it might have had, it is there as law. And the Anti-Gang Bill is there to enable the suppression of association established for unlawful purposes.

We had the Anti-Terrorism Bill 2011, an Act which criminalizes terrorism and provides for the detection, prevention, prosecution, conviction and punishment of terrorist activities and the confiscation or forfeiture and seizure of terrorist assets. We had the Bail Amdt. Bill, 2010 which amended

the Bail Act; to confer and accord the jurisdiction to deny bail to a person who is a gang member.

Let me take the opportunity to compliment the hon. Minister of Justice for the manner in which he has been working very hard to establish [*Desk thumping*] a new framework of legislation. [*Desk thumping*] Within two years, at least he has begun to put in place mechanisms to build proper court facilities for the magistracy and the Judiciary at least four of them he has already designed and he bring to fruition. Maybe one day he will stand in this Parliament and give a full account of the number of things he has done so far to affect the very way the Judiciary is going to be operating in the country. Mr. Speaker, one can go on and on.

The Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago Bill, 2011 expanded the remit of the FIU to include combating terrorist financing. Mr. Speaker, all of this, and I can go on and on, but the Government is not afraid. We have published a document called Fulfilling the Promise—2011/2012, publicly accounting and outlining many of the programmes here to deal with crime in the country.

Mr. Speaker, there was something I left for last, and this has to do with education and the Early Childhood Education Centres.

Mr. Speaker: Just a minute. There is somebody playing with a cellphone. This is the second time I am raising this issue about cellphones, smart phones, to have them on silent mode. Do not provoke the Speaker to review the use of electronic devices in the Parliament. I am appealing to all Members of Parliament to put your cellphone on silent mode.

I am hearing over and over this sound emerging, I do not know from

which side, and it seems like the person is not hearing, but I am hearing it. So I am asking Members, please, I cannot run the House by myself, I need your cooperation, and I appeal to all Members to help me, so that I can help you. Thank you.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was on the point of the Early Childhood Education Centres. The Prime Minister sets a goal for this Government by 2015, and has given a mandate to the Minister of Education to achieve universal early childhood education by 2015. The Prime Minister herself has to be credited with achieving early universal secondary school education. [*Desk thumping*] Say what you want! She made sure that every child got a place in secondary school when she was the Minister of Education. She set in train a chain of events that have led to that. Mr. Speaker, 7,000 to 10,000 students used to be left out and they used to fall through the cracks, and it was some of those students without opportunities that ended up on the crime line—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is right.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—because they felt unwanted; they felt unappreciated.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And you are blaming the PNM.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It was Mrs. Persad-Bissessar as the Minister of Education who changed that and history cannot change that fact. That is a fact! History cannot change that. Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is talking about action and that is only vision. I would like to inform the Member that prior to the coming of this Minister of Education, only nine Early Childhood Centres were built and there was a company from Korea that walked off with US \$50 million in contracts

[*Crosstalk*] to build Early Childhood Centres, and what did this Minister do? This Minister has so far built 29 Early Childhood Centres—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: They were in progress.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and he has taken them across the country placing them in places like Retrench, Golconda, Wellington Road and Debe where there is going to be a university and which people on the other side have a problem with. The people of Debe must not have a university. So, are they not people too? What is wrong with that?

Hon. Member: Take care you get a heart attack.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: My dear, if I get a heart attack for speaking the truth that is okay, but I know what I am saying here is factual. [*Desk thumping*] But you see, my mind is not like a mind like yours that wishes people bad in terms of saying, “mind you get a heart attack”. My mind and my heart is a mind of love.

Mr. Speaker: Member, listen, let us not get there. I do not think any Member in this honourable House is wishing anybody bad. So, I do not think you should be making that statement to any Member of this honourable House. So I ask you to continue, but do not make any imputations to any Member of this honourable House. Continue hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communication.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the statement but I have a very clean heart, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Not only has he built 29 Early Childhood Centres providing opportunities for people to have their children in a proper childhood centre close to their communities and supervised by the Ministry of Education with teachers trained properly in order to develop them as young people, but 24

more are being constructed, and 80 more are due to start before the end of the year. Mr. Speaker, 133 centres by mid-next year would have been built by this Minister of Education. That is achievement! [*Desk thumping*] That is dealing with young impressionable minds and making sure that they do not go astray, but they are taken into care with loving hands early in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, let me just back that up by saying that training of 600 persons in ECCE has commenced by the various tertiary providers to expand the cadre of teachers required in this field. Talking about opportunities, young women and young men in this society want opportunities.

Last night, the Prime Minister announced that the El Dorado Centre for the training of nurses is now ready, and this country needs 3,000 nurses; 3000 possible job opportunities. What might have been the possibilities if this kind of opportunity was not being provided for people? I have demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we are approaching the crime situation and we are doing so and doing so in a holistic fashion.

If I may now say, I want to compare a couple of years for you in terms of serious crimes and the statistics that have been provided by the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and this was provided to me on May 24, 2012. When you talk about serious crimes you are talking about the following: murders, wounding and shootings, rape, incest and other sexual offences, serious indecency, kidnapping, kidnapping for ransom, burglaries and break-ins, robberies, fraud offences, general larceny, larceny of motor vehicles, larceny of dwelling houses, narcotic offences and other serious crimes.

Mr. Speaker, in 2008, in all those categories, there were 20,566

serious crimes; in 2009, 22,162; in 2010, this Government took office and we were there for eight months and it went down to 20,126, and if that was not good enough, it went down in 2011 to 15,877. So, there has been a downward trend. In other words, if you work 15 over 20 and you work out the percentage, the difference is five over 20, so serious crimes went down by about 26 per cent under the People's Partnership administration.

2.45 p.m.

So something is beginning to take effect. Something is beginning to happen in the society. There is now a trend occurring in the society. In 2012, as of April 30, the first quarter, there were 5,416 serious crimes in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, as I close my contribution this afternoon, let me thank all my colleagues on this side, whether it is the Minister of Works and Infrastructure who provides roads and facilities that help people to empower themselves and live a better quality of life in the society; whether it the Minister of Public Utilities and the Minister of Sport who have been providing the playgrounds and lighting up the playgrounds; whether it is the Minister of Community Development, who under the Self-Help Programme, has affected the lives of thousands of people in this country—thousands of people; whether it is the Minister of Local Government who like, last Christmas did 403 projects, so that people got employment, and they were able to have a decent Christmas; whether it is the Minister of—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Welfare?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—the People and Social Development who is doing yeoman service in terms of alleviating poverty, and dealing with

poverty reduction in the society; the Minister of Tourism who is providing excellent facilities like the Valencia Visitors Centre, and soon to be developed, Caura Centre, Knolly's Tunnel and what have you, that would provide places, not just of interest, but places where citizens can go with their families, and they could have a very nice afternoon, and they could enjoy themselves in a familiar kind of setting; or the Minister of Education, as I have said, or the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, who has been bringing legislation into the Parliament, including legislation like the Masters and Servants Act, the Maternity Benefits and what have you, and who under his watch so far had seen 39 agreements settled.

All of these things that create dissidents in the society, and all of these things that reduce dissidents in the society, Mr. Speaker, I take my hat off to them this afternoon, and also to the hon. Prime Minister, who as CEO of this cadre of Cabinet Ministers—the Chief Executive Officer—because she performance-driven and result-centred. The Minister of Justice, the Minister of Legal Affairs, the Minister of Trade and Industry who has been working hard to bring investments in the country; the Minister of Public Administration who has been working to reform the public service. All of these activities they form part of a strategy of the Government, to empower people, to improve the quality of life—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have not spoken about your tremendous work.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—so that people would not have to go on the crime line, but they would have alternatives to choose from. I thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

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

Speaker. I have known you for a very long time, and I must say that in your younger days you were quite a flamboyant parliamentarian, but oh how have you mellowed in your matured years, to have sat there, in the face of this Motion, and to have studiously allowed good sense to prevailed, as you have done, to let the Member for Tabaquite vent, is admirable.

Mr. Sharma: You are attacking, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I understand the problem that the Member for Tabaquite has, and I understand what he is. It is a source of wonder that of all the people in this House, his colleagues, the Member for Tabaquite is the one who most—and may I coin a phrase here—sycophantically allude to the brilliance of the Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia. And one would want to wonder if that brilliance never shone when he was one of those who were always opposed to her becoming even the leader of the party. He was the last to have been dragged in, but every time he gets up to speak, 90 per cent of his contribution is in glory and praise of our colleague, the Member for Siparia, I stand in my shoe and I wonder.

I understand, I have no problem with the Government conducting its celebration, but clearly whoever did the plan last night, did not allow the Member for Tabaquite to speak. So he had a speech for Mid Centre Mall yesterday, and by not being allowed to speak there [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: —he spoke it here.

Dr. K. Rowley:— he came here and he gave us exactly what he had planned to say in Mid Centre Mall, provided they had allowed him to speak. But they did not subject themselves to that, so that today we had to be subjected to it, and, Mr. Speaker, I admire your understanding of the situation.

What is the Matter before the House? The matter before the House this afternoon could be easily identified, it is everything except what the Member spoke about. And just to remind you, so that, at least, we can spend a few moments focusing on the matter that we should be addressing, let me read the Motion of my colleague, and the Motion is this:

“Whereas the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago has continued to escalate, and;

Whereas the former PNM administration had initiated a number of systems and strategies to deal with the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago, and;

And whereas the current Government of Trinidad and Tobago has taken certain actions to weaken the national security systems and structures in Trinidad and Tobago;

And whereas the action of the current Government has contributed to the escalation of crime in Trinidad and Tobago;

Be it Resolved that this House take note of the systematic dismantling of the national security systems and structures in Trinidad and Tobago and call on the Government to cease this action and take steps to put in place an effective national security system which would have the effect of securing the borders and by extension the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago to bring about a reduction in crime in Trinidad and Tobago.”

That is the Motion, Mr. Speaker, now, clearly, the Member for Tabaquite either did not read this Motion, or he studiously ran as far away as possible from the substance of this Motion. He did not have to agree with

the recitals, we know that because any reference to anything that the PNM would have done, would have been an anathema to him, so he would not have to agree, but he would have been required to take responsibility for what his Government has done.

Because what this Motion is saying, is that whether you agree or you do not agree what the previous Government was doing, and we know that they do not agree, you, the Government of today, you took action to stop some of what the Government was doing, or all of it, and you also took action to initiate some of your own proceedings. And we are now saying that the circumstances require review, and we are calling on you to be effective in what you are doing—that is the Motion. So, what do we get from the Member for Tabaquite? Nothing new! We got him in all his glory, and permit me, Mr. Speaker, to respond to a few of his assertions.

So he continues his excitement and his euphoria of last night, no problem with that, but he went on to say that this Government, by its very dealing with the crime situation, which is the Motion substance apparently, I am assuming that is what he was talking about because that is the Motion before the House, he wonders why this Motion should be here because this Government, and to quote him:

demonstrates honesty and openness, and therefore, as the Government acts one should not have to ask any question because it should be seen by all, open and honest.

Guess who is talking, Mr. Speaker? The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, trying to convince us in this House, and the national community, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago

demonstrates openness and honesty—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: All the time, all the time.

Dr. K. Rowley: Let me give you one example of their openness, and his openness, why we cannot accept his assertion that openness and honesty abounds, and is visible. Listen to Member for Tabaquite talking to the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the Parliament, and I am quoting here from *Hansard*, the country's record:

“Speaking about accountability”—

That is the Member talking in January 20, 2012. He is making a statement in the House—statement to the House, by a Minister of Government, and he says, and I quote:

“Speaking about accountability let me say here and now that the cost of the Prime Minister's official delegation was paid for by the Government of India.”

In any serious Westminster system this Minister would have been drummed out of the House for not speaking the truth in Parliament because we know that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago did go to India, and she led a very large delegation, and when the delegation was being formulated here in Trinidad and Tobago, certain persons, including the Opposition, were asking, why this string band, why are all these “hangers-on” going? I even asked my friend from Oropouche if he was going, and he said that he did not want to be part of any string band, he not going—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: He is not going.

Dr. K. Rowley: —or words to that effect.

Dr. Moonilal: The Member is experienced, and he knows what he is doing, please. I actually wanted to wait until they were going on another delegation

when you were on the delegation to India.

Dr. K. Rowley: Oh, okay. I misunderstood you.

Dr. Moonilal: I would prefer to go on that delegation.

Dr. K. Rowley: He clarified that, Mr. Speaker, he said that he did not want to go with them, he want to go with me. Okay, I misunderstood that, but the bottom line is, the country wanted to know why all these people were going to India because they understood that there were ramifications for cost and so on, and relevance. It was in that context that our Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communication, who was overseeing this arrangement, came to the Parliament with a prepared statement, and told us, and put on the *Hansard* record what I have just quoted for you, “that the delegation is being funded by the Government of India”.

So, the trip took place. We then asked because we saw other expenditure, we asked questions in the Parliament, and in answering the questions we asked, in total contradiction to this statement that he made in the Parliament in the Lower House, he went to the upper House, and told the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the delegation cost \$8 million.

Even as he was doing that, on the record in the Lower House, his colleague, my friend from Oropouche East, and other Members of Cabinet, had already put on record, numbers that showed that the delegation had cost well over \$12 million, and the Minister of Finance told us that there were other millions that the Ministry of Finance has not reported on as yet. So in that situation, how could we believe, ever, anything that the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communication even said?

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communication owes this House an apology, and he owes this country an

explanation. [*Desk thumping*] And for him to get up here this afternoon, on a serious Motion, and fulminate in the way he has done, is obscene to the extreme. Because anybody in this country, knowing this record of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communication, would feel un-served, and to get up here and raise the very subject that he should not touch—the same way that he ran away from the crime issue, he must run away for the issue of honesty and openness because he does not stand well in the light of those two attributes.

Mr. Speaker: I do not want you to implicate, impute or in any way give the House the impression that you are addressing or querying the truthfulness of a Member. If you wish to do so, do not do it in an ordinary debate, bring a substantive Motion in the Minister. But I want to caution you, do not impute improper motive, and do not in the process question the honesty or truthfulness of a Member of this honourable House.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I am very well guided by your advice, and the Standing Orders of this House. I simply taking issue with the content of the contribution of the Minister in the debate that he chose to join ill advisedly, and all that I have done is to put on the record his own words, then and now, and I leave it to you, Mr. Speaker, and the country to impute whatever motive you want to impute from it. I move on.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say in the height of his fulminations about a previous government being responsible for the crime situation by creating a dependency syndrome. That is a phrase that this country has learnt very much like they learnt about the parasitic oligarchy and other things. Dependency syndrome has become a cliché in this country meaning all kinds

of things. However, an example of the dependency syndrome, as described by my friend and his colleagues in the Opposition was the existence of CEPEP and the use of CEPEP. The *Hansard* record is replete with the response to those programmes.

And, only today, Mr. Speaker, this very Member, who, today, talked so loudly about dependency syndrome in this very Chamber, a couple hours ago, thereabouts. He was here asking his colleagues and asking us to agree to a quarter billion dollars more for CEPEP. I thought in coming into Government that they would have had other ideas and other ways of raising people up. But apparently all they have is an expansion of CEPEP. [*Desk thumping*] If CEPEP was dependency syndrome, how come [*Interruption*] after two years in office and three-quarters in a fiscal year, you are coming to the House to get \$250 million to expand CEPEP. So if that is the fact, you cannot then come here and talk about dependency syndrome, because you seem to be creating more of the very thing that you criticized. And that is all I want to say on the subject, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

In trying to get you to understand what the Government is about, he says, “the Government is about equitable distribution of resources”, and he mentioned what is going on in certain constituencies. This Minister seems to have a carryover from last night. I do not know what beverage he was on last night; it was not coconut water, because how could he come here knowing [*Interruption*] that only yesterday day or day before yesterday, the people of Beetham—it was yesterday the 24th—who were expressing themselves.

Mr. Warner: Well sponsored by you.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, protect me from them, please? Please!

Mr. Speaker: Members, please! Do not implicate and do not impute to Members of this honourable House any motives that are dishonourable. If you wish to do so, Members on the Government Bench, please file a Motion. The Member is speaking, take notes.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for your protection. It was the people of Beetham, who, last night on the news, I saw, telling the people of the country to come look at their circumstance, among the least fortunate in the country they were able to demonstrate to the country that a community centre that was under construction when the government changed in 2010 has remained abandoned and unattended in Beetham. *[Interruption]*

So, while you cannot complete a community centre in Beetham to do all the wonderful things he talked about centres can do. He just gave us a thesis of how these things would contribute to improvement in the quality of life and lowering of criminal conduct, but the one in Beetham has been left half-finished only because the Government has changed. Then he has the gall, he has the unmitigated gall to talk about equitable distribution of resources. *[Desk thumping]* If that was not sufficient, I have stood in this particular—*[Hon. N. Baksh rises]*—no, I am not giving way to you in particular. Keep your seat! *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker, in this very place I have had to ask questions, Motion on the Adjournment about the Carenage Fishing Complex which, if you pass in Carenage now you would see the skeleton of the building, half-finished. *[Interruption]* It began in our time, yes; it reached 50 per cent completion, and this Government has been in office for two years, has presented two budgets, and the Member for Naparima who is trying to disturb me now is

on record in *Hansard*, twice, telling us, that nothing will go on there until 2013.

Hon. Member: That is right. That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: He is on record twice as telling us that there will be no return to the Carenage Fishing Complex to complete it until 2013. It was in this House that I had to bring a question to find out how much new money was put in new projects, and at the time they told us it was \$1,300 million, but they could not find one cent to put on the Carenage Fishing Complex, and he comes here to today and has the gall to talk about equitable distribution of resources. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Ten million dollars on it.

Dr. K. Rowley: Then the Minister who postpones Carenage Fishing Complex to 2013 wants me to give way. You can join the debate if you wish. Join the debate and talk about what a wonderful Government you are and how equitable you are distributing the resources. You can do that. Mr. Speaker, we are not fooled.

So, here it is, in Beetham half-finished community centre, Bagatelle in Diego Martin, same thing; Diego Martin Sports Complex, untouched; Carenage Fishing Centre, left alone; and you want us to believe that you are distributing the resources openly.

I hear my friend talking about Biche High School—[*Points across Chamber*—I want to remind you—

Hon. Member: Who talked about that?

Dr. K. Rowley: One of my friends over here.

Dr. Moonilal: Today?

Dr. K. Rowley: Today.

Mr. Warner: I am his friend; I am his friend.

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes, we are friends. *[Interruption]* And I want to draw to your attention, notwithstanding the “ol’talk” from Members on the other side and the political talk, Biche High School was built under the UNC. That is a fact. *[Interruption]*

Biche High School was due for opening under the UNC. Fact! The Minister of Education at the time was the person who is today the Prime Minister. That is a fact. The school was ready by July of 2000. When the school was completed an issue arose about the environmental and the physical nature of the school. The school was funded by an IDB loan. The IDB had cause to put an expert to review that completed school, which was not opened by the Minister of the day, for the reason I just mentioned. *[Interruption]* The report was done by an engineer called Burgess. Burgess did that report and the report was sent to the Minister who is now the Prime Minister, and the conclusion of that report was that the school, which cost \$30 million, the money was wasted because the school was built in an environment where it could not have been used. It was on that basis that the Member for Siparia who was the Minister of Education, failed to open the school at that time.

Miss Cox: And they come here and say is the PNM.

Dr. K. Rowley: The school—and I will ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether if fact, anybody on the Government side could tell us that the school was not finished and ready in July 2000 and it was not opened by the very Government that built it? Because of the gas leak issues and because of the structural issues that went with it.

This Government came in—

Hon. Member: Would you give way?

Dr. K. Rowley: No, I am not giving way; you could join the debate if you wish. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, the school was built by the Government; it was finished under the UNC; it was not opened by the UNC. *[Interruption]* The school and the IDB report, which I have seen and I have read. The Burgess report deemed the school to be \$30 million wasted. *[Interruption]* This Government has gone and they have redone the school, but if you noticed, the cost of refurbishment of the school was more than the cost of building the school. *[Interruption]* The cost of refurbishment after a period of testing for years cost more than it took to build the school. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for Caroni East, you will have an opportunity to speak.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have two minutes at the end.

Mr. Speaker: No, you have no two minutes at the end. *[Laughter]* No, if you speak and you claim that you are being misrepresented, then you can rise, and at the end you can get two minutes. But you are yet to speak. *[Interruption]* So, could I ask you, hon. Member for Caroni East, take copious notes, and if you wish to speak after the hon. Member, you are entitled.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to speak.

Mr. Speaker: No, but you cannot speak whilst a Member is speaking. And I want you to observe Standing Order 40(b) and (c), respectively. Be silent when a Member is on his legs. And no matter how we feel about a Member's contribution, each Member has freedom of speech in this House

and this Speaker intends to ensure that that freedom is exercised. With my protection, continue hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I trust that I would get a little extension for the injury inflicted upon me.

Mr. Speaker, I could take issue with the Member for Tabaquite all afternoon, but he would love that, because then I would not deal with the substance of the Motion, which I expect to deal with and I will deal with. It is unfortunate that this problem that we as a people are having to deal with, this crime problem, finds itself rooted in political toing and froing, because whatever the political occupancy office is, the issue of crime—the people of Trinidad and Tobago better understand this you know; those who prey on the society in their criminal conduct do not begin contemplating those actions on the basis of who is in office.

Criminals do not determine who is the office to plan their attack; big, small or medium size. The entire society of Trinidad and Tobago is facing this problem of unacceptable level of violent crime. And I dare say, Mr. Speaker, we are not alone—if I may very quickly give you an idea as to the nature of our problem, in my research for this Motion, I will just very quickly look through to see what is happening elsewhere in the world, and let me give statistics. These statistics are the latest that are due and they are 2008 statistics, but very much so, not much has changed between then and now, so I want you to take it in the context that it is very much, as it was it is now, notwithstanding the Government's story.

I am talking here about number of murders per 100,000 in the population—number of murders per 100,000 population: In Fiji 2.8; Italy, the home of the mafia, the land of the criminals in the south they tell you,

where Naples is, 1.2—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under PNM 30.

Dr. K. Rowley: Ireland, two; but, of course you have countries like Jamaica where it is 59; South Africa, where it is 36—and it has fallen from 60-odd. In South Africa it was 60-odd per 100,000, it has fallen to 39; Trinidad and Tobago in 2008—and we are very close to that figure now. I do not know the exact figure because these are not the last figures—we are 39.7, approximately 40 persons per 100,000.

So, we have a problem. Whether we like it or not any government of Trinidad and Tobago, any government of Trinidad and Tobago, will have to give this priority—40 persons per 100,000 being murdered in this country. [*Interruption*] And, of course, there is an interesting side to it, if we look at the countries where the statistic is even more dramatic, in our neighbourhood you would see in Central America, El Salvador, 51 per 100,000; Guatemala, 45 per 100,000; Honduras, 61 per 100,000. What is instrumental and instructive about that, is that these are the areas, the countries that have allowed criminal gangs to flourish in a way that they do not flourish anywhere else in the world.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at—there is a paper here written by somebody call Deanne Lashin featured article of 2005, is called “Crime in the Caribbean.” When I read this article, what struck me in a research paper called “Crime in the Caribbean”, it makes reference to the northern Caribbean territories, and throughout the paper Trinidad and Tobago was not mentioned at all. It talks about Jamaica, St. Lucia, Antigua, Bahamas,

Barbuda, St. Kitts Nevis and most recently Aruba. This is 2005. It does not mention Trinidad and Tobago. But between 2005 and today, Trinidad and Tobago has moved well up where there is no way we could not be noticed by any researcher who is researching crime in the Caribbean.

So over the years—the fact of the matter is that the criminal element within our borders has grown considerably and the country tries to respond to it, and it is that what this Motion is saying. We acknowledge that we have this crime problem, there were responses to it, albeit unsatisfactory in many instances, and that it became a matter of great concern to the national community and one can say it resulted or it contributed significantly to a change of Government because Government requirement to secure the population is a priority, and quite properly it was a political issue. So the Government that was responding to this growth of the criminal conduct in this country where in 2005, we did not even make the parade. But by 2008, I think it was we were up there—in 2008, 2009, 2010 we were breaking record, the criminal element was flourishing. There was a response to it because in the statistics here one of the things you would see, Mr. Speaker, pleasingly is that kidnapping for ransom is zero, zero in recent times.

So there was a time when we were having kidnapping on a daily basis. We responded; the State responded, and we stamped it out and we are still required to respond to the rest of the violent crime in the country. And now the researcher points out that it is the drug trade and the gang conduct that is contributing to this escalation in crime in Central America and in the Caribbean.

That brings me to the point of how this Government having advocated, that it could have done a better job than the Government of the

day is now being called upon to account two years after it has been in office for the status quo. What happened, Mr. Speaker, was that the Government decided to respond in a variety of ways. This Motion talks about what the Government has done. The Government established a policy enunciated by the Prime Minister herself, we are not going out at sea to fight crime, so we do not need off shore patrol vessels; we need to fight crime in the streets in Trinidad and Tobago. That was a change in policy.

The special anti-crime unit which was targeting heavy haters in the criminal element, this Government decided it will treat with it and I heard my friend from Oropouche saying again—let me tell you why SAUTT was important, Mr. Speaker—draw your own conclusion. When I was the Minister of Housing one of the most popular requests I used to get personally were officers of the State who were policemen and sometimes prison service officers who were making a special plea on a regular basis to be assisted to be relocated from where they live, because they were afraid of criminals in their district, policemen and to a lesser extent prison officers. My colleague from Oropouche East might be still having that same experience. What that tells you, Mr. Speaker, is that the criminal element had become tough enough and respected enough by the police officers that the police officers felt fear for their lives and their families. Against that background you have special units or SAUTT was meant to be the special unit of special officers with special training and special—how should I put it?

Hon. Member: Do not put it.

Dr. Moonilal: Special money.

Dr. K. Rowley: No, well that could be that too, but a tougher kind of

officer who would confront the criminals in their turf. I am hearing today that the current police service, the current Commissioner of Police is in fact initiating special anti-gang units within the police service. It is the same thing. It might be costed differently, it might be named differently, but when it comes to the job that they are required to do this special anti-gang policing that is now being formulated by this Government is the same thought process that SAUTT was meant to do. [*Desk thumping*] And the special training that SAUTT was providing, I expect will be provided to those who are now going to be part of a special anti-gang unit of the police service, except that it is now two years later. But in the interim what is the situation, Mr. Speaker? Over and above what the Government did there is one particle action the Government took.

In August last year there was nine murders over a period of four days involved in a weekend. And while my colleague from Oropouche East was telling the media that there was no need for a state of emergency, within 24 hours the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago declared to the country that she will be declaring a state of emergency sometime later. And we did in fact get a state of emergency that was supposed to be limited. They did not even know what they were declaring. It was meant and it was said to be a limited state of emergency in the hot spot areas of the country, turns out what they had done was to declare a state of emergency across Trinidad and Tobago and put the country under curfew. And we heard it today from my colleague from Tabaquite, who up to now has not understood what damage this Government did last year. He said this action of the Government in declaring a state of emergency is to show or it demonstrates that the Government has strength to tackle the problem, and it demonstrated that

there is political will. It is not justifying on the basis of the effectiveness of the action you know. It was meant to demonstrate that the Government had testicular fortitude under the skirt. Therefore, now that we look to see what has been the effect of that, they put it across that it was a previous Government did not have the will to do it. But there were two reasons why it was not done by the previous Government.

- (1) That it was not going to be any sustained and significant approach to the real problem of the crime that we were experiencing.
- (2) That if you do it you would damage the economy of Trinidad and Tobago in a very serious way.

This Government and its spokesperson said no it has to be done because Ken Gordon say so. Since 2003 Ken Gordon advocated that and the PNM would not do it, because the PNM is in league with the criminals. [*Desk thumping*] And they declared a state of emergency—and now they foolishly tap their desk as though there is something that has been accomplished.

Today, Mr. Speaker, post state of emergency—we are in a position to look at the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago. Let us take a very quick walk through the last six months. Emergency lasted from end of August into December. Let me just run through a few of the headlines of the period. We had January, just to go in order. You know in January when we saw a return to the criminal activities the Attorney General—it is only hysteria over the murder rate. He is talking in January. Persons who are already concerned that the murders, the violent crime, murders, which we thought we had dealt with between August and December in a state of emergency and curfew it

was still with us in January, but the Attorney General was calling it hysteria, that was January.

Today, Mr. Speaker, in June do you know that the outcome of the murder activities of 2012, higher than month, upon month. For an equivalent period 2011 which saw the bringing into being of a state of emergency. Clearly the state of emergency has not dealt effectively with the criminal situation because today the murders which is the worst action of criminal conduct in the country in 2012, day upon day, month upon month comparing the same period with last year it was worst in 2012 than it was in 2011. But these persons in the Government all of last year during the emergency was telling the country that the state of emergency was their solution to the crime problems. Six months later we now know it was no solution and the problem is still with us. [*Desk thumping*]

I am talking here about March, just pulling out at random. Four killed in 24 hours. This is after the state of emergency, March of this year. And that is after the Attorney General in January says, it is only hysteria. April 10 murders in five days, after the state of emergency. February well the Attorney General he went from January to March into February with his hysteria talk. And of course Mr. Speaker, the same way we got the state of emergency by “vaps” we got CCJ by “vaps” too. My friend from Oropouche is on record of telling the House the CCJ move is also a crime fighting plan. This Government is on record you know. The Leader of Government Business telling the world that the move to the CCJ is the Government crime fighting plan. So you understand why persons are asking if our CCJ is ready to be a hanging court. But of course, the experts have said and have shown that the CCJ or the Privy Council it will not be what

the Government is holding it out to be, it would not be a hanging court so unfortunately my friend from Oropouche East who sees as crime plan is out of line to describe the CCJ and its use as our final court of appeal as any crime plan of the UNC.

Today, I am in a position to announce that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has no cohesive crime plan—[*Desk thumping*] none. Do not take my word for it. I am talking here about the police spokesperson, Sgt. Mystar that fella who comes up, the cartoon character that comes up and speaks for the police [*Laughter*]. He says homicide rate is on the rise. This is in May you know. This is in May. After trying to tell us all along that serious crime is falling when we are confronted by weekend murders by the dozen and half a dozen, he is now telling us homicide rate on the rise, as if we have to wait to hear that.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you heard en passant, in the mix, of the fulminations of the Member for Tabaquite this general impression he is giving that serious crimes are going down. They are playing with statistics. I have here the most recent of the police service serious crimes statistics. My friend from Tabaquite himself mentioned burglaries and break-ins as one category; robberies as one category. I just told you about murders.

What is the position with burglaries and break-ins? In January burglaries and break-ins: 340; February, 351; March, 374 and April, 340. In that scenario, can anybody in this Government or in the police service really come out and say that there is any reduction at all in the incidents of burglaries and break-ins in this country, bearing in mind that a number of persons who suffer burglaries of one kind or another do not even bother to

report it? Those are the reported ones. And when you see the April figure being equal to the January figure, and February and March were higher than January, on what basis is the Government and the Government's spokesperson telling this country that crime is going down? You are taking us for fools in this sphere of activity and we are not fools; we are not stupid; we want to be served and we are fed up of the lies! [*Desk thumping*]

Robberies—and these are the police official figures—January, 328; February 410 and, of course, in April, 343. So on that basis you can go and say, March—I have to search here; no big difference. The bottom line, robberies in March—I have to search for that.

Mr. Speaker: While you are searching, hon. Member—

Dr. K. Rowley: No, I am not searching, it is not—

Mr. Speaker: Whilst you are searching, your time is up. Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. K. Rowley: [*Desk thumping*] I wish to thank my colleagues for the extension and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so we have seen that there has been no improvement in the situation with respect to murders. We have seen where, statistically, even looking at the raw numbers, there is no significant reduction in the other categories, like robberies and break-ins and so on. Then, on that basis, what then is the Minister of National Security doing trying to tell the country that he is praising the cops for bringing down crime? Praising policemen for bringing down crime! Today, against the background of the inability of the Government to bring about any significant

improvement in the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago, against the mountain of misinformation and the confusion and the destruction of our peace of mind, and our security apparatus, I call for the resignation of the Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*]

I have heard the Prime Minister last night say that she is going to be reviewing portfolios and performance. Well, if she does, and she conducts any objective review, the Minister of National Security has to be shown the door, because his presence has made no difference to our circumstances. None whatsoever! None! As a matter of fact, he has embarrassed himself in the matter with the OPVs, where he was publicly calling for their presence and their use in the crime-fighting arrangements in securing our borders, because gun crimes are the crimes that are causing us the greatest anxiety, and we do not make guns in Trinidad and Tobago. I cannot tell you the last day I heard the police apprehending anybody with a homemade gun. It is sigs or taurus, Smith and Wesson, and all the latest cutting edge that come into the country through porous borders, and this Minister, who came out publicly and told the country that the offshore patrol vessels are vital to secure our borders to prevent drugs and guns from coming in, he is in office while the situation worsens and he is trying to mislead us by telling us he is praising police for bringing down crime when, in fact, the situation is getting worse.

He was here in this Parliament, joining with his malicious politically-driven colleagues, who were telling the people of Trinidad and Tobago—

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please. I think that the hon. Leader of the Opposition can use better language and withdraw that thing about

“malicious”. I do not think that you could get through to—

Dr. K. Rowley: I will save that for when you are not present. However, I withdraw those comments. He, as National Security Minister, was joining with his colleagues, changing his tongue to say that the vessels were being abandoned because they were lemons. Those were his words. And when he was asked in this House: is it that the malfunctioning of one of the guns on one of the ships was such to cause the contract to be fatally flawed and destroyed? He said, no.

What is happening right now, Mr. Speaker, which the Government is failing to respond to in this Motion—because we asked them to account for the actions they have taken, and one of those actions was the cancellation of the OPV contracts. All they have managed to do is to give the Attorney General frequent holidays in London, because what is happening now, as we warned them in this House, there is a serious arbitration going on in London where the Attorney General, not being the lawyer on record—because we have expensive lawyers on record in there—he goes to London probably to oversee the operations. This Government has now told us—they have admitted—that they are in arbitration over the matter; the vessels are now with the Brazilian navy securing the Brazilian borders. These lemons are securing the Brazilian borders. Criminals are coming north from the drug sources in Bolivia, in Peru, in Colombia, Venezuela, and Trinidad and Tobago is wide open.

Mr. Warner: Coming south from north.

Dr. K. Rowley: Coming north from south. They are coming north.

Mr. Warner: From south.

Dr. K. Rowley: That is obvious.

Mr. Warner: No.

Dr. K. Rowley: I leave it to you to assume that they are coming from south. They are coming north, from Bolivia, from Peru, Venezuela and Colombia, and the world now knows that Trinidad and Tobago is open for criminal drug and gun business.

This Government has told the country that they expect to receive from the arbitration, 140 million pounds returned to them. We anxiously await the outcome of the arbitration in London to see whether, in fact, the basis for the cancellation of that contract was, in fact, sustained at an arbitration that is taking place now. In the meantime, while arbitration is taking place, the criminals are having a field day in Trinidad and Tobago.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, one of the issues we raised with this Government was the disappearance of certain files that were being compiled by SAUTT during its existence. Whether you like SAUTT or did not like it, whether you approve or did not approve it, whether it was legal or illegal, as you say it was—and it was not illegal—you had a fact that you cannot deny, that during its existence and its work programme, SAUTT was developing files on a number of criminals or persons who were engaged or suspected to be engaged in criminal conduct in this country. Those files have disappeared in Trinidad and Tobago. When this Government came into office the action they took against SAUTT resulted in the Prime Minister who is the Chairman of the National Security Council not being able to tell the country definitively what became of those files.

So while we heard about the Government spying on me, my wife, my children, the Prime Minister, Dale Enoch and who, we never heard about one person being spied upon by SAUTT who was involved in criminal

activity. And when they were asked where are those files, the Prime Minister told us they were in the control of the Commissioner of Police. The Commissioner of Police made a public statement saying, "I have no such control over any such files; I know nothing about those files." Those files have never been accounted for, and today I call upon the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to tell the people of this country, definitively, what became of the files of those criminals that SAUTT had.

The next thing we know is that many of the informants that were being used by SAUTT have been eliminated, and only a week or so ago we heard that there was a break-in in one of SAUTT's premises. Who is guarding the guards? Imagine the SSA is supposed to be guarding us and cannot even guard itself.

What is more troublesome is that when the newspapers broke the story that there was a break-in and burglary at this high level security station, officials of State chose to lie to the public that it did not take place. It was the media that reported that the break-in took place and there were loss of items. One week later, the very break-in that did not take place, the police is now admitting that "we are now going to initiate an investigation into the break-in at the SIA out in the east". So what happened during the period when the break-in actually took place and when the police was initiating this investigation? And why is it so difficult to get truth from the State in Trinidad and Tobago? If there was a break in, there was a break-in. Why do you have to lie about it? And now that you have admitted that it took place, you are telling us, it is only two old computers that they took. Why must I believe you?

The allegation is that serious security items were lost, and if you were

lying about the actual break-in, why are you not to be seen to be lying about what was lost? As of now we are saying we do not believe what is being told to us. It is unfortunate, but the fact of the matter is, we have come to the point where we can believe nothing that is said to us by officialdom in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

And insofar as we are concerned about the police's ability to treat with these matters, every passing day one's confidence is shaken further, because it may very well be that we are a country facing the kind of numbers I just pointed out to you, which I compared with other countries—facing that level of violent crime, but we might be telling ourselves that we are dealing with it, but we do not have what it takes to be dealing with it. Because, you know, I was looking at a research paper and a comment made by Dr. Diane Williams, Senior Adviser at the Criminology Department of UWI. She had this to say, and I am quoting her here. This was in March of last year. She says, and I quote:

“If we do not have the manpower and the human and technical resources, we are not able to service the crime, as it were.”

And this is something that we need to ask ourselves, notwithstanding all that we had done or all that we are doing, because it is largely being seen to be ineffectual. Are we, in fact, directing the human resource? Do we have the correct human resources, and are we addressing the situation from this technical and human resource requirement? Are we? Because one sometimes has to ask what is happening with the police service, because it is not the teachers, the doctors, the lawyer or the parliamentarians who are, in fact, the responders to crime in this country; it is the police service and their support agencies, and one has to ask what is happening.

And it is in that context, Mr. Speaker, I want to raise, just out of this matter of how the police is functioning; here it is, people decide to commit a crime; shoot somebody; kill them; they plan; they do it in hiding; they hide themselves, and so on, and the police is required to go out there and investigate, to conduct certain specific investigations to try to find out who this criminal was; who did this crime; to collect evidence and to bring that evidence to the court with the person.

But this Government seems not to understand what evidence means, because when they were declaring the state of emergency, we warned them that if you are going to pick up people, as they did—remember the scene, Mr. Speaker? Pick up people all over the country, mainly in eastern Port of Spain, willy-nilly, load them into trucks like cattle, dump them in the jail, and the Prime Minister was out there talking about criminals being on the run and praising herself and her Government, and we said to them: where is the evidence that would be led against these people?

3.45 p.m.

That every single person, probably bar one, has been allowed to walk scot-free having been herded in, having been presented as the result of crime fighting by this Government, in the end, puff. Nothing!

The Prime Minister whose Government had as its priority crime fighting as number one priority—number one priority had to do with crime and the Government's response to crime. They laid out some actions, all have failed. So now we await the Government's own assessment of its performance and its officers, its Minister to see what changes would be made in the coming Cabinet reshuffle.

The bottom line was that having picked up people left, right and

centre and not being able to prosecute one of them, not being able to account for one of the files of all these people who were suspected of criminal conduct, like my colleague from Tabaquite today, a whole lot of flowery old talk, self-praise which as we know is no recommendation. The Prime Minister is making a statement on the failed state of emergency, refusing to accept that the state of emergency has failed as a crime fighting tool, has succeeded in damaging the economy. Because we heard only this week from the Governor of the Central Bank that our economy in the last two quarters—and he was talking about the last quarter of last year and the first quarter of this year which makes up a significant part of this fiscal year—contrary to what the Government again in the same self-praising language told us would have seen economic growth, we are not surprised that during the period of the state of emergency the quarter that led into October, November and December, our the economy contracted by over 2 per cent.

This “hard ears” Government after they had the first 90 days of the emergency and saw the damage it was doing, they extended it. They came to the Parliament and extended it. The damage of that emergency did not end in December, it carried over into the first quarter of this year and it is with us now because we are in recession. Consecutive terms of negative growth. If you listen to the Government you would not think it is this country we are talking about.

Dr. Rambachan: How you could have recession and growth at the same time?

Dr. K. Rowley: The only growth is your stomach. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, Mr. Speaker, 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Leader of the Opposition, I know you like to

snap—because—I ask you to use better language, please.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, which of those words is unparliamentary?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Withdraw!

Mr. Speaker: The Member has taken offence to what you have said.

Dr. K. Rowley: He could if he wishes. I want to know which of the words I used is unparliamentary and I will withdraw it unreservedly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is no need to repeat.

Mr. Speaker: I am not dealing with the question of an unparliamentary, word. I am saying that you can at least express—*[Interruption]*

Dr. K. Rowley: If my language was not unparliamentary why would he jump like that?

Mr. Speaker: Alright. Let me get a copy of the *Hansard* report on that matter and then we will deal with it later.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, the Member even as I am demonstrating that the Government statements of untruths can be challenged by the facts from the Central Bank, my colleague from Tabaquite is sitting over in his seat and talking about growth. That is the misleading information that I am trying to object to. If I did in fact use descriptive language that is offensive to my colleague, I withdraw.

Hon. Member: He have real belly.

Mr. Imbert: You are a big belly man.

Dr. K. Rowley: But the point I am making, Mr. Speaker, even as I am demonstrating that the Government is trying to tell us one thing which is not true, the Governor of the Central Bank has just pointed out to the country that for consecutive quarters what we expected to happen has not happened, the out-turn has been decline instead of growth. He will not accept the truth

even if jumps up and bites him in the—face. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Rambachan: “Yuh hurting today eh.” Aloys hurting you.

Dr. K. Rowley: There is a serious problem in this country and it will contribute to a further deterioration in our quality of life as the population fails to believe what the Government says to it. I am talking about evidence, the plan was to herd people put them in jail. Then, you know, Mr. Speaker, the Government pollutes the environment. It pollutes the police service. Because, when the Government could not explain its lack of effectiveness with a state of emergency, it started saying that it was the Anti-gang legislation that was the problem. Not that they picked up people—without evidence, the files on some of those persons cannot surface to be used as evidence against them, all of a sudden there was this cliché in the country which is now being repeated by members in the media and interestingly enough by the police service.

I have heard senior police officers recently talking about the failure of the Anti-gang legislation. I did not know that legislation got up and did anything. If any police officer wants to accuse anybody of anything or any citizen wants to accuse anybody of anything, it does not matter how serious or how minor the offence is, you are required under the specific legislation, under which the complaint is made, to be able to adduce evidence to show that your complaint can be supported. In the absence of evidence, it does not matter how the law is drafted, you are wasting your time.

So when this Government went out there and picked up thousands of people knowing that there was no evidence against them, to go to the court to prosecute them, the Government was engaging in public relations gimmickry and nothing else.

You know, I was lying in my bed the other night watching the Senate debate.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Thought yuh watching cricket.”

Dr. K. Rowley: That hard to watch. It was easier to watch the Parliament Channel. Mr. Speaker, I was watching the proceedings in the Senate. I almost bolted out of my comfort when an Independent Senator was treating with an amendment in committee stage in the Children Bill, 2012.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I have advised Members of this honourable House, the Senate is an independent Chamber and we do not want to refer to any developments or proceedings of that House. As well as they are advised not to refer to any proceedings of this honourable House. So, I would ask you, hon. Leader of the Opposition, I have ruled on that matter before, that we should not really bring the Senate debate or any contribution by any Member of the Senate into our deliberations in this House.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, am I to understand from that ruling that the records of *Hansard* of the Upper House are not available for reference in the Lower House?

Mr. Speaker: Maybe two years later but not in the current period, Sir.

Hon. Member: What!

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I have been here for quite a while, when was that position taken, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: You can meet me in my Chamber—[*Laughter*]—and I will discuss with you the actual precedence for it.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay. I am guided. But the bottom line is that the Attorney General who was the poster child for this

“grab and jail” and whose statement was that, “jail eh make to ripe fig...”

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, please. I mean to say, you cannot describe an Attorney General as a “poster child.” An Attorney General is a Member of this honourable House and let us not attribute or impute or in any way indicate negative and dishonourable comments to that office. So, I would ask you—you know better. And I know you are more eloquent in your language in describing people but not as what you have said. So please—

Dr. K. Rowley: I must say, Mr. Speaker, my choice of elegance of language is something that goes with the occasion. A poster child is not necessarily a negative.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I know. I am just asking you if you can use better language in terms of describing an honourable Member of the Parliament. That is all I am saying.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, you would like me to be more elegant in my language. That is a request I can entertain. Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General who was the chief advocate of the, “grab and jail” arrangement under the guise that, “jail eh make to ripe fig,” he was the one who put his Government’s position forward that you could fight crime without evidence. And rather than proceed to accumulate evidence, so as to make use of the provisions of the Anti-gang legislation, this Government’s action, the record will show, is to have picked up people without evidence, alerted criminals that they were on the Government’s radar and the end result is six months later, the crime that we sought to address last year August is still with us unaddressed and gets worse. [*Desk thumping*]

It is from that standpoint that I took note of the fact that the Attorney

General is now in a position to say that it will depend on the evidence. This is a dramatic change of position of the Attorney General. He is now saying that based on the legislation, it will be the evidence. He is now saying and I agreed with him that we in this honourable House, we can make the laws but those who operate the laws will have to produce and provide the evidence.

Today, I commend that to the people of Trinidad and Tobago as the new position of the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago. And you ask yourself what happened in August of 2011? All that happened is that the Government saw a spike in crime, panicked and declared a state of emergency. Because in recent times similar levels of killings have been taking place with increased frequency in Trinidad and Tobago. If the Government genuinely believes that its crime plan of a state of emergency is a response to that kind of spike in crime, then the people of Trinidad and Tobago ought to expect the Government to act with further emergencies.

Thank God, that is not yet being told to us by the Government. But in the meantime there is a requirement for the Government to respond to the ongoing crime situation in the country.

It is not sufficient to come here every day or to go on platforms and parrot what happened under the last Government. The last Government had its challenges and responded as it saw fit. The results of that we have lived with it and we have survived that. We are still alive, thank God, to see each other's face. But the bottom line is, if we are to continue to remain alive it falls to this Government to protect us from the criminals who might be at this very moment conspiring to kill more people in this country. If this Government does not come up with competent, policies and programmes to respond to the criminals who are planning to kill us now, then failure will be

our lot as we go down in the weeks and months and years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this Government at work, we have seen the Government's results, we have seen its penchant for not levelling with us, and on this matter of crime we would like to see it depoliticized. We would like to see it measured against our national success in responding to those persons, who for one reason or the other, choose crime as a way of life.

We are seeing amongst us now in our population, people who it cannot be said that their criminal conduct is as a result of lack of opportunity, and they did not have a job or they did not have the opportunity to have a meal. Criminals come in all forms and fashion. There are those who have millions who are committing crime because as far as they are concerned poverty in millions is about the same as poverty in dollars. Some of the loudest voices in this country against the crime situation are today silent. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Who?

Dr. K. Rowley: Who?

Dr. Moonilal: You have three minutes.

Hon. Member: Robocop.

Dr. K. Rowley: There were those, who when the crime level was unacceptable, as it is unacceptable now, made a career—

4.00 p.m.

In fact, my friend, the Member for Chaguanas East—you asked me who—was not a politician. His career was conceived, became embryonic and was given birth in his fight for crime. Today, he is the most silent person in Trinidad and Tobago. As far as I am concerned, it appears as

though, as long as Robocop is not interfered with, he has nothing to say because his campaign will not be—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: Hon Member, I ask you to be very, very cautious because I know that this matter has been raised across the floor, and I know the implications of what you say when you say it. So it borders on implicating and imputing improper motives to the hon. Member for Chaguanas East. I ask you to desist from that course. It is not the first time you have alluded to that or attributed the Member for Chaguanas East in that respect, because I have been sitting here and I know what takes place on the floor of the House. So I ask you to desist.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I have no role to play in the choice of the Member for Chaguanas East campaign team or his campaign programme, but I simply say, clearly something has changed. The Member for Chaguanas East seems to have lost his appetite for taking issue with the level of criminal conduct in the country. He is now comfortable. As far as he is concerned, what is happening now does not require the sound of his voice. The Member for Chaguanas East made a name for himself—Keith Noel 136. It appears as though it is only when it gets to Keith Noel 666 that he will open his mouth again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by saying that this Government's record in fighting crime has been dismal, its reporting has been deceitful and the Government needs to shape up or ship out, starting with the Minister of National Security.

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

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Jack Warner): Mr.

Speaker, I had not plan to speak on this Motion, but after listening to the last speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West, I am forced to rise in light of some of the deliberate miscommunication and some of the statements he has made in this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, one gets the impression that the Member for Diego Martin West has a convenient memory loss, I should, so he has forgotten all the things about Mastrofski, he has forgotten all the things about the blimp—not one blimp, but two blimps—he has forgotten everything about the men from Scotland Yard who came here to fight crime at astronomical salaries—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: In their retirement.

Hon. J. Warner: Yes, in their old age—and, of course, they enjoyed the sunshine at Maracas Bay and so on. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: They came for bake and shark.

Hon. J. Warner: He has forgotten that, and he has come to this House—oh, he is a saint; he is an angel; he is holier than thou. He has invented and created the words “purity of purpose”. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, it was the Members on this side who joined with them when they were unluckily on this side and wanted to get us to help them with the Police Bill. We realized then that for us to fight crime effectively, we had to have the joint efforts of both sides. We realized that fighting crime was a collective effort so to speak, and we joined with them to help in the Police Bill. It was they who decided, after, to bring in the Regulations for appointing a Commissioner of Police. They tend to forget. After all the examinations, after all the investigations, all the enquiries and all the

interviews were carried out, they found that one Stephen Williams was the person—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Our own.

Hon. J. Warner: Our own locally grown Stephen Williams—whom the committee recommended to be the Commissioner of Police, it was they, led by the Member for Diego Martin North/East—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: And including the Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. J. Warner: He was among those persons—who, of course, came to the House and went against the very same Stephen Williams, whom the committee had recommended. They left office and left us with the problem of finding a Commissioner of Police. They tend to forget.

Mr. Speaker, they forget that their record showed that on three occasions—not once, not twice, but three times—they extended the term of office for the Commissioner of Police. What was his name again?

Dr. Moonilal: Philbert.

Hon. J. Warner: James Philbert. I have nothing against James Philbert. They who were so much concerned about crime could not find a Commissioner of Police to fight crime, but when they did they went against it. For the first time they found an increase in the decrease of crime. [*Desk thumping*] They tend to forget. I cannot sit here in all seriousness and listen to this level of hypocrisy and this posturing that takes place here for the record, and it seems to be that they are so concerned about crime.

Mr. Speaker, he seems to have forgotten that in 2008—if I am correct—that was the year when we had 500 plus murders. That was the year; I think that was 2008.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes!

Hon. J. Warner: Over 500 murders and he come here today, with statistics, to say how many murders out of 100,000. In 2008, out of 100,000, what was the ratio? What was the ratio? I cannot understand it. Then you come here, today, and talk to this House as if you are holier than thou. That cannot be right.

We have been here for two years, and for two years I do not recall the Member for Diego Martin West making one proposal on how to fight crime. Not one proposal! And, week after week he goes and gives a press conference—running a party by press conference—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Chasing every car.

Hon. J. Warner: Yes, it is true—saying nothing. What has he said about the crime? What has he said about the issue in terms of how we could battle the crime wave in the hotspots of Trinidad and Tobago? What has he said? He comes here, today, holier than thou. Same old, same old. I have heard about the OPVs more than 15 times. [*Interruption*] “When you talk let me hear about it, nah.” I have heard about the blimp the same number of times. I have heard about the OPVs going to Brazil, same time. I have heard about SAUTT. But after having said all of that, he has not said that all those innovations and creations failed. [*Desk thumping*] They failed and because they failed, we are where we are today, and we realized that it does mean that you buy every pie in the sky as a solution. It does not mean that.

When we came, we realized that some of the actions that they had put forward were doomed from the start. They seem to forget that even when to buy a single boat—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: The *Su*.

Hon. J. Warner: The *Su*—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. J. Warner: I am trying to be like you. I am trying to match you. The *MV Su* came down here and after \$52 million, did not take to the sea as yet. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: The crowd affected him from last night.

Hon. J. Warner: You see, I could understand. He was talking about the Member for Tabaquite and he said that the Member for Tabaquite did not know what he was drinking last night. He is sure it was not coconut water. Well, I hope that you saw what happened last night, when we had over 40,000 people [*Desk thumping*] coming, of course, to an event in the middle of the week, in a non-election year, and where you had, of course— [*Interruption*] Yes, we had 40,000 URP and CEPEP; [*Interruption*] and Sugar Aloes is a URP. Sugar Aloes is a URP, you see. You have not recovered yet from the fact and the shock you saw on television last night.

She is a queen, she is so royal, sung by Sugar Aloes. “That is killing you”. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: That is what hurting. That is it.

Hon. J. Warner: When I was a little boy my grandmother gave me a word called “bazodee”; that have you “bazodee”.

You talked about the Member for Chaguanas East and said that he has lost his appetite and he is silent. This is a Member of a Cabinet. This Member is in a Cabinet where we have collective responsibility; and in the Cabinet— [*Interruption*] You will never reach Cabinet—he makes his submissions. There are spokespersons here who will talk about crime. He talks about trade and industry. That is the kind of discipline he has. He does not pee on every car. [*Interruption*] That was said by the Member for San

Fernando East.

Dr. Moonilal: The Member for San Fernando East say he runs down every car.

Hon. J. Warner: Run down every car. At the end of the day, the Member for Diego Martin West, as the Leader of the Opposition, as the Leader of the PNM, is chasing shadows. He had done nothing; he has said nothing; and what is so surprising to me is that he took 75 minutes to say nothing. [*Desk thumping*] Bring some stats here that have no meaning, no value to us. At the end of the day, what has he said to fight crime? [*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: What new?

Hon. J. Warner: What is new, Mr. Speaker? He has forgotten—the Member for Diego Martin West—that they had some model police stations. [*Interruption*] Yes, eat your heart out. He has forgotten that in their time they had some model police stations and those model police stations were only model because in each of them there were more wrecked cars parked up than anywhere else. Chaguanas was one of those stations. When we had those model police stations did he consult anybody? Did we know, of course, what their functions were; what they were supposed to do; what was the objective? Did he? He comes today to try to ridicule this Government and talk about 21st Century policing.

At the end of the day, if even we try 21st Century policing, we did not spend money the way you have spent on the blimp to do it, because we believe it is worth a try. We believe, having been advised by the Commissioner of Police, that it is more beneficial for the country, for our policemen to be more mobile, to make more patrols, and at some stations they felt it can be closed after 6.00 p.m. so that you can be able to serve the community better.

If it works, we all win. If it works, fine. We are all winners. **4.15 p.m.**

If it does not work, Mr. Speaker, we try something else. But to come here and to posture, and this is something that they do week after week, especially the Member for Diego Martin West—week after week; same old, same old. OPV, SAUTT—week after week. I do not know if, at the end of the day, they believe that in any way that they can—I do not want to use the word “jumbie” us, but I want to say, Mr. Speaker, if they can railroad us.

Hon. Persad-Bissessar: Never. They cannot.

Hon. J. Warner: They cannot do that, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that after two years we know where we are going. I do not know if they know where they are. We know where we are going. If anyone had listened to our Prime Minister last night in her State of the Nation Address, you would have heard where we are going after two years. [*Desk thumping*] Two years, Mr. Speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, on the next occasion, the Member for Chaguanas West will complete his contribution. I beg to move that this honourable House do now adjourn to Monday June 04, at 1.30 p.m. in the afternoon, and on that day, it is the intention of the Government to debate through all its stage, the Finance (Supplementation) Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question for the adjournment, there is, in fact, a Motion that was supposed to be responded to. That Motion was raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East and a response was supposed to be had. Is that being deferred?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: There is another matter on the Motion on the Adjournment and that is in the name of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

The Pan in the Classroom Programme

(Government's commitment)

Ms. Donna Cox (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, this afternoon, to speak on the very important programme, Pan in the Classroom. This programme was launched in 2002 to implement the Ministry of Education's curricula, a music programme, using the national instrument as the instrument of choice in the nation's schools. The Pan in the Classroom Project Unit was appointed to administer this programme.

The programme was piloted in 15 schools. Each school selected for phase one of the programme was to be issued with a 16-piece range of steelband instrument and a complete set of steelband accessories. The programme has since expanded to 180 schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Further developments including an expansion of the staff in the Unit, and by Cabinet Minute No. 2229 of August 30, 2007, which agreed to the employment on contract of the staff in the Pan in the Classroom Unit for a further period of three years.

The programme was supplied by pan makers and tuners from all over the country. This programme created economic opportunities for many new and current pan makers. Since, the general election of May 2010, this programme has been in jeopardy. Many Pan in the Classroom tutors' contracts were not renewed, and this placed the National Junior Panorama Competition in danger and the Pan in the Classroom Unit in limbo.

Mr. Speaker, the *Guardian* newspaper of January 10, 2011 carried an article with the headline and I quote:

“Junior pan in danger.”

This article referred to the possible cancellation of the junior panorama. To date, no proper explanation was given for this occurrence, and actually in that same article, the Minister of Education promised to investigate.

But, Mr. Speaker, after this, month to month contracts were issued to the employees so that the junior panorama event would not be affected. But, this occurred, not only for Carnival 2011 but also for Carnival 2012—this year also. In April/May 2011, employees were told to reapply for their jobs—that is the employees of that Unit—and they were interviewed accordingly. Some contracts were issued but for one year, and, in some cases, retroactively. To date, there are no long-term contracts at this Unit. We would like to know, Mr. Speaker, what is the reason for this?

The contracts of the staff in this Unit will be up later this year. What is the Government’s plan? Will they be renewed for longer than one year or will they be renewed? We would like to know, because, this ever-changing contractual arrangement between the Pan in the Classroom staff and the Government continues. I have in my possession a letter signed by about 30 instructors sent to TTUTA outlining their concerns about this Unit and asking TTUTA to look into the matter on behalf of the instructors of that Unit.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is important to know that the only school that was approved to receive a set of pans, since May 2010, was the Penal Rock Road Hindu School.

Hon. Member: What!

Ms. D. Cox: Mr. Speaker, I understand that no other procurement of instruments took place for any school. In essence, the expansion of the

programme was effectively halted, and, I wonder why.

Mr. Speaker, the only set of instruments, from May to present, that was supplied to the Penal Rock Road Hindu School was refused by the school. I was reliably informed that instructions were given to the Hindu schools, under the Sanatan Dharma Maha Saha, not to accept pan in the schools unless all Hindu schools were outfitted with a complete set of Indian instruments. So, the Penal Rock Road Hindu School accepted the Indian instruments that were available to schools but did not accept the pan.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education announced recently that the Pan in the Classroom Unit will now be a multi-cultural music unit. There will now be a conversion from pan as a main focus to a range of instruments including the dholak, tassa, dhantaal, cuatro, african drums, xylophone, harmonium, sitar, tabla among others.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with the addition of these instruments to schools if they so desire. As a matter of the fact, the option of choosing these instruments at schools was always a choice for the school's administration if they so desired. They could have requested any other instruments beside pan, but, many of them choose pan. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? I will tell you why. Because pan is an excellent music teaching tool. It is a melodic percussive instrument. Most of the India instruments proposed are percussion instruments, and you cannot play a scale and teach music to accompany these instruments. Pan in the Classroom is a curriculum programme with exams and the scaling down of this programme will leave a dent on the music education agenda in the school system. So, Mr. Speaker, our youths are the future, and a whole movement of a people was brought to a halt by the scaling down of this

programme.

I want to quote an article on the steel pan written by Dr. Aurelie Helmlinger, a research fellow, ethnomusicology in the French National Centre For Scientific Research. This is from her PhD thesis which was defended in 2005. It is entitled Steel band in Education, An Ideal Teaching Aid. She states and I quote:

The advantages of this instrument are both cognitive and social.

She also stated that and I quote:

The position of the notes on the tenor pan as well as the other fourth and fifth instruments for cello sixth bass is an excellent means to intervals. It is a fantastic pedagogical tool to learn the scales in classic theory.

This practice of playing the steel pan is also excellent for social development. A common ethnomusicological observation shows that music practice, especially orchestral practice, develops social links. Various studies show that music practice is a success factor at school especially in mathematics and languages. Musical activity improves self-confidence and ambition.

The ethnomusicologist also stated and I quote:

That steel pan is a perfect means for music teaching at a large scale as in schools because of its cognitive advantages and enjoyable characteristics. It facilitates the access to music.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the steel pan has been rated as the fourth best teaching tool for music in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the deafening silence from the stakeholders of pan where this situation is concerned. Where is Pan

Trinbago in all of this? Where is Mr. Keith Diaz? Where is Mr. Patrick Arnold? Have they all gone silent?

I am aware, however, that letters were written from Pan Trinbago to the Minister of Education. Four letters were written requesting meetings with him and one is even dated as far back as May 16, 2011, so it is a year ago. I would like to know why this meeting not has taken place, because they have requested a meeting with the Minister since then concerning the situation with the instructors, and also concerning the programme. I would like to know why the Minister has not met with the pan fraternity as yet on such an important matter. If the Government is interested in the music education of this nation's youths, the Pan in the Classroom Programme should remain and be expanded. I wish to reiterate that the Government can choose to encourage and expand the use of various instruments in the school system, but should not change the Pan in the Classroom Programme and its name. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, many countries are seeking to have a programme such as exists in Trinidad and Tobago because they recognize the benefits of pan as a tool in the teaching of music to children. Mr. Speaker, I will give some examples. The British Virgin Island started a programme of this nature in the 1990s. In the US Virgin Islands, there is a steelband in almost every school. Japan, Sweden, Denmark and Norway are all involved in teaching pan in the schools because they are aware that it is one of the best instruments for music education. Nigeria is now attempting to start this programme. There are also schools in the UK and the US who are teaching pan in schools. Antigua is preparing to start a similar programme. Their instructors are currently training in UWI in Trinidad.

With the pan programme in primary schools, Trinidad and Tobago is second to none in terms of music structure in schools in the world. So, Mr. Speaker, why is the Government interfering with this important programme? What about the future of the instructors and other members of the Pan in the Classroom Unit? Why do they have to reapply for their post? Have they not been performing at an exceptional level? The instructors for the new instruments are the ones who should be made to apply for these programmes, not the ones who have already been accepted in the programme. But, if we have new instruments, then, of course, I am aware that there will be a need for new instructors. Why is this programme going to be dissolved into a multi-cultural one? There are schools with other instruments that are gathering dust, but, certainly, not pan.

The Pan in the Classroom Unit had an independent budget. Now they have to rely on the Ministry's curriculum department for funding.

4.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, consistent and based on agreement, in accordance with Standing Order 94 between both sides of the House, we shall continue to sit until the conclusion of the matters before his honourable House, before we take the formal adjournment and upon the adjournment, Members can have their tea. There is an agreement between both sides. You have two minutes more.

Miss D. Cox: Mr. Speaker, are you sure it is two?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you have two minutes more.

Miss D. Cox: The Pan in the Classroom programme also provided a skillset of young persons who hone their skills as pan tuners and entrepreneurs. The development of the industry has stopped because the programme has not

been expanded since May 2010. The programme created opportunities for many new and current pan makers. The local steelband manufacturing industry was dealt a severe blow as a result of the prolonged stoppage of the programme. The industry is presently very slow and consequently has resulted in many tuners turning to other careers. Some are unemployed at the moment. I know, because some of them are from my constituency. The action by the Government is contrary to the development of such an important industry. The pan industry is an area where economic activity should be given special attention and incentives, as it lies at the foundation of the development of the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to advise the Minister of Education to leave the Pan in the Classroom programme as is. If the Government so desires, they can institute their other programmes and hire teachers for those instruments. I want to remind this House that this is the only musical instrument that was invented in the 20th Century, a product of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and is for all people. *[Desk thumping]* Contrary to what some misguided persons believe or want us to believe, this is an instrument for every creed and race. I ask that this be investigated and would like the Minister to let me know what is the position with the Pan in the Classroom programme. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant brought this Motion to the House, since it allows a second opportunity to clarify a lot of misconceptions and misinformation that had been spread around the country over a period of time, which might have been deliberate

in its aspect.

Permit me to read from a *Guardian* newspaper report

“Education—May 11, 2012

Pan to stay in schools—PM”

Hon. Member: Very good. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): I quote:

“We are not shutting g down pan in schools.”

That is the Prime Minister speaking. [*Desk thumping*]

“Pan is here to stay’. This pledge was made by Prime Minister Kamal Persad-Bissesar as she dispelled speculation—

Miss Cox: It is not what you say.

Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh:—that Government was indirectly shutting down the ‘Pan in the Classroom’ project by not renewing teachers’ contracts. Delivering the feature address at the official opening of the new Marabella South Secondary School on Wednesday, Persad-Bissesar vowed that pan would never be removed from schools under her watch.”

[*Desk thumping*]

“She added: ‘I want to correct this misconception.’”

Dr. Moonilal: Repeat it.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: “Persad-Bissesar vowed that pan would never be removed from schools under her watch.”

[*Desk thumping*]

She added: ‘I want to correct this misconception. Pan is very much alive and I am advised by the Ministry of Education that contrary to the views of some,’—which were expressed here this afternoon—“the

programme has never stopped, 'it will never stop and it will continue in schools across T&T,'"

That was the Prime Minister's statement. [*Desk thumping*]

"she said to loud applause.

She said the ministry also would introduce string, wind and percussion instruments to the schools."

But not to the detriment of pan in the classroom and other instruments.

"So do not believe this misconception that my Government has closed down the 'Pan in Schools'. 'We will never do that.'"

Those words are the words of the Prime Minister.

"As we celebrate 50 years this year let us remember pan is the only acoustic instrument invented in the world in the 20th century."

[*Desk thumping*] The Prime Minister continues to say:

"It is our national instrument and 'Pan in Schools' is here to stay,' PM Persad-Bissessar said. She also vowed to equip every student with the latest technology needed to compete in a global environment."

Mr. Speaker, the concept behind the Pan in the Classroom programme was always to augment the teaching of music in schools, with the focus being that as the national instrument. The heart of the additional programme remains music, but it facilitates the expansion of the original programme, via the introduction of multicultural forms of music in the primary school curriculum.

The framework to be used in relation to the addition of multicultural forms of music, Pan in the Classroom remains, it continues. In fact, we have 99 primary schools with Pan in the Classroom and 85 secondary schools, a total of 185 schools in Trinidad and Tobago with 16-piece ensemble. An

ensemble has four set of tenors, two sets of double tenors, two sets of double seconds, two sets of double guitars, two sets of Chellos, two sets of tenor basses and two sets of six basses.

Mr. Sharma: What about a dholak and a harmonium?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, in a Cabinet Note recently, the Member spoke about us not renewing the contracts for the Pan in the Classroom instructors. Cabinet passed a Note to have 8 regional coordinators and those regional coordinators were appointed and they continue their jobs; 35 music instructors and one project coordinator. The project coordinator continued the job; the eight regional coordinators continued their job; and 35 mini instructors have been working in the curriculum department.

The framework used in relation to the introduction of the multicultural forms of music, in addition to the pan, indicated that schools would also be given, in addition to the pans, a choice of other musical instruments in addition to the ensemble, percussion wind instruments as well.

Mr. Sharma: “Boy talk thing like dholak nah man.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They could be the dholak, the harmonium the guitar, the tabla, the tassa drum set, the xylophone, African drum set, tassa drum set, cuatro and non-melodic percussion instruments. Schools would be supplied with an appropriate amount of the chosen instruments, appropriate for class instruction and in accordance with the technical advice of curriculum officers or other designated agents of the Ministry.

Teaching staff in the primary school with the appropriate competencies will deliver the current and adapted music curriculum by music instructors. This Government has moved to increase the amount of

musical instructors by another 50 music instructors, moving from 35 music instructors to 85 music instructors. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Very good. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Out of the eight regional coordinators, their talents were so good as music instructors, they were appointed as curriculum coordinators in music, because their competence in music was so good. All these regional coordinators and music instructors, now close to 85 of them, are now being incorporated in the Pan in the Classroom programme. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: How were they recruited?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The first set was recruited by contracts by the last administration and we advertised for the contracts again and the same regional coordinators got the jobs again. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Warner: The first set was advertised?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, the first set was advertised. We advertised again and the same regional coordinators. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. McIntosh: And the instructors?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The 35 music instructors were also reappointed and we are advertising now for another 50, based on the Cabinet Note that was passed in April. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. McIntosh: For five months.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So, we have 85. *[Interruption]* Why what? The Member of Parliament indicated: Where is Keith Diaz and Patrick Arnold? Minister De Coteau and myself will tell you that every time they wrote a letter to us, we would meet with them. I just asked my colleague a while ago in the back, there has never been a time that Mr. Diaz nor Mr. Patrick

Arnold required to have a meeting with us to discuss the situation and we did not meet with them. They have spoken loudly in appreciation of this Government's movement to continue, even at a more advanced stage, the whole issue of Pan in the Classroom by our students.

We have been to most of functions throughout the country, those to which we have been invited, to be with the students in the Pan in the Classroom programme because that is the emphasis that we have given. [*Interruption*] I have just been informed by Minister Warner that we are also building a pan headquarters from this Government for the people. For seven years that has gone bad.

Mr. Speaker, we have trained more than 500 teachers in the Pan in the Classroom programme so far and the music instructors are now implementing the music curriculum in primary schools, teaching all classes from Infants year one to Standard Five. They are teaching the fundamental elements of music, singing, listening and responding to music playing instruments, creating, composing, reading and writing. These lessons attempt to appeal to the three domains of affective psychomotor and cognitive behaviours. Clinical instructors, the 35 that we have now, plus the 50 to come, will exercise clinical supervision, including sitting in, observing and evaluating lessons done by music instructors in the Pan in the Classroom as well.

We have also set about for the development of standardized specifications for steel pan instruments in the 16-piece ensemble. That is as far as we have been going, standardized specifications for the instruments.

We have hosted vacation camps all over the country and we have catered to over 4,000 students over this period that we have been in

Government. We hosted both National Junior Panorama champs, both in 2011 and 2012 and we were so loudly praised that we attended both events at the Queen's Park Savannah where the new calypso champion, the young police officer—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Dwayne.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—Dwayne was there and we had all the schools participating in the National Junior Panorama.

Hon. Member: Not Dwayne Gibbs.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We also facilitated the National Junior Steel Band Music Festival and we have ongoing training of these music instructors. We had pan concerts in Trinidad, with the Pan Puree in Caroni and the Steel Pan Inspirational Music in the northeastern district. What else do you want the Government and the Ministry of Education to do? We have been working.

In March 2012, the Ministry of Education announced the expansion of the music programmes in the primary schools to a multicultural music programme, who is implementing the structure built closely on the existing framework used to deliver the Pan in the Classroom initiative.

Pan in the Classroom Unit is part of the Visual and Performing Arts Unit of the curriculum, Planning and Division. A policy for monitoring, maintenance and replenishments of the instruments supplied is a unique feature of the programme so as to ensure appropriate and effective usage, institutionalization and continuity.

4.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: You have two more minutes, hon. Member; two more minutes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes. In fact, the Permanent Secretary recently did an audit of Pan in the Classroom. She found that a number of schools were not using it as they should have, some of the schools, their pans became a little rusty. We have been in discussion with suppliers of pans to determine how much more we need to put into the new schools. So it is a very active process going on.

I end by reminding you of the statements made by the hon. Prime Minister, that Pan in the Classroom is here to stay, and under this Government it will continue to expand.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, Wednesday, May 30, 2012 is Indian Arrival Day in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and serves as a way of commemorating the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers from India to Trinidad.

I would now like to call on the hon. Prime Minister, to bring greetings on this very important occasion. [*Desk thumping*]

Indian Arrival Day Greetings

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues here in the Chamber, and to those fellow citizens who may be tuned into our channel.

Hon. Speaker, I want to say it gives me very great pleasure to extend greetings to each and every one of you, as well as to our entire nation on this the 167th anniversary of the arrival of persons of East Indian heritage to our shores. It is with great humility that myself as a person of Indo-ancestry, to bring greetings in this august House on this very special occasion. However, this a day is more than just a day of remembrance and reflection, it tells us

about the story of determination by those brave and pioneering souls, who endured life threatening journeys across the Kalapani, in search of a very better life. We should note that over a period of seven decades, from 1845—1917 a total of 147,596 Indians came to Trinidad and Tobago, as indentured labourers. They came from many parts of India such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Madras, but they arrived at this very same place which we now call our homeland.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of, in fact, visiting Kolkata then it was Calcutta, where many of our ancestors sailed from, to visit the one-year anniversary of the plaque that has been erected marking the first journey out of Kolkata. As I was doing that, they had to take us to the memorial in a boat, and as I was coming from the boat—you had to go into the boat and then walk up to the memorial—I thought to myself so many hundreds of years ago, my great, great grandfather walked down towards the boat, and I was coming in that boat and walking up unto the shores from whence they came.

So their decisions to leave India would have required enormous courage and sacrifice, as they journeyed into the unknown, because they had no idea—we had no TV screens and Internet, no telephones and so the communication lines would not have been there, and to come to a new land in search of a better life; that was why they came.

Researchers have compiled voluminous accounts suggesting the system of indentureship was another form of slavery but, in retrospect, we can see that though daunting an experience for thousands of Indians who came to the Caribbean, today's generation descended from them, is significantly better

off than those which time left behind in India. So we are proud to be here in Trinidad and Tobago as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Many stories have been told about indentureship to the Caribbean, in particular to here in Trinidad and Tobago and, quite naturally, as we have more than one and a half century of history behind us. One such story is that of Pratibha Goliah, her story helps us to understand the emotional trauma of being indentured here—not yet in her teens, newly married, she was snatched and taken against her will to the holding bay for transshipment to Trinidad, leaving behind all of her possessions. She recalls the sordid sight of her fellow boat people committing suicide by jumping overboard as the boat set sail. Stories like this suggest that Indian Arrival Day is more than just a day of remembrance; it is a celebration of the human spirits triumph over seemingly insurmountable odds, to build a legacy of strength, of discipline and tolerance, which has inevitably shaped our society, and made us who we are as a nation today.

Whilst the East Indian experience was unique in its own way, as would have been for those who made their journey to these shores from Africa, from China, from Europe and other parts of the far reaches of the globe, there were many things that were common to all. Most important amongst all of these, was indeed a desire once they came, to enjoy the greatest freedom in life without fear in an atmosphere of peace, prosperity and harmony.

As we celebrate Indian Arrival Day on Wednesday, we must acknowledge the significant roles of all other groups who came to these shores, and would have contributed significantly in shaping our society and giving life to our very admirable diversity.

As we celebrate 50 years of independence this year, we also celebrate that we live today harmoniously in our very plural society, and that in my respectful view is attributable to the respect for our ancestors whether out of India, whether out of Africa, whether out of China, whether out of Europe, it is what they instilled in us their children through generations. Though lacking in academia, they taught us how to love and embrace each other, how to coexist and become each other's keepers and how to share the little we possessed. I sometimes think, Mr. Speaker, that Trinidad and Tobago is the great nation that it is, because of the people who came from great civilizations of the world, out of Africa, out of India, out of China, out of Europe and out of other parts of the world, that is why we are so great as we are today.

I ask you to look around, you will see the composition of my Government, which reflects the noble philosophy of oneness, and whilst we know and accept the fact that we are all made up differently, we are driven by different cultural values, we are confident that the mental shackles of slavery and indentureship, have cultivated in us a freedom envied by many nations of the world. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, happy Indian Arrival Day, to those in the Chamber and those outside of the Chamber.

I thank you very much.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin North/West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we approach the holiday on May 30, which we celebrate in recognition of our citizens who arrived from the Indian subcontinent, I take great pleasure, and on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to associate

myself with the historical vignette presented by the hon. Prime Minister, as we acknowledge our origin, and also our aspiration in building a nation called Trinidad and Tobago.

The history of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is one of migration. There are very few citizens in this country who cannot trace their origin to some migratory action. And, therefore, as we acknowledge the comings and the contributions of one group of our citizens, we ought to be mindful of others who are, in fact, also migrants to this land that we are in. [*Desk thumping*]

When that migration took place from the subcontinent to Trinidad and Tobago, I dare say, I would be surprised to see in any script of history, that it was the intention or expectation of any of those involved, that they were going to build a nation anywhere, they were escaping the hardships of their homeland and, in many instances, as the Prime Minister pointed out, many persons came against their will.

However, Mr. Speaker, history has a way of turning out surprising outcomes, and the outcome of Trinidad and Tobago which today is a proud nation, and, as Sparrow said, a model nation in the world, a model which demonstrates that people coming from all over the world, and meeting in one place, can come together in common purpose, and that purpose in Trinidad and Tobago is nation-building.

We too have our challenge and still have our challenge, but as we acknowledge the components of this society, as we associate with the challenges, and we pay tribute to those who allowed their good to prevail over what could easily have been bad, and as we compare ourselves with others, who may not have had the challenges that we have had, and who

have not done as well as we have, we can say there is a lot we can be thankful for in Trinidad and Tobago. And we are a people who have decided to take our responsibility for our future in our hands; we did that 50 years ago this year.

As we acknowledge the origin and the date on which people left India to come to Trinidad and Tobago, we can also say we acknowledge how much we have gained and what we have done as a people together. There is hardly a person in Trinidad and Tobago who does not have a neighbour, a friend, a member of their family who they can identify with the East Indian community—*[Interruption]*—not so, Sir, if you want the history, talk to me, I will tell you.

Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*—yes, Tobago. We in Trinidad and Tobago are a people who take a lot for granted, and as we celebrate Indian Arrival Day in 2012, we should resolve at this stage not to continue taking things for granted, but to let our history be our guide as we strive manfully towards a future with boundless faith in our destiny.

Mr. Speaker, I wish the members of the East Indian community and the national community, happy Indian Arrival Day. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to join with both the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, staff of the office of the Parliament, and my own family, to wish the entire nation, a happy Indian Arrival Day. Let this be a testament of the strength of human spirit in spite of insurmountable odds, as well as a reminder of the legacy of endurance, discipline and tolerance that now inherently flows through each and every one of us as citizens of this beloved country of Trinidad and Tobago.

To all, happy Indian Arrival Day to the citizens of this country, and

particularly the citizens of East Indian descent.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.57 p.m.