

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

SESSION 2012—2013

VOLUME 18

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 17, 2013

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the following Members: the hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, Member of Parliament for Tabaquite, is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The hon. Winston Peters, Member of Parliament for Mayaro, is currently out of the country and he has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period May 11—18, 2013. The hon. Vernella Alleyne-Toppin, Member of Parliament for Tobago East, is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House.

The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Audited Financial Statements of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2012. [*The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh)*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

2. Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ended September 30, 2012. [*Hon. R. Indarsingh*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Secondary Entrance Assessment 2013

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, following the administration of the Secondary Entrance Assessment on Thursday May 09, 2013, concerns had been raised with

Secondary Entrance Assessment 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

respect to the suitability of one out of the 46 questions on the mathematics paper. The Ministry of Education noted the concerns expressed with regard to the use of the word “ratio”, and the possibility of students’ unfamiliarity with both the word and its application in mathematics.

Mr. Speaker, in this context, following discussions between CXC, that is the Senior Assistant Registrar and the Chief Education Officer of the Ministry of Education, I have been advised by the Chief Education Officer and, therefore, I would like to advise this honourable House, students, parents, teachers, education stakeholders and the general public, that in the interest of ensuring that no student is disadvantaged by this question and in accordance with standard assessment practice, a decision has been taken to exclude question 35 from the assessment.
[Desk thumping]

Mr. Sharma: Very good work! Very good!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to advise that the removal of this question from the assessment will in no way affect the weight of the mathematics paper as students’ scores on all papers are placed on a common scale by converting them to standard scores by CXC. These standard scores have been and will be used for the placement of students in secondary schools.

Mr. Sharma: That is global best practice.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to inform this honourable House that the Creative Writing component of the Continuous Assessment Component, which was introduced this year for the first time as a measure to improve students writing skills and which will contribute 20 per cent towards SEA, has been successfully implemented by the Ministry of Education.

To facilitate this a number of measures were put in place, including an online student registration and data capture system, a rigorous monitoring and moderation system to ensure the reliability of students’ scores, both within and across schools, and extensive training for teachers and principals. A team of more than 250 curriculum officers, school supervisors and Continuous Assessment Component monitors systematically supported both public and private schools as the CAC was implemented.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, all principals, teachers and parents for their hard work and their

Secondary Entrance Assessment 2013

Friday, May 17, 2013

dedicated support in ensuring that these examinations and their processes have been successfully completed for our students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**(HOLY NAME CONVENT PAST PUPILS'
ASSOCIATION (INC'N) BILL, 2013)**

Question put and agreed to: That a Bill for the incorporation of the Holy Name Convent Past Pupils' Association and for matters incidental thereto, be now read that first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

**(SUGAR INDUSTRY CONTROL BOARD (REPEAL)
(VALIDATION) BILL, 2013)**

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move:

That a Bill to validate actions done pursuant to section 4 of the Sugar Industry Control Board (Repeal) Act, 1995, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the necessity for a labour supply on the sugar plantations of Trinidad and Tobago is the reason for the plurality and diversity of our twin-island Republic. Mr. Speaker, we all came here to live because cane and sugar was king, and as late as the 1900s there existed approximately 300 independent sugar plantations in Trinidad. And with the passage of time we would have heard of the dominance or the existence in this scenario of Tate & Lyle, which would have been followed by Caroni (1975) Limited and we must all remember the unceremonial closure of the company in 2003. This is a year which will always be remembered for the industrial relations terrorism carried out by those on the other side, and it was one of the darkest periods in the history of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, this was followed by entities such as the Rum Distillers of Trinidad and Tobago and the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited, and also the sugar industry team. We all know of the sweetness of cane but, as I said, in 2003—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Do you have any samples?

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—but in 2003 it was a very bitter and dark period. Just for the record, in 1966 and 1967 estimates would have indicated that world cane

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. R. INDARSINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

sugar production stood at approximately 41 million tons, and in 1965 Trinidad and Tobago produced over, or approximately 250,000 tons of cane sugar and the industry employed at that point in time, approximately 35,000 men and women.

The sugar industry, of course, based on the statistics that I have just presented was vital to the economy of our country, and the establishment of the Sugar Industry Control Board for the first time gave cane farmers a voice in the sugar industry, particularly, with regard to the whole question of the price formula. And this price formula, whether it was in the 1960s, the '70s, the '80s and '90s and so on, always was an issue of discontent, an issue for the concern of the cane-farming sector. Anyone who has a thorough appreciation of the cane-farming sector and what it meant to the sugar industry of Trinidad and Tobago would have remembered the battles, the struggles and so on, which were pursued by the Trinidad and Tobago Island-Wide Cane Farmers Association, the Cane Producers Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and also the Cane Farmers Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Sugar Industry Control Board was incorporated on November 01, 1966, under Act No. 14 of 1966, to enhance the operations of the sugar industry. Mr. Speaker, section 9 provided for a number of regulatory functions which included:

the checking of the computation of the price formula;

advising on the exercise of the powers of disallowance in relation to the price formula, and it focused on the granting, transfer and cancellation of contracts between cane farmers and manufacturers;

the allocation of tonnages for each crop year to cane farmers and estate owners and issuing of the licences to cane weighers, cane farmers and sugar manufacturers, and also dealt with establishing and maintaining a register of cane farmers and cane weighers;

advising also on the exercise of power in relation to the fixing of quotas;

organizing the supply of new varieties of planting material to cane farmers; and focused also on prescribing the standard to which canes must conform in order to be acceptable for processing into sugar;

and also dealt with the issue of advising as to the supply to cane farmers of chemicals for the control of sugar cane pests, and the collecting, examining and

distributing statistics relating to cross-cultivation and reaping of sugar cane, including the cost of ploughing and fertilizers and other scientific and research information useful to the cane farmers;

and of course, the setting up of machinery for the orderly cutting and delivery of farmers' canes to the factories.

Mr. Speaker, the Sugar Industry Control Board was also engaged in the establishment, maintenance and repair of roads and traces used by cane farmers, the rental of two cranes to Caroni (1975) Limited and the provision and maintenance of two scales used by cane farmers.

Mr. Speaker, those on the other side really never understood what Caroni Limited and more so this entity too, played in terms of the role which it played in relation to national development. Caroni and the sugar industry must not be seen as isolated in the context of just sugar cane. The sugar industry, Caroni, was rum, citrus, aquaculture, dairy, livestock and a field engineering department, and I just zeroed in on the issue of maintenance of roads and the maintenance of scales and so on.

In this overall context, as I said, those on the other side never understood the value and importance of Caroni (1975) Limited and the sugar industry, because cemeteries, roads, playgrounds, you name it, in the context of local government were services provided by Caroni (1975) Limited and the sugar industry in terms of the importance of this industry, not only from an economic point of view, but what it meant in terms of providing that level of infrastructural support at the local government level as in relation to what it delivered to the people of the geography of the sugar industry.

I could recollect clearly, Mr. Speaker, when I occupied the position of General Secretary and President General of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union, a number of village councils, a number of principals of primary schools and secondary schools and so on, would have called soliciting the support of various section employees and so on to get their playgrounds, their cemeteries—you name it—in a state of readiness, in a state of acceptance, based on this relationship that the sugar industry and Caroni (1975) Limited had with the community.

Mr. Speaker, section 4 of the Sugar Industry Control Board Act provided for a member of the board to be appointed to hold office for a period not exceeding three years as may be defined by the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. R. INDARSINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

Resources now the Minister of Food Production. In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, section 5 provided that a member may resign at any time and that such resignation would take effect from the date of receipt of such resignation.

Mr. Speaker, the term of office of the last board who was appointed in 1985, the members of this board, would have expired in 1988 sorry. And in 1987—January of 1987—all members of the said board resigned en bloc and therefore, the Sugar Industry Control Board had no duly constituted board in place after January 01, 1987.

The decision to dissolve the Sugar Industry Control Board was taken in 1987 and justified on the grounds that since its establishment in 1966, a number of changes had taken place in the sugar industry, particularly with regard to the ownership structure of the industry. Sugar companies had changed from being privately owned to state owned, and this negated, really, the need for the functions performed by the Sugar Industry Control Board because the board was primarily established to have that relationship between the manufacturers and the cane-farming sector.

It was as such, at that point in time, that there was this general consensus to dissolve the board since these functions were performed by other existing institutions.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to this, on April 28, 1994, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago agreed to dissolve the Sugar Industry Control Board and to dispose of its assets and the disposal of its assets should stand. As a result of this, Cabinet appointed a team on May 10, 1994. The report of the committee noted that the Sugar Industry Control Board Act made no provision for its dissolution. Accordingly, on March 31, 1994 the Government of Trinidad and Tobago agreed that the Attorney General and the Minister of Legal Affairs then, should be requested to expedite the arrangements for the repeal of the Sugar Industry Control Board Act to formalize the dissolution of the board.

Mr. Speaker, with the passage—as the time progressed in 1995, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago agreed that the Sugar Industry Control Board be dissolved and the Sugar Industry Control Board (Repeal) Act was assented to on July 18, 1995 as Act No. 15 of 1995 in terms of the repeal Act. Section 4(1) of this Act provided that:

“Within six months of the date of the commencement of this Act the Divestment Secretariat of the Ministry...Finance...” now the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, “in conjunction with a Cabinet appointed

Committee shall—”

take action as outlined below, as I will outline, to facilitate the orderly winding up of this particular board. It was as follows:

- “(a) arrange for the appointment of the former auditors of the Board”—at that point in time—“Price Waterhouse”—now Pricewaterhouse Coopers—“to prepare a statement of affairs of the”—Sugar Industry Control—“Board and undertake any other accounting work necessary for the disposal of the assets of the Board...
- (b) meet the cost of the preparation of a statement of affairs and any other work pertaining to distribution of assets from financial resources of the” Sugar Industry Control—“Board;
- (c) apply the assets of the Board to meet the debts and other commitments of the”—Sugar Industry Control—“Board, including payments of outstanding stipends to the Secretary;
- (d) in the event of a surplus of assets over liabilities, utilize such surplus in a project that would benefit the cane”—farming sector.
- (e) in the event of a deficiency of assets against liabilities, meet such liabilities in accordance with the Companies Ordinance, in order of the priority of debts; and
- (f) take such other action that would facilitate the orderly winding-up of the affairs of the”—Sugar Industry Control—“Board”.

Mr. Speaker, the winding up was due by January 17 of 1996. However, this was not achieved because there were several unresolved disputes or matters pending, including a land dispute and a pending High Court matter. These matters were resolved in 2005 by the Divestment Secretariat of the Ministry of Finance and it should be noted Mr. Speaker, that the Divestment Secretariat of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provided oversight for the Sugar Industry Control Board. However, the secretariat had no legal authority to conclude the winding up, and there was no legal basis upon which the Sugar Industry Control Board could be wound up, and as such, by Minute No. 2860 of October 20, 2011, Cabinet agreed inter alia to amend section 4(1) of the Sugar Industry Control Board Act of 1995 to allow for the establishment of a Cabinet-appointed committee to take the necessary steps that would facilitate the orderly winding-up of the affairs of this board.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet-appointed committee noted the following:

the statement of accounts prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers as at the September 29, 2006 indicated that the Sugar Industry Control Board’s surplus

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. R. INDARSINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

asset comprised \$654,641 held in the Roytrin Money Market Fund. Item 4(i)(d) of the Repeal Act stated that in the event of a surplus of the assets over liabilities, the Sugar Industry Control Board should utilize such a surplus in a project, as I said previously, that would benefit the cane-farming sector or cane farmers.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the committee, having considered moneys paid to approximately 3,420 cane farmers in the amount of \$82 million for transitional support as a condition of their exit from the sugar industry, recommended that the surplus funds be deposited into the Consolidated Fund. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago by Cabinet Minute No. 2860 of October 20, 2011 accepted this recommendation. The moneys and the accumulated interest totalling \$876,815.51 as at June 05, 2012 were deposited into the Consolidated Fund in June of 2012.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and the Investment Division and the Cabinet-appointed committee noted that the Sugar Industry Board is therefore in a position to be dissolved since all of the issues identified in the Sugar Industry Control Board Act have been completed. But it is important, as we deal with the winding up of this Sugar Industry Control Board this afternoon, to examine the relationship that existed between the State and the cane-farming sector of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Yes, very important.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: As I said, in 1966 when it was established it was to deal with this relationship and to act as an oversight body that would have promoted the development of the cane-farming community in Trinidad and Tobago, an entity which would have promoted too the welfare and expansion of the cane-farming sector.

Mr. Speaker, I trace the history of the sugar industry in the context of 1966, what existed at the time and up till 2003 where, as I said, it was one of the darkest periods in the history of this country, when those on the other side took the decision to close down Caroni (1975) Limited. But more importantly, what they would not tell you or what they would want to continue to keep as a secret, is that there was to be a reconfiguration of the local sugar industry in 2003. I am reading directly from a comprehensive and integrated development plan which was submitted in a presentation to the Cabinet by the Divestment Secretariat of the

Ministry of Finance, October 20, 2004. And, in this whole question or issue of the reconfiguration of the sugar industry they focused on the establishment of the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited which was to deal with three core activities.

One, the creation of an appropriate business model and engagement of appropriate staff and contractors to manage the sugar cane processing and sugar refining operations. The organization of the Usine Ste. Madeleine Factory to produce annual levels of 75,000 tons of raw sugar and in excess of that amount of demand conditions so warranted, and more importantly, the purchasing of sugar cane from private cane farmers at the factory gate at an agreed price and on schedules determined by the factory to meet the targeted production levels of the factory.

So, in this regard the local reconfiguration of the sugar industry at that point in time was to take into consideration in 2003 the expansion—if I should use that particular word—of the sugar industry through the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited, and it was to be based on a quality-based payment for sugar cane. The price of sugar cane will be determined—will be quality-based which will eventually be determined through an institutional infrastructure including a testing committee established to test the quality of sugar cane and to provide results within 24 hours and, of course, farmers' groups were to be represented on the test committee that was to be established by the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited.

But, Mr. Speaker, that relationship of ensuring, or that commitment of ensuring that in the context of reconfiguring the sugar industry at that point in time, to ensure that there was stability, to ensure there was continuity in the context of the cane-farming sector was something that those on the opposite side did not give any sense of priority and any sense of commitment and dedication and follow-through. The records will indicate that the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited was a colossal failure in terms of what it was established to do and what was the involvement of the cane-farming industry to this particular entity. And also, if any of the recommendations of the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association or the Cane Producers Association or the Cane Farming Association of Trinidad and Tobago, these three key stakeholders in the context of the cane-farming community, if ever they were taken on board by those on the other side in the context of what this Sugar Industry Control Board meant in terms of that relationship and what it had set out to do in relation to the cane-farming community of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. R. INDARSINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the brutality—that those on the other side in relation to the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited—and the focus at that point in time that they had on the workers continued as it relates to the cane-farming sector of Trinidad and Tobago. It must clearly be pointed out as it relates to the issue of the national adaptation strategy for the sugar industry as it relates to Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, I want to read from a statement by the then Minister of Finance, Minister Karen Nunez-Tesheira—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “Oh God, doh spoil the speech nah.”

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—on June 06, 2008, who indicated—and I want to read into the record what she stated. [*Interruption*]

“Mr. Speaker, I wish to apprise this honourable House on the decision of Cabinet taken on May 23...to access over the period 2008—2011, €1.643 million or TT \$413.72 million from the European Commission. The grant funding represents financial support by the European Commission for the accompanying measures for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, one of the sugar protocol countries and is provided in the context of the National Adaptation Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago.”

And the Minister of Finance went on at that point in time to indicate that:

“On execution of the financing”—arrangement—“the sector budget support would be delivered through annual tranches to the Ministry of Finance over the period 2008—2011...”

And specifically the Minister pointed out: 2008—€ million, 2009—€0.974 million, and so on. And again, as I said, this was designed to ensure that this relationship of ensuring that there was some kind of duty, care and attention to the cane-farming sector would have been pursued by those on the opposite side. But it was never one of putting on the front burner this whole question of ensuring that there was survival of the cane-farming sector or diversification of the cane-farming sector in the context of the configuration of the sugar industry.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, in 2008 the European Chargé d’Affaires indicated and told the media that the Government’s failure—the then Government’s failure—to access € million of this funding or TT \$54 million in 2007 resulted in funds being diverted to Guyana. I just want to repeat that, that the failure of those on the other side in 2007 resulted in funds—TT \$54 million— being diverted to Guyana. And it is only with the coming of the People’s Partnership Government

or coming into office of the People's Partnership Government or administration that sense of duty, care and commitment to the cane-farming community and the stakeholders within the cane-farming sector was rekindled.

Again, the focus on people-centred development which has resulted in the Minister of Food Production and the Ministry of Food Production signing—Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj and the Ministry—a memorandum of understanding that will help to negate or mitigate the negative impact which cane farmers have faced as a result of the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. This memorandum of understanding was signed with the Cane Farmers Association of Trinidad and Tobago—the Cane Producers Association of Trinidad and Tobago, and as a result of this there was also the payment of \$82 million directly to the cane-farming sector. And those on the other side may want to tell us that during their tenure in administration the amount that they would have drawn down and in terms of whether they placed it in overall budgetary support, what they did or what they failed to do, and also their failure really to deal directly with the cane-farming community in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, it was brutality upon the workers and then it was brutality on the cane-farming sector, a Government that did not have any sense of duty, care and attention to ensure or to see that the cane-farming community survived in Trinidad and Tobago, and to put the necessary support mechanism to ensure that the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited had a proven track record. And also, what became of the Rum Distillers of Trinidad and Tobago which was supposed to be one of the prime entities that was established also in the reconfiguration of the local sugar industry at that point in time.

2.15 p.m.

At one point in time, Mr. Speaker, when the Member for San Fernando East would have addressed an annual convention, and if my memory serves me right, and I could recollect, it was either the 49th or the 53rd Annual Convention of the People's National Movement, the Member for San Fernando East in delivering the feature address said that the rum distillery of Caroni (1975) Limited should have been used as the economic or the flag bearer for reviving the economic fortunes of Caroni (1975) Limited. And in fact, he added too in his address, that the socio-economic implications of closing Caroni (1975) Limited were too far horrendous to contemplate—the socio-economic considerations or implications of closing Caroni (1975) Limited were too far horrendous to contemplate—and the establishment of two brand new mills and the preservation of the cane-farming sector of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. R. INDARSINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

So when the political dynamics was 18-18 it changed from preserving the sugar industry and stabilizing the sugar industry, and as soon as the political dynamic shifted from 18-18 to 19-17 or so, it was one of stabilizing and consolidation to one of closure. No duty, care and attention again, as I said, as it relates to the cane-farming sector of Trinidad and Tobago, and understanding the importance of the sugar industry, and what it meant to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and what it meant in terms of its existence being a way of life and a culture for the people within the geography of the sugar industry. The then administration allowed the assets of this company to be plundered, pillaged and, of course, to be benefited by those who were favourable to them in terms of political patronage at that point in time.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is important as I said to make these points in the context of the history of the sugar industry, what the Sugar Industry Control Board was established and set up to do, and that relationship which existed for it between the manufacturing sector at that point in time and providing a voice for the cane-farming community in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in this context it is imperative that what I have laid out, and taking into consideration what those on the other side would have carried out and perpetrated in relation to where the sugar industry is no longer with the people of Trinidad and Tobago, it is in this context that the House must see the importance of passing this Sugar Industry Control Board (Repeal) (Validation) Bill, so that the Sugar Industry Control Board could be wound up.

This House is asked to note that within three weeks of winding up the Sugar Industry Control Board, the Minister of Finance and the Economy shall cause a report on the dissolution of the Board to be laid in both Houses of Parliament as prescribed by section 4(2) of the Sugar Industry Control Board (Repeal) (Validation) Act. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Mr. Speaker, it was difficult to listen to the last speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Painful.

Mr. C. Imbert:—the person who presented the Bill.

Dr. Moonilal: Your grandfather used to beat his grandfather sometimes.

Mr. C. Imbert: My grandfather was a magistrate. Mr. Speaker, the Minister did not deal in any way with the matter before the House. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: “He commit propaganda—” [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Took us on a history lesson. For a time there I was wondering whether he was aware of the things that had been done with respect to the sugar industry over the last 25 years or so, because he appeared to be speaking in the present tense when he should have been speaking in the past tense.

I think it is necessary to put the history of this matter into perspective, Mr. Speaker, since the Minister did not do so. If we go to the *Hansard* record of June 1966, one will see that the Sugar Industry Control Board legislation was introduced by the then PNM administration. In fact, the person who introduced it was the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Lionel Robinson—I was not around in 1966—and, Mr. Speaker, when the People’s National Movement Government introduced legislation to assist the persons associated with the sugar industry, workers and farmers in particular, the *Hansard* record will show that the legislation was met with almost universal approbation.

If one looks at the speakers in the House of Representatives and one looks at the speakers in the Senate in June 1966, one will see that the Opposition Members: Mr. Lionel Seukeran, for example, Mr. Farquhar, and other Members who were not in Government at the time, Mr. Vernon Jamadhar, Mr. Capildeo and so on, if you go back into the record and look at the reaction to the introduction of the legislation to control the sugar industry, as I said, it was met with approval and universal approbation.

The reason is, Mr. Speaker, at the time there were a number of private entities involved in the production, manufacture, purchasing, sale of sugar and sugar-related matters. And there was a view at the time that the sector was largely unregulated and that a number of players, large players were taking advantage of cane farmers and also taking advantage of Trinidadians, generally. So, the then PNM administration felt it was necessary to bring some order, to bring some equity into this sector and that is why the Sugar Industry Control Board legislation was passed in 1966—Act No. 14 of 1966.

The Minister did tell us what the Board was intended to do, and that was to look at the pricing of cane, to look at the granting of licences, to look at the quantities of cane, the allocation of tonnages for each crop to cane farmers and estate owners, to look at standards and so on. But the whole purpose and intent of the Sugar Industry Control Act which was Chap. 64:03 of the laws of Trinidad

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[MR. IMBERT]

Friday, May 17, 2013

and Tobago was to assist cane farmers in a largely unregulated sector where large players and foreign entities were taking advantage of local cane farmers and Trinidadians, generally, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, it was welcomed by all present, both in the Senate and the House of Representatives. It was viewed as a landmark piece of legislation brought by the then PNM administration to help cane farmers. And I thought it was necessary to say that, because if you listened to what the last speaker had to say you would think that the People's National Movement had nothing to do with the nationalization of the sugar industry and the assistance given to persons in the sugar sector after the issues arose with the then Tate & Lyle Company. If you listened to what the last speaker had to say—I mean we need to go back in time.

It was the People's National Movement that created Caroni Limited, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] It was the People's National Movement that rescued the sugar sector when there were problems with Tate & Lyle. It was the People's National Movement that introduced legislation for the Sugar Industry Control Board. [*Desk thumping*] These are the facts, and Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: And PNM closed it down.

Miss Ramdial: Exactly!

Mr. C. Imbert:—the support for the sugar sector ran into billions and billions of dollars. When Caroni was eventually closed down in 2004/2005—2003 era, 2003—the initial cost of closure was in excess of \$2 billion. That was to pay off all the debts and liabilities and to settle all outstanding matters. That was in excess of \$2 billion. Added to that, were additional billions of dollars which were spent and are still being spent to deliver parcels of land to former sugar workers—service lots. As I said, billions of dollars have been spent and hundreds of millions of dollars are still being spent to deliver service lots to sugar workers, Mr. Speaker. So the money put into this industry in the 2003—2010 period must have been close to \$7 billion when you do all the proper calculations.

So it is incorrect for anyone to say that the previous administration had no regard, no sympathy, no understanding of what was happening with regard to this sector and this particular geographic area of Trinidad and Tobago. What the Minister was doing was really rehashing some arguments that we heard over 20 years ago—these are dated arguments. I expected the Minister to make these comments because he was the President of one of the trade unions in the sugar sector and I guess he feels some sense of responsibility, some sense of duty. He

has to speak to the former members of his trade union and so on. So I am not going to get into any argument with the Member for Couva South over what happened because, as I said, this is a very old story.

But the fact of the matter is that the preferential subsidy arrangements that Trinidad and Tobago enjoyed with the United Kingdom and with Europe in terms of a preferential price for sugar cane, a highly inflated price—because our farmers here enjoyed the benefit for many, many years and that is why the sugar industry was maintained, because the European countries had decided that they would subsidize the cost of production of sugar cane and gave us a price that was way above the world market price for cane, and they went on with this for years.

But as time evolved and as the European Community itself began to grow and as it faced its own economic problems, then you had producers of sugar within the European Community itself complaining, producers of sugar from other types, of other sources, such as beet sugar and so on, you had persons within the European Community complaining that these preferential arrangements were not really to the advantage of European citizens. Eventually, as with all good things, the preferential arrangements came to an end, and the subsidized price collapsed and the economics of sugar changed fundamentally, where previously—although the sugar industry ran at a loss, as far as I know, always ran at a loss, hundreds of millions of dollars every single year, it really came to crisis proportions when the subsidy arrangements collapsed in Europe, Mr. Speaker, and the industry simply became unviable.

2.30 p.m.

Prior to the collapse of the subsidy arrangements Trinidad and Tobago would have subsidized Caroni to the tune of maybe three, four hundred million dollars a year. But, after the collapse of the subsidy arrangements, the level of support that would have been required to offset the deficit between income and expenditure would have run up into billions of dollars. So it just was not viable, and unfortunately the country could no longer afford to continue subsidizing this industry to that extent, especially with the new information.

There is absolutely no doubt—that is why I say, I do not want to fight with the Minister—that Caroni had taken on a lot of responsibilities that would normally be undertaken by other departments of Government: the maintenance of roads, the maintenance of irrigation systems, and as the Member spoke about, the maintenance of recreation grounds and so on. But, all of these things come at a cost. So you had an entity that was losing three, four hundred million dollars a

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[MR. IMBERT]

Friday, May 17, 2013

year, every year, maintaining local roads, local drains, recreation grounds, cemeteries and so on. But who was really paying for all of that? It was the Treasury, Mr. Speaker, it was not Caroni. Caroni was running at a loss. So they had no profits that they could use to maintain these roads and so on. So really it is one pocket, to the next pocket.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Forget the consequences.

Mr. C. Imbert: No, no, no, not at all. The fact of the matter is, that it was the Treasury, through Caroni, that was maintaining these local roads and these local watercourses and these recreation grounds. It was the Treasury. It was the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago. It certainly was not Caroni, because Caroni was running at a loss. If you are running at \$300 million-dollar loss per year, then part of that loss will be the maintenance of infrastructure. *[Interruption]* No, I am telling you. The infrastructure should be maintained by the requisite government agency; the local road should be maintained by the local government body. It should be given sufficient funds to do it. Local recreation grounds should be maintained by the requisite bodies and they should be given sufficient funds to do it. The maintenance of watercourses and so on should be done by the Drainage Division.

Miss Ramdial: Yes, it is.

Mr. C. Imbert: No, but that is how it should be. When you muddle up all of that and you put it into a company, and a company that is supposed to be using its funds to develop its product, which is sugar cane, and it has to take its funds and maintain local roads and maintain recreation grounds, then you are interfering with the economics of that operation.

Mr. Speaker, these are arguments that have been dealt with ad nauseam for years and years and years. The fact of the matter is, that these things happen, and there were good reasons for it, and of course, hon. Members opposite were not happy about it, but I am afraid this has already occurred.

I do not get the impression from the Minister, and perhaps he could tell us in his winding up, whether it is the intention of this Government to revive the sugar industry. Perhaps we may wish to know. If that is your intention, fine. *[Crosstalk]*

I heard—yes—the Minister talking about giving \$82 million directly to cane farmers—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Rowley: From the UN.

Mr. C. Imbert:—but the EU money was \$250 million, so what has happened to the other \$170 million, that was received from the European Union.

Hon. Member: Tell us about Caribbean Airlines.

Mr. C. Imbert: If the present administration has given \$80 million directly to cane farmers, that must have come from somewhere, because the EU money was deposited into the Consolidated Fund; just like the surplus from the Sugar Industry Control Board, that money was put into the Consolidated Fund. The \$250 million from the EU was put into the Consolidated Fund.

So, if \$80 million has been paid out of the Consolidated Fund to sugar workers then following the same principle, what has happened to the other \$170 million that was provided to provide support to the sector? Perhaps the Minister can tell us, is it the intention of this administration to pay \$250 million to cane farmers? Just let us know. We would like to know what your policy is, because apart from the historical perspective, which I think we all know, and I do not think we will get anywhere arguing about this, because if you deal with it from an economic perspective, it is obvious that a decision had to be made; if you deal with it from a social cultural perspective, you are going to get into an argument.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to get into any argument with the Members opposite as to the proper use of \$500 million or \$700 million of taxpayers' funds in terms of subsidy of a state entity on an annual basis. I mean, it reminds me of Caribbean Airlines. I mean, the numbers are similar. You have a situation where we are subsidizing Caribbean Airlines now to the tune of \$700 million a year. And, I mean, that is a discussion that we will have to get into at some point in time. Does it make sense to subsidize a state corporation to the tune of \$700 million a year?

My understanding is that that corporation may have lost \$700 million in 2012, but it lost four or five hundred million in 2011. So we are talking over a billion dollars in subsidy, and we have to have these discussions.

There have been discussions about Caroni for the last 20 years, as to whether the industry was viable; is it worth it? Should the taxpayers of this country pump \$500 million a year, every single year, into subsidizing Caroni? And at the end of the day a decision was taken not to do that. If the Members opposite wish to reopen that and they wish to reintroduce the concept of pumping \$500 million a year into the sugar sector, well tell us. Let “we” know what your plans are.

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[MR. IMBERT]

Friday, May 17, 2013

As I said that is an argument that has been debated at length, and it is not my intention to get into that at this point in time. But, I would like some clarity from the Minister.

In 1995, the then Minister of Agriculture, who happens now to be the Leader the Opposition, piloted legislation to repeal the Sugar Industry Control Board Act—that is Act No. 15 of 1995—and the rationale given for the repeal of the Sugar Industry Control Board Act was that the functions of the Board had really been overtaken by events.

The point was that this was necessary when you had all these independent sugar producers, when you had foreigners involved in the sugar industry, but the Sugar Industry Control Board had become redundant with the advent of Caroni Limited, and also, the intervention of the State in the sugar industry and the State even, more or less, controlled the entire sugar industry by the time the decision was taken way back by the NAR in 1987 to suspend the operations of this Sugar Industry Control Board. And as the Minister told us, it was the NAR Government, early in its term—and at that time there was no dispute between the components of that NAR government. It had not fractured into an ONR rump and a ULF/UNC split at that point in time. It was still NAR comprised of ULF and ONR and DAC and so on, so that the decision taken, would have been taken by consensus, and would have been taken by the former president of the sugar union, Mr. Panday.

So that in 1987 when the then NAR Government, January 1987, that is just one month after the general election of 1986, when the decision was taken to suspend the Sugar Industry Control Board, that would have been a decision essentially of the UNC, and subsequent to that, no Board was appointed from 1987 coming down as the Minister told us. So that the Board just remained in abeyance, and then in 1995 the then Minister of Agriculture brought an Act essentially to wind up this situation and bring closure to the whole thing.

The mischief that we are seeking to correct today—the Minister really has not dealt with the mischief that we are seeking to correct today. Because what are we really doing today? We are spending all this time in Parliament, I mean we have been regaled with tales of sugar, but that is not really what we are about today. We are spending all this time on a piece of legislation, and all this legislation is intended to do, is to validate the payment of \$800,000 into the Consolidated Fund. [*Desk thumping*] That is it, nothing else. I know, as I said, the hon. Minister was a president of a sugar union at some point in time, so perhaps he feels some need to talk about his tenure, when he was a major player in the industry, but that is not what we are about here.

We are about a situation where there was a section in Act, No.15 of 1995, that said that after the winding up of the Sugar Industry Control Board, which by that time had not been functioning for more than seven years, that in the event of a surplus of assets over liabilities, utilize such surplus in a project that would benefit the cane farmers. That was it. And there was a time limit given. Perhaps that was the mistake made by the Parliament at the time that putting a six-month period to wind up the Sugar Industry Control Board and putting it into law was perhaps a timeline that was a little too tight, because the six months ran out, as the Minister said; there were land disputes; there was a court action.

My understanding is when I read the *Hansard*, when I looked at the contributions of Subhas Panday, in particular, in 1995, there was some dispute over a tenancy on which a particular scale was located in deep south Trinidad. I think, it was the Norman Girva scale, is the name of the scale.

Mr. Indarsingh: Girwar, Girwar.

Mr. C. Imbert: Girwar, my apologies, Norman Girwar scale, that was way down in the deep south of Trinidad at the time, and I think there was a dispute over the ownership or the occupation of the particular piece of land that the scale was located on. So that, there was that issue, and there were other land disputes, and therefore, the six-month period given in Act No. 15 of 1995 was unrealistic, it expired, and the Board could not be wound up.

So here we are now 2013, 18 years later. Essentially, all we are doing, is removing the six-month time limit that was in Act No. 15 of 1995, just taking out the six-month time limit and, in addition, recognizing that billions and billions of dollars have been spent with respect to the closure of the sugar industry. Billions and billions of dollars have been spent: \$80 million dollars in particular given to cane farmers under the PNM administration and from what I am hearing another \$80 million given to cane farmers under this partnership administration. So you are talking \$160 million dollars, if my mathematics is correct, in addition to everything else that was done for farmers generally.

So you are talking about a sum of money, let us say \$200 million spent, and you have to now relate that to a surplus of \$800,000. So the view was since \$200 million has been spent or more, then the best thing to do with this \$800,000 dollars is to put it into the Consolidated Fund. All we are doing here today, is authorizing the money to be deposited into the Consolidated Fund, full stop, and to validate all the actions of the various state officials involved with this matter for the last 26 years.

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[MR. IMBERT]

Friday, May 17, 2013

Now, who could object to a piece of legislation like this? You know, so, really if the Minister had not spent his time giving us tales of sugar, we could have been in and out of here in five minutes, because all we have been asked to come and do today is to agree that the \$800,000 that is the assets of the Sugar Industry Control Board that was accumulated over the last 20-odd years, that was paid into the Consolidated Fund, that the act of paying that into the Consolidated Fund was legal.

You could have stood and spoken, Mr. Speaker, through you, for two minutes, and you would have gotten a response from this side for one minute, saying we are in complete agreement, let us pass this Bill, take the division and go home, but no, no.

2.45 p.m.

Every time there is an opportunity to gallery and to revisit history and to go back in time and do revisionist history, and to recreate history, and to pretend and mislead, and not talk about the fact that there is a peculiar economic event that occurred in the period from the 1990s into the early part of the 21st Century, and that was the collapse of the preferential subsidy arrangement for sugar emanating from Trinidad and Tobago and other countries in the world, every time we have this discussion, that part is left out, that the European subsidy on sugar disappeared and the sugar industry was struggling at the time. As I said, it was losing money.

No Government had ever been able to make the sugar industry profitable. It was always a hundred million, \$200 million, \$300 million, \$400 million, some years, \$500 million; that was the level of the subsidy. It was struggling, but the decision was to keep it going. Even though you had to subsidize to the tune of \$300, \$400 million a year, the decision had always been, “Let us try and keep this thing going”, because of the recognition of the other—the multiplier effect of this expenditure and so on, Mr. Speaker, and then the subsidy system collapsed and just threw all the economics out of whack and took that \$500 million to a billion. So you were now facing a situation where the State would have to subsidize this industry to the tune of a billion dollars a year, and a decision was taken.

Mr. Speaker, that decision was taken 10 years ago and it is obvious to me that the Member for Couva South is living in some period 10 years ago. Time has gone on! There have been all sorts of general elections in between there. There have been changes of Governments. You even referred to the 18-18 period

yourself. All sorts of things have happened in Trinidad and Tobago since then. We now have a female Prime Minister for the first time, Mr. Speaker. We have you in the Chair, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*] I mean, time has moved, you know, over the—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: “You have a female Chief Whip!

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, we have a female Chief Whip. So time has gone on and I would ask hon. Members opposite, stop dwelling in the past. If you want to revisit and go back into the 1990s and the 1980s and the 1970s and the 1960s, Mr. Speaker, you could do that if you want, “yuh know”, but the people of this country are tired of that. They are tired of it. They want to know what you are going to do now!

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Weary!

Mr. C. Imbert: They want to know where we are now! Are we better off than we were three years ago?

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. C. Imbert: What is our future? Who will they vote for in the next general election?

Hon. Members: The PNM.

Mr. C. Imbert: How will we deal with our stagnating economy? How are we going to deal with crime? That is what people want to know about. They do not want this revisionist history going back into something, you know, that occurred 10, 20, 30 years ago.

Dr. Moonilal: “You doh want that!” [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert: No, no. Mr. Speaker, I am giving the hon. Members some friendly advice.

Hon. Member: Leave them.

Mr. C. Imbert: You can go ahead and go back in time and dwell in the 1990s and live in the 1980s and the 1960s if you wish. Go right ahead! You stay there! Stay there in your little ivory tower and your little world of your own. Stay there and stay in the 1970s and the 1980s and your little cocoon, your little comfort zone, stay there; but the people of this country, Mr. Speaker, “they not interested in all ah this ol’ talk, dey interested in what the Government is doing about crime”, what the Government is doing about our stagnating economy, and where we are going to take this country into the future. [*Desk thumping*]

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[MR. IMBERT]

Friday, May 17, 2013

So, I just want to say at the outset, if the Minister—[*Crosstalk*—no, at the end, sorry. [*Laughter*] I want to say in conclusion—my apologies.

Hon. Member: Finally!

Mr. C. Imbert: [*Laughter*] I know you got frightened I was going to talk for another half an hour—no. In conclusion, if this piece of legislation could have been dealt with in three minutes—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Baker: “Yuh supporting it?”

Mr. C. Imbert: Of course we support the Bill!

Hon. Member: Of course!

Mr. C. Imbert: There is no problem with this legislation. The problem we have is the rambling, historical—inaccurate historical account of the Minister.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Caroni East and Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Member: Chaguanas East.

Mr. Speaker: Chaguanas East, rather. [*Crosstalk*]

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank this House for allowing me to make my contribution on this Bill to validate actions done pursuant to section 4 of the Sugar Industry Control Board (Repeal) Act, 1995. Of course, as luck would have it, Mr. Speaker, somehow I always get to speak after my Member of Parliament, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Roberts: Poor you!

Hon. S. Cadiz: I have no idea why that—that must be in the Standing Orders and I think these Standing Orders should be revisited. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: So you could speak of his poor representation.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the things I marvel at with the other side is they are so scared stiff to talk about their tenure. What they did to this country, and I keep saying it, [*Continuous interruption*] until those on the other side apologize to this country for what they did for this country, [*Desk thumping*] this side, this People’s Partnership, the people in Government are going to continue to remind the population exactly what they did.

Mr. Roberts: “Yes, yes, tell dem!” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Cadiz: So when the Member for Diego Martin North/East asked a simple question: are we better off than we were three years ago? Of course the answer is what? A resounding yes! Of course!

Mr. Roberts: Yes, man! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Cadiz: But that is what they do not like, that is what “they afraid” because when we speak, when we go to the people, when we interact with the population and we remind them, because you cannot forget, “yuh know”. That is the same—that Member for Diego Martin North/East apparently had the file for the rapid rail, the consultancy worth \$500 million, under his desk; \$500 million, and he is talking about—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “It couldn’ fit!”

Hon. S. Cadiz:—the devastation and the closing down of an entire industry that maybe 300,000 people in this country depended on, besides direct employment, children, employment of suppliers of goods and services and what have you. Okay?

An entire section of this country, you could have drawn a line as to where, who, within that area would have been devastated by the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, and he is talking about \$200 million to \$300 million subsidy, and “he sitting down on ah box in his office on \$500 million worth of consultancy”. [*Crosstalk*] Imagine that! No, but they want this population—who they think might not remember—they want this population to forget the sins of those people on the other side.

Mr. Roberts: Never! Never! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Cadiz: We will never forget the sins! You know, he speaks about when the—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Member.

Hon. S. Cadiz: The Member, sorry. Thank you, Prime Minister. The Member was talking about when the price of sugar dropped substantially as a result of the contracts that we had with the Commonwealth and what have you, when those had expired—whether it was the Lomé Convention or what have you, when we lost that, hence the reason that they had to shut it down. So when the price of oil drops, what do we do? Shut down the oil industry? What kind of economics is that, “eh”? What kind of economics is that?

Hon. Member: “Connect it to the Bill, nah.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: The issue there with this Bill, yes, it is—we are talking about a very simple Bill that could have taken two to three minutes, five minutes to present and off we go, but the fact of the matter is, we have to understand what happened to the sugar industry. Okay? What happened to it and the result of it—the result of those actions by those on the other side, how they devastated this country.

Yes, I fully support what the—strangely enough, every now and again, I have to fully support the Member for Diego Martin North/East, because in 2005—sorry—in 1975, when Tate & Lyle was closing it down, the then hon. Prime Minister, Eric Williams, jumped in to save the industry, Mr. Speaker, because he realized what would have happened. He realized that the economic devastation it would have created in Trinidad and Tobago would have been catastrophic, so Dr. Eric Williams had to act very swiftly as the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited would have meant massive social dislocation, and that was in 1975. So Dr. Eric Williams understood what would have happened in those days.

When we move forward now, Mr. Speaker, to November 1999, the now Member for San Fernando East and then Prime Minister—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: The former PNM!

Hon. S. Cadiz:—made the statement in a speech entitled “Preserving the Legacy, Building a Nation, the Making of a People”. In that presentation, he promised to apply technology-based solutions to save Caroni; to save Caroni. This is in 1999. He also stated that the new automated factories would be installed at Usine Ste. Madeleine and Brechin Castle. He also said that cane farmers, whose lands were not appropriate for mechanical harvesting, were to be compensated and assisted, where appropriate, to exploit alternative activities.

So, yes, the other side, in its early days, supported the sugar industry with Dr. Williams saving it in 1975, and then, in 1999, the Member for San Fernando East making these very bold statements about what he intended to do with Caroni. Yet still, by some I do not know, they are the only ones that could tell us, what happened then in 2003.

When Prime Minister Manning made that statement, that was in November 1999, so that was practically the end of 1999, a mere three years after, “they come and they decide”, that is the end of it. One really has to wonder why, Mr. Speaker, whether it was not the result of the 18-18, that election, that somehow somebody’s mind changed, that the best way to never have a 18-18 again is to deal with Caroni because of the effect it would have on the economy in that particular area.

You know, John Rahael, who was the Minister of Agriculture at the time during the closure, he made a statement and he said, and I am quoting from a *Guardian* report in June of 2004—

Mr. Roberts: Is that the truth or did you read it in the *Guardian*?

Hon. S. Cadiz:—and said:

“A lot of time, thought and consideration went into the restructuring of Caroni.”

But what restructuring are we talking about? “They went like ah security guard in de night and they put ah padlock on de gate and that is what they considered restructuring.”

Mr. Speaker, 300,000 people—that is what percentage? That is a quarter of the population of this country devastated by the closure of Caroni, and they are saying they put a lot a thought? According to Minister Rahael, a lot of time, thought and consideration went into the restructuring of Caroni—where you have destroyed people’s lives, you have destroyed an entire community of Trinidad and Tobago, and you put a lot of time and thought into doing that? What kind of governance is that? What kind of people would sit down in a room and dream up this thing, about how to deal with the other side, how to deal with the Opposition, how to cut their heads off and bury them, how to get rid of them forever—

Mr. Roberts: PNM!

Hon. S. Cadiz:—and the only way they could think about doing it was to destroy that economy? Why? Maybe because every Opposition leader that came—in those days came from that area. I do not know if that was the reason for doing that. But there had to be some other reason, because you could not take an industry that provided so much to so many people and in one fell swoop you just close it down.

When you talk about restructuring, I know in business—when you are talking about restructuring a business, Mr. Speaker, a restructuring of business will take—you will restructure it over a period of time, you will look at the loss-making areas, you get rid of those; you look at the areas that make money, you look at the—for instance, Caroni (1975) Limited was earning US \$175 million a year in foreign exchange, and I am pretty sure, in 2003, US \$175 million was something that this country would have wanted, it would have depended on.

When the Member for Diego Martin North/East makes the statement—*[Crosstalk]*—millions. When the Member for Diego Martin North/East talks

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. S. CADIZ]

Friday, May 17, 2013

about playing fields and roads and what have you, [*Crosstalk*] who is doing that now? If you were not paying Caroni between roughly \$300 million a year in subsidy, and they were doing all of this work; all over this island you have Caroni (1975) Limited supporting all these communities, all these neighborhoods, you cut that off, you cut off that subsidy, you shut them down, you padlock the gates, who has to do it the following day? You still have to find the money to pay local government, you still have to find the money to give to works, you still have to find the money to give to whoever is going to be doing—Drainage Division—the mentioned Drainage Division. Okay.

3.00 p.m.

But there is more to it, you know, Mr. Speaker. There is more to the closing down of Caroni (1975) Limited. A couple areas where Caroni (1975) Limited provided real service to those communities—for instance, in health, Caroni (1975) Limited had their own health facilities where the workers were able to attend and go to. So, as soon as the padlock went on the gate, all those facilities were just closed down, overnight, closed down. Caroni (1975) Limited workers, the 50,000 people employed directly and indirectly with Caroni (1975) Limited, that is the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited and their families, all of a sudden now, no health facilities the next morning. They had to go to the regular government facilities.

Again, you are talking about the subsidy, the subsidy was going to Caroni (1975) Limited, of course, but when you remove that subsidy, padlock the gate, you still have to pay for the services to the people. So really and truly, who worked out the math for that?

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about health, and you are not just talking about the health facilities, you are talking about what happened to those workers when they woke up the next morning realizing what had happened to them—mental health issues, dependency issues. I am going to read from the same “*Guardian of democracy*” of June 27, 2004. That is roughly one year after the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. I am reading here—this is in Basta Hall. I do not know if the Member for Diego Martin North/East knows where Basta Hall is, but it is right there, “it eh far from here”.

Mr. Imbert: “Right by Point Lisas.”

Mr. Roberts: “Dah wey yuh park de *Su*?”

Hon. S. Cadiz: “Basta Hall, home to over 1,000 former Caroni workers, has been stuck in a time-warp since our last visit with residents in October, 2003.

The old-fashioned, tight-knit community of approximately 1,700 remains in a state of chronic depression, having depended on the sugar...industry for generations.

Their withered hopes and dreams can also be compared to the 300 acres of abandoned cane"—lands—"which mark their territory and heritage.

Unemployment figures have remained consistent, with less than 50 per cent of the adult population gainfully employed in construction jobs, plying taxis or keeping shop.

Most of the retrenched workers have already exhausted most of their VSEP money, with most of it having gone toward house renovations and loan payments."

That one small village, Basta Hall—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: What a shame!

Hon. S. Cadiz:—the devastation, and I am pretty sure when they say why we—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Shame!

Hon. S. Cadiz:—going back in history, people of Trinidad and Tobago have to understand—[*Interruption*]—they have to understand what those on the other side stand for and that is exactly what it is, devastation. [*Desk thumping*] Those on the other side are not people centred. They have nothing. They do not want to know about the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is themselves who they want to look after.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(5)—[*Interruption*]—no, no, 36(5), imputing improper motives.

Mr. Sharma: Nonsense! Nonsense!

Miss Mc Donald: "No, no, no; yuh cyah say dat."

Mr. Roberts: "Why? Buh is true!"

Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to be very careful in your language, please.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Mr. Speaker, I note your—yes.

When we go back, again, we are going back to—and I say, "doh go back. Dey doh want to go back." My constituency of Chaguanas East, smack bang in the sugar, when I look at what happened when we came into office in 2010, the

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. S. CADIZ]

Friday, May 17, 2013

flooding that I would get in Chaguanas East and the work that we have to do that Caroni (1975) Limited would have normally done, okay—they would normally have done it; they would normally have cleared all the irrigation channels. That is what they did. They would maintain the irrigation channels, they would maintain the drainage system in these areas but “dey go, dey padlock de gate; dey send ah security guard, dey padlock de gate of Caroni (1975) Limited and then saying how the subsidy is too much and yet still not one single cent goes into the proper maintenance of irrigation systems and drainage systems.”

So when we came into office in 2010, I am very glad to report, one of the first things that we did, [*Desk thumping*] was to go into the area, clean out all the old irrigation channels that they failed to do—and Caroni East is one of theirs you know, but never again. They would not be seeing that in a hurry.

Mr. Roberts: “Dah was Ken Julien own.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: So when they talk about the drain on the Treasury, yes, it is a subsidy, yes Caroni (1975) Limited could have been restructured, yes the whole sugar cane industry could have been restructured to where it would have been either breaking even or making a profit. Okay? It was not a problem to do, but I do not think that those on the other side maybe—“I doh know.” I do not know if they were capable of doing that because maybe they did not even understand what that industry meant to Trinidad and Tobago. I think that therein—that is where the problem lies.

They never really and truly understood what this thing called the cane industry represented to Trinidad and Tobago, and they had no interest whatsoever in trying to understand it. “So when they go and they padlock the gate, they did not realize that with Caroni (1975) Limited closed down that there would be no maintenance of the irrigation system and the drainage system of that whole central area and hence all the flooding.”

I remember the same day we were sworn in, the Prime Minister had to put on her tall boots—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Baksh: Wellington boots.

Hon. S. Cadiz:—and head down into central to assist those poor people in central that were flooded out. So, it is not just a straight case of closing it down.

The other thing, we are importing in the vicinity, at least up to 2010, up to US \$600 million worth of food. This is a country where “yuh could stick yuh finger in de ground and it go grow”, the kind of arable land that we have in this country.

You see, for the Member for Diego Martin North/East to say that is a nonsensical statement, Mr. Speaker, you see where the thinking is? This country has thousands of acres of arable land. We have been farmers for centuries. Tobago used to feed Trinidad. Before the great oil came in in 1907, what did this country rely on for its exports? It was all agriculture.

Mr. Roberts: “Um-hmm”, teach them.

Hon. S. Cadiz: We ate locally. That is what we did. Now, US \$600 million worth of food is imported, but, by padlocking the gate, not understanding what you were doing—

The famous buffalypso that Dr. Steve Bennet—who received a national award recently—Dr. Steve Bennet pioneered the buffalypso. He spent years building a breeding herd of buffalypso.

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh preaching, man!”

Hon. S. Cadiz: Where is the buffalypso breeding herd? Do you know what they did? “They send it to Venezuela and they send it to Costa Rica. They sold off the breeding herd. Imagine that! You spend years developing something that Trinidad and Tobago could live off of, homegrown, and what yuh do with it? Yuh doh even understand what a Buffalypso is, far less for Caroni (1975) Limited.” Caroni (1975) Limited had one of the best breeding herds of buffalypso. “When they padlocked the gates, no Caroni (1975) Limited workers to go and work with the animals or anything like that and animals dying and people stealing the animals.” [*Interruption*] “Of course is true.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, please! Members, I have been flexible but I would now be rigid. We cannot be shouting over the floor that what a Member is saying is not true. In the first instance, that is not proper. It is disorderly. So I ask Members to hold your fire because you will have a chance to speak.

Mr. Roberts: Take notes then.

Mr. Speaker: But do not shout. That is unparliamentary. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. S. Cadiz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: “Yes, yuh rattling dem, boy, yuh rattling dem!”

Hon. S. Cadiz: Mr. Speaker, another area that Caroni (1975) Limited was contributing substantially to food in Trinidad and Tobago is citrus in the La Gloria Estate. I remember driving south—I used to drive south every single day of

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. S. CADIZ]

Friday, May 17, 2013

life—and you would see these trucks loaded with citrus coming up the road, overflowing with citrus going up to Citrus Growers to be processed, truckloads of citrus, grapefruit and orange and as “dey say in Trinidad, poteegal”, going up to Citrus Growers to be processed. Do you know what we have to do now, and is good business for Belize? We importing—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “Poteegal?”

Hon. S. Cadiz:—no, importing the concentrate.

Mr. Roberts: “Fuh true?”

Hon. S. Cadiz: “We importing concentrate from Belize.”

Mr. Roberts: “I didn’ even know dat.”

Hon. S. Cadiz: And I think the Belizean people are very happy to export concentrate for us. But we go from a net exporter of grapefruit to the United Kingdom and we now—“every juice—no more parlour juice. Every juice yuh see ah child drinking outta dem lil box is concentrate imported from Belize”, and that is what the other side did.

So they did not know that when you padlocked the gates of Caroni (1975) Limited, what effect it was going to have. They left those citrus groves in La Gloria Estate—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. S. Cadiz:—overgrown; “people stealing—rampant stealing going on because there is no security, no nothing going on.” Okay? Vines taking over all the citrus trees, but they did not worry. What is citrus? “We doh need that. Dah cyah help us. And that is why our food import bill—because the concentrate that yuh bringing form Belize all contribute to the US \$600 million that we importing, but again, understanding—ah doh know”—I agree with you, Mr. Speaker. I fully support—I am not going to go there. But how they could not figure that out is beyond me, Mr. Speaker.

Tilapia, “cascadu—I see ah fella in one ah de papers de odda day; there is a picture of a man selling cascadu saying that he cyah get cascadu again.” He cannot get cascadu again. So down to tilapia farms, Caroni (1975) Limited—all that food was being processed, so Caroni (1975) Limited was not about sugar. At the end of the day, it was not about sugar, it was about everything else. But the other side, understanding the 18-18 result, understanding that one of the ways to deal with the Opposition, the then Opposition, was to cut off the head, break

them, break the economy in their area, and that is why the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited came like a thief in the night because they could have restructured it. There was absolutely no problem. Any company can be restructured.

“Ah coming back tuh meh food bill”, because when we talk about food, that is the politics of the kitchen table. That is where people listen and that is what people want to know, what are you doing, because when I sit down at my kitchen table and I cannot afford to buy this and I cannot afford to buy that, then you start worrying, what is this Government doing. “Is kitchen table politics; is kitchen cupboard politics we talking about.”

Caroni (1975) Limited—molasses. “Angostura now, gone and planted 17,000 acres of sugar cane in Barbados.” [*Crosstalk*] Seventeen thousand acres Angostura Limited had to go and plant in Barbados to make up the shortfall of the molasses that they would normally buy from Caroni. “So boop, there it goes again, US \$600 million food bill, but they laughing and joking.” But, yes, let them laugh and joke at a US \$600 million food bill because that is something that they—that is their legacy, Mr. Speaker. That is the legacy.

Mr. Speaker, something as simple as bagasse board, nearly every single piece of furniture that is imported into this country—and “ah using” the word “imported” because that is what it is—is made with bagasse board or some kind of chipboard, okay, and yet still, “dey close down Caroni (1975) Limited, no more bagasse, just do away with a whole other industry now.”

Then we talk about intercropping. “When dey finish reaping de cane, okay—when we finish reaping de cane during de dry season, before the cane started to grow up again for the next year’s crop, the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited and the cane farmers would plant food crops in between now.” So you had thousands of acres available to farmers to do intercropping, to plant all kind—“baigan, watermelon—all kinda thing was planted in between.”

When you are talking about a food bill; how do you bring down a food bill? That is what we are talking about. Here it is that you have an entire industry, all these tens of thousands of people dependent on this industry—this industry is doing sugar, yes, the price of sugar falls but that is not the only industry that we talking about here. We talking about the food industry, food security for this country.” Caroni (1975) Limited was in a position to provide food security for this country and yet still, no, they want nothing to do with that, padlock the gate, shut it down. Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker!

One of the things that happened in 2003 was the other side's view of labour because, by shutting Caroni (1975) Limited down, five labour unions suffered—they devastated five labour unions. That just shows because there is no way anybody in their right mind could look at that, break collective bargaining agreements just like that, okay, other than the other side.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited went home with very, very little, they now have to go—and I fully support the fact that now through the work ethics of the people of Chaguanas East, for instance, Chaguanas has now become a thriving borough, okay, because people after a while they just said “enough ah dat, dey done shut we out areddy”, let us move on, let us create another economy down here, and that is exactly what they did.

Instead of taking that work ethics of the people of Caroni (1975) Limited and restructuring Caroni (1975) Limited, making it a bigger, better company, a profitable company, their answer to it is if we do not know about the industry, and we “doh” think we could handle this, and this thing has all kinds of political implications, the best thing to do, take “a padlock and padlock de gate and shut de whole thing down”.

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. S. Cadiz: It is a shame, Mr. Speaker. It is a shame.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*—we have to sit down here and—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. S. Cadiz: So, when we come—“because dey go tell me ah” did not even mention the Bill once. So when we come to the Bill, of course, too late is “de cry”, it is already done, but I want this population to understand that when we are talking about those on the other side looking after the economy of this country, those are the wrong people to do it, they are incapable.

So unless oil is at \$140 a barrel, they are incapable of managing this country's economy, just by the simple fact of taking an industry like the sugar industry, what it meant to this economy, by not even understanding how it works, not even understanding how you could restructure it and fix it, they just did the one thing that they know how to do, shut it down. It is like all the other things that they have dealt with over the years.

So, I agree with the Member for Diego Martin North/East, this is a simple Bill and this Bill should take two minutes, three minutes or five minutes to present,

and a very simple debate and, therefore, Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Diego Martin West. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for offering me an opportunity to join this debate. I want to begin by reiterating what my colleague from Diego Martin North/East said, that the matter that brought us to this House, the matter before us, is that the Government has observed that there is \$800,000 in surplus, that is left from the sugar industry labour welfare accounts and which I think about seven, or how many years ago, when we closed the SILWC arrangements, at the time we said after we settled the matters, we made provision for if there was a surplus. It turns out there was a surplus of \$800,000 which has been lying there; the Government quite properly has come to the Parliament to say that we will change the law so as to allow that money to be accessed, and to be put to whatever use the Government sees fit.

It was not my intention to join this debate, but I could not sit here, Mr. Speaker, and listen to the Member for Chaguanas East talk such unadulterated unparliamentary word matter. [*Desk thumping*] The one point that one gleans from this Member for Chaguanas East, who sees it fit because he represents Chaguanas East, because he has been totally absent and unproductive in Chaguanas East, he seized this opportunity to get up here today, and mislead the population probably satisfying himself, but the bottom line is this: virtually everything he said has one core thought, yes, we could improve our food bill reduction, yes, we could produce this food but, of course, the one thing, it must be produced by the Government; that was all he was saying. So if Caroni (1975) Limited did not do it, it could not be done and as a result of Caroni (1975) Limited not being in place, all these wonderful things—

Mr. Imbert: “Cyar be done.”

Dr. K. Rowley:—that could be done in Trinidad and Tobago to reduce the food bill are not being done because there is no Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Imbert: “Hmm, imagine dat.”

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, the word “nonsense” is parliamentary still, it still is, but I am not casting any aspersion on the Member personally, but what the Member has just said, the content of what he had said is begging for that description. I could not sit here and listen to the Member reach out to people and telling them, that something terrible had happened to them because of some kind of spite of the 18-18 election results.

Hon. Member: Madness!

Dr. K. Rowley: That is not true. The problem with the maintenance of a state sugar industry has been engaging this country way before the 18-18. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, during the NAR there was a split between the Dookeran faction in the NAR, and the Basdeo Panday faction, because I do not have the time this evening and there is no reason to do it, but just to remind you there was a Dookeran plan under the NAR where as an economist, who understood the other side of what the Member for Chaguanas East spoke about afternoon in such a terrible way, the Dookeran plan—

Hon. Member: “Yuh never read de Dookeran plan?”

Dr. K. Rowley:—had come up with some idea as to how to grapple with the problem of a state sugar sector in a changing world economic environment.

The Basdeo Panday plan, when the politics broke up, was to preserve the trade union arrangement and do not touch anything and it was good politics to oppose the Dookeran plan. We were not there, the PNM was not there, there was no 18-18 and the NAR split down the middle leaving the problem there unattended. The bottom line is, Mr. Speaker, that the survival of a sugar industry in Trinidad and Tobago, the one that a man from Maraval is now the big champion of—[*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Hon. Member: Imagine that!

Dr. K. Rowley:—he left Maraval and went down to Chaguanas and is now the big spokesman for the preservation of sugar cane growing. [*Interruption*] “Ah coming to dat”—the preservation of cane growing. The bottom line is that the preservation of Caroni (1975) Limited as a state-growing enterprise was largely an offshoot of international economic conditions. He said Dr. Williams saw the need to preserve it and, apparently, Dr. Williams being a humanitarian, decided that when Tate & Lyle was pulling out, that he preserved it out of humanitarian conditions. It was preserved then against the context that the subsidy in the external markets was still available.

Hon. Member: Exactly.

Dr. K. Rowley: If at the time in 1975 what happened in 2002, 2003 happened and the subsidies were unavailable, it is very likely and almost certain that Dr. Williams would have acted differently. But in 1975 picking up the slack from the pulling out of Tate & Lyle and others, it was done against the background that the US market was still there for subsidy, and the European market was still there for

subsidy, and if we pick up some of the subsidy here in Trinidad and Tobago, we could have maintained industry which would produce sugar and export it to those countries; and that went on for 25 years. We got 25 years more after the original owners turned their backs on sugar; that is how Caroni (1975) Limited came into being, but things were changing.

He asked the question, what happened between 2003 and the 18-18 and it had to be some spite or some wickedness because it could have been preserved and it was an election result. No, Mr. Speaker, what happened was that first and foremost, the US stopped the subsidy availability to Trinidad sugar industry.

Mr. Imbert: “Well, he suppose to know dat.”

Dr. K. Rowley: We continued with the industry, because our export to the US was about 35,000 tons or thereabout, but it was the US who first stopped the subsidy into their market. So Caroni lost that market with the subsidy. That strain came on Trinidad and Tobago to continue the industry. We continued the industry, we reduced the production but we continued. Then the major change came about when in the European market with the coming of the WTO and the deepening of the UK involvement in Europe, and the strength of the European idea of not subsidizing sugar outside of Europe, that the Europeans took a policy decision to do two things: one, stop providing subsidy markets for people like us; and two, to provide us with some money over a period of time to switch from the sugar that they were supporting through subsidy to whatever else we wanted to do in agriculture, and that was the difference between Dr. Williams’ intervention in 1975 and what happened in 2003.

Where this Member came from Chaguanas East to be talking what he talked about this evening as though we just got up one morning and decided to shut down the sugar industry? And, in fact, what happened was that when the decision was taken in Trinidad and Tobago that in the absence of a market, we could not continue as a state-growing industry—there is absolutely nothing in Trinidad and Tobago today to prevent anybody from growing sugar cane, you know. If anybody in this country wants to get up and grow sugar cane and produce sugar and molasses there is absolutely nothing to prevent them from doing it.

He just mentioned Angostura, a Trinidad and Tobago private sector company, has gone to Barbados to grow 17,000 acres of cane and apparently that is PNM’s fault. I thought he would tell us here this evening, why did a private sector Trinidad and Tobago company go to Barbados to grow cane and not grow it in Trinidad, because cane can only grow in Trinidad in the state sector by the

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 17, 2013

Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago? That was what he was saying, you know, that was what he said here this afternoon; that since cane was not grown in Trinidad on the state payroll in Caroni (1975) Limited, cane could not grow here, so they had to go to grow it in Barbados. What arrant nonsense, Mr. Speaker!

They must have taken a decision based on something else to suit their bottom line, their economics, their management, they chose to grow their cane in Barbados. It might very well be that the limping Barbados industry which is owned by the bank in Barbados—not the Government, you know. The Barbados sugar industry is owned and supported month to month on life support by the bank in Barbados, that may have given an opening to Angostura to go in there and do a good business arrangement. It has nothing to do with the PNM, Trinidad and Tobago or the agronomy of Trinidad and Tobago and cane growing.

This Member gets us up here this afternoon and talks—“ah mean, ah doh want” to describe it in an unkind way but, Mr. Speaker, if that is what comes from a Minister of Government, then God help Trinidad and Tobago. He knew absolutely nothing about what he was talking, because once the European subsidy was pulled out, the numbers for growing cane in Trinidad and Tobago were horrendous. He also mentioned the manufacturing of sugar. We are not an island unto ourselves. We are part of the Caricom where we have joined by treaty and unless he is telling us ignore the treaty, disregard the treaty—

Miss Mc Donald: “Dah is what he say.”

Dr. K. Rowley:—we will have to pay attention to the fact that even the small amount of sugar that we were using from our own production, if we are going to stand alone producing our own sugar here only for our benefit, we could not see it only as what we could produce. We have to see it against what the Guyanese could sell to us, because Guyanese sugar would have access to Trinidad and Tobago market as if the sugar was grown in Carapichaima—that is how it is—in Caricom free movement of goods and services. So Guyanese sugar was always available to flood Trinidad market and compete with the sugar produced in Trinidad and Tobago as it is now.

So I want to see the businessman who will start to grow cane in Trinidad to compete with Guyana’s more efficient and larger farms with economies of scale. There is absolutely nothing on the government instruction or government policy or any law to prevent any businessman from starting to grow cane in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, I think the land is available, lots of Caroni (1975) Limited land is

available, and I am sure if a businessman comes forward now and says he wants a few acres of land to grow cane, because he thinks it is a good business to compete with Guyanese sugar—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Cadiz enterprise.

Dr. K. Rowley:—I am sure the Minister will be happy. But show me the businessman, show me the business house that is going to come forward now since Government wickedly closed down Caroni—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*—in power.

Dr. K. Rowley:—and there is all this benefit to be had from growing cane. Where is the businessman who is coming forward now to grow cane knowing that the sugar he produces will have competition from Guyana?

3.30 p.m.

And we did have, Mr. Speaker, a sugar manufacturing company, which initially was relying on Caroni (1975) Limited sugar for some of its raw material for refining; and, of course, since we stopped producing sugar here in Trinidad, it is relying almost entirely on Guyanese raw sugar or, not at all; but the bottom line is this: all that he has said here about the wonderful things that a state-growing sugar industry would have done and could have been fixed in one year.

They have been there for three years now. It could be fixed in one year. Sugar cane grows and is harvested after one year. It is an annual; it is a grass. You could plant it and after one year it is ready for harvesting. So all you want is a plant and you could buy a plant as the Government did under the UNC. Go to India or somewhere, buy a plant, bring it here; it takes six months, you have a new plant. So the PNM shut it down out of wickedness. Well, you take one year, bring a plant, put it there; spend one year planting cane and, “badow”, we have a replacement of the sugar industry. Have they done that? Do they intend to do that?

Except we hear this “ol talk” year after year after year after year by politicians about how the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited has brought this Tower of Babel falling down on the country, but then he tells you, from the other side of his mouth, that the most prosperous areas in Trinidad and Tobago today are the areas where cane was grown. Is that not interesting?

It was this horrendous decision to come out of sugar and everybody was going to fall down and die; but at the same time Penal, Debe, Chaguanas, he is telling

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 17, 2013

me—I did not say so—he is telling me and I verily believe him, that among the most prosperous areas in the country today are areas which were initially dependent on the sugar industry.

So, therefore, is it not reasonable to assume that when we came out of sugar and those who took us out of sugar expected that we could have lived differently and lived prosperously as we are doing now as he said? So where is all this story coming from and why is it necessary 13 years after the sugar industry has been closed, right, but closed in response to international pressures?

We are not the only country that closed our sugar industry. There was no PNM in St. Kitts. There was no racial composition in St. Kitts to cause people like our friend, the Member for Chaguanas East, to invoke ethnic pressure. St. Kitts is a homogenous community. They lived almost 95 per cent dependent on sugar and in the end what happened? When the same external pressures were applied to St. Kitts as the subsidy was lost, St. Kitts had to shift. The industry had closed down. Who closed down St. Kitts' sugar industry? Who closed down the Antigua sugar industry?

Hon. Members: PNM.

Dr. K. Rowley: You understand?

Miss Cox: “Is de PNM.”

Dr. K. Rowley: But in Trinidad and Tobago, they now interpret it outside of the reality, and a Member of Parliament, a Minister of Government, an MP for Chaguanas comes here this afternoon and starts to make these statements which are completely devoid of any understanding of the history of the industry; of any understanding of something that took place a decade ago, calling people's names and ascribing to them malice aforethought, when in fact all we did as a country was to make the most of it until it made no sense to go any further.

What he should have said before he sat down was that his Government policy would be to open the sugar industry. The land is still there. Land does not rot; it is still there. You can plant cane again, since all these wonderful things are available for the sugar industry funded by the Treasury because you can only speak for the Treasury funding. That is the only point he made this afternoon—that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago should be doing that. Then he goes as far as to say, of course there were other spinoffs from the industry. Caroni (1975) Limited was growing plantain, remember that? What that meant, the Government was growing plantain—

Mr. Imbert: At a loss.

Dr. K. Rowley: Let me repeat that: as part of the Caroni (1975) Limited empire, Caroni (1975) Limited was growing plantain by the truckloads, but what that meant, every plantain grower from Toco to Diego Martin, his plantain in the market was competing with the Government's plantain, and I do not want to go into the economics of that because at UWI and elsewhere where they are sane and sober, you will see the negatives of that. Plantain grown by Caroni (1975) Limited competing with plantain grown by an independent farmer anywhere in this country was bad business.

Caroni (1975) Limited was growing cassava, same story, so one can take the position of my friend from Caroni East and talk about the wonderful things that Caroni (1975) Limited was doing in terms of producing these things. It is a mirage. They called it diversification for years, but all it meant is that the Government was growing these things at the State's expense.

There is no reason why they could not be grown without the State doing it and what has to happen in this country is encouragement for these productions outside of the structure of a Caroni (1975) Limited; but he comes and makes a case that the buffalo herd—which buffalo herd? The State had a buffalo herd. The Bovells had a buffalo herd, right? I wonder if it is Government who sold off the Bovell's buffalo herd.

Mr. Imbert: “That is wha he saying?”

Dr. K. Rowley: If you listen to him, you get the impression that the only buffalypso in the country was Caroni (1975) Limited's and he goes to the ridiculous state that when Caroni (1975) Limited was closed down the Government padlocked the gate and left the animals to starve and die. Absolute untruth!

Miss Mc Donald: Oh Lord!

Dr. K. Rowley: Absolute untruth! Who in this country left cattle to die in this country?

Miss Mc Donald: “Oooh!”

Hon. Member: PNM.

Dr. K. Rowley: “Yuh” hear him? No, “Robocop.” [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, that is not true. That did not happen. It did not happen. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago did not close down Caroni (1975) Limited one day with a

padlock and leave animals to starve. There was a phasing out of the State's involvement in these matters. As a matter of fact, a lot of what was Caroni (1975) Limited ended up in private hands, officially and unofficially in some cases.

If he is aware of the writings of Prof. Spence, he makes reference to the citrus fields, the programme of utilization of Caroni (1975) Limited lands in the private sector, if you go to the policy and the programme, you would have seen that in the case of the citrus, there was the argument that it could be divided up into the small farms. It takes about 40 or 50 acres to make a viable farm and that could easily have been done. The trees are still there. The infrastructure to create small farming for food production, we spent—this Parliament, passed \$2 billion as part of the Caroni (1975) Limited restructuring to allow a newly-formed state company, EMBD to put in infrastructure to bring parcels of land, to make it available to farmers so that they could produce whatever they choose to produce on their own volition to add to the food production mountain in this country. That happened in this country.

You think the roads that EMBD built to make access to land are just for joke or to spend money? The whole Caroni (1975) Limited situation was looked at in that context. There was a plan; you identify industrial land; you identify housing land, agricultural best soils—it is all there and it is happening. It is not happening in the best and most efficient way, but there was a plan being followed and it was against the background, when the EU decided to stop the subsidy and they made a certain amount of money available to the Government, it was to help the Government to do things like this.

What they did, they went and told the sugar cane farmers that the EU money was theirs and the farmers had this expectation and made this demand on the Government, starting with the PNM Government, to get in their own hand, the money that the EU made available to assist the Government to make this transformation; and in the election of 2010, they actually committed themselves to paying the farmers the EU money. They encouraged the farmers to come to Port of Spain to go outside the EU office and demonstrate, telling the EU that the PNM Government had this money from the EU and was not giving it to them. The EU had to issue a statement saying, not only is the money not to be given to farmers or made available to farmers as cash as promised by the politicians, but if the Government does that, the EU will stop the flow of funds from the outstanding tranches.

That happened in this country. Politicians were telling the cane farmers—misleading them the way he spoke this afternoon—that the EU money was

available to pay them in cash. That was their election campaign. There is a fella called Seukeran Tambie. He speaks for cane farmers and, quite properly, based on what they told him, he was making these demands, leading cane farmers, demanding this money; and worse than that, Mr. Speaker, while they misled him down that road, they were quietly telling them that the reason why the PNM was not paying them the money the EU gave the PNM to give them is because the PNM was racial.

They were doing that and, Mr. Speaker, when the cane farmers came to Port of Spain and they went outside the EU's office and the EU issued a statement saying, listen Trinidad and Tobago, if you pay any of our money to cane farmers as cash as promised, we will stop the payment to Trinidad and Tobago. Minister Vasant Bharath went further. He said, if we give you the money in cash, you would not farm, you will buy stove and fridge and car.

Miss Mc Donald: I remember that.

Dr. K. Rowley: A statement from a Minister of this Government responding to the cane farmers who they misled, telling them—because they were now confronted; you in Government now, you give them the money; and let me ask any of them today; get up in this Parliament today and say that you gave EU money as cash to any farmer in this country. Get up and say that today; any of you, because if any of them said that, the EU money not available because it is not to be given as cash to people as any entitlement. It is for the Government to spend in developing the agri-sector however the Government sees fit. Some of the very farmers could get help in doing what they want to do, post-sugar. If they want to stay in sugar they could get help doing that, but you cannot give them cash.

Three years they in government facing their promise to the cane farmers because they did not speak the truth to them; the very same way he got up here this afternoon and did not speak the truth to the country about the history of the country as it was.

Mr. Speaker: Please, hon. Member, you know that we cannot really attribute that to a Member of Parliament. So I ask you not to go there and to withdraw that because a Member of Parliament's word is his honour.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that bruising statement, but I cannot let the record remain unchallenged. The same way the Member got up here this afternoon and by his misunderstanding of the situation misled the population, it is precisely what they did in the election campaign. [*Desk thumping*]

It is that haughty misleading of misinformation, portraying the PNM and the PNM Government as being anti-worker, anti-this, anti-that, it is that which caused the cane farmers to have the impression, as stated by them, that they were in line to get EU money as cash because the EU put the money there for them who had lost their industry—simply that—and having found themselves in the corridor of Government, they could not deliver on their promise to the cane farmers because they could not; they did not dare take the money they had in hand from the EU and pay it to any cane farmer; and even in the face of that, as a member of the Cabinet, he comes here this afternoon misrepresenting the situation all over again.

You are not fooling anybody, you know, because we have nothing to hide. These are public policies and as my friend, the Member for Tunapuna knows, this is not a Trinidad and Tobago thing. You go to Mauritius, you go to Guyana, you go to wherever sugar cane was grown, this is the issue we faced at the turn of the century, and to make a bland comparison between the turn of the century and 1975 is to not understand that significant changes have been made by us and to us and it is a different environment.

This discussion did not start yesterday. When the first sod was turned at Point Lisas, it was turned on sugar cane land and we understood that we were changing our economy. We used to be a banana producer in Trinidad and Tobago and an exporter of banana. I knew when in Tobago my parents and grandparents planted banana for export and, in the port in Trinidad, banana was exported from here; but then somewhere along the way we lost the banana industry. We lost it to disease and, therefore, we had to survive without it. I wonder if he will get up and say that because of the PNM and because of race and because of spite we lost the banana industry.

We used to export oranges and grapefruit as he said, but when Britain joined the Common Market, we could not enter the British market. That is how we lost it. We lost the market when Britain became a member of the European Common Market, so changes have been made to us and about us, and we responded differently. Fortunately, as we lost these markets that we lived on in agriculture, we found a way in the energy sector, and I dare say a more valuable and money-earning way which has paid for a life which we know today which is far better than we had then.

3.45 p.m.

It does not mean that we should not produce every cassava, banana and sweet potato that we can produce. But understand it, it is not an either or, it is an

adjustment to circumstances. There is absolutely nothing today in this contract that prevents anybody who wants to use the same arable soil you talk about to go out there and plant what they want to plant.

I know a young highly qualified university graduate who is a cassava farmer in Trinidad and Tobago, and I am sure he is earning more than all of us in this Parliament. The only reason why he is doing it is because he knows how to do it and he is making a good living doing it. But they would never get up here and talk our story so that our children will know our history and understand their circumstance. They will forever be revising the history to score political points. Well, today, Sir, you laid an egg [*Laughter*] because nobody in this country who knows our history will take you very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, in Petrotrin, we had a situation where the Government had a cattle farm and there were farmers working for the Government milking cows in Petrotrin on oil company wages. I am sure the union liked that, but when you look at it from a standpoint, is that the best way for the country to operate? Nobody says do not rear cattle; nobody says do not have a good wage for the farmer—*[Interruption]*

Mr. McLeod: Will the Member give way?

Dr. K. Rowley:—but the arrangement—*[Interruption]*

Mr. McLeod: I wish to assure the Member that those employees at the Star Farm, they worked under separate agreements and their wages were not oil wages.

Dr. K. Rowley: Well, I am glad to hear that, but I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, there were no farmers outside of Star Farm who were getting a wage like the ones who were operating with the Star Farm in Trinidad and Tobago, because the wages paid by the Treasury at Star Farm—when Star Farm became PSAEL or whatever it is—when it became that, you had superior elevated cost in terms and conditions. Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is these were local economic conditions that had to be taken in a kind of seriousness which was not shown by my friend from Chaguanas East this afternoon.

He talked about tilapia. Caroni (1975) Limited was growing shrimp and tilapia in Orange Grove. I was the Minister. But when you looked at it, it did not make economic sense for Caroni to try to make a profit centre out of it. It just was not there. You might have grown some stuff that was consumed, but the nature of the economics—the economic model of doing it as a state sector matter—it was just not there, and it is against all of those considerations that when the State's primary purpose which was the cane growing came to an end, these things, they were available for the private sector.

You should have asked yourself, why did they not survive or grow under the private sector? It is because—you know, the Member for Chaguanas East is a businessman in Trinidad and Tobago. He came into politics from business, and I am sure he has a lot of friends in the business community. I am sure they would be surprised to hear him getting up in the Parliament and making this case for the State to be the grower of tilapia, and the grower of shrimp, and the producer of plantain, and the producer of baigan, and green peas and buffalypso, and that the only way these things could be done is if the Government does it in a work model like Caroni (1975) Limited.

The Government has lots of other models to try to improve our agricultural production and those models are under this Government as well, because in the last three years they have changed nothing much to what they met there. I am sure if you examine the Ministry's support for farmers now, in terms of access roads, subsidies, technical support, health support for poultry and pigs and importation of breeding stock, these are the same things that previous Governments were doing.

Only recently I saw a statement where the Government intends to import 100 and how many heads of cattle from Jamaica. That is not new. We imported cattle from Canada 30, 40 years ago, bred them, made them available to farmers, so who wanted to farm and do dairy cattle in Carlsen Field, in Tobago or wherever, it is all there, so we keep trying to do it. There are some inherent inefficiencies, but do not get up and behave as you just suddenly woke up like Rip Van Winkle and decide that you want to know who decided to close down Caroni (1975) Limited! It was the people who determined that it was the best thing for the country.

Mr. Speaker, I did not want to get into this debate, because this debate really is not for people who have their head screwed on. You come here this afternoon just to allow the Government to access some moneys that were there as a result of something that happened, and then you hear people start misrepresenting the country's history, in the way that he has done, to give the impression that something quite irresponsible and quite terrible happened.

I am sure there are persons who had hardships as a result of the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited but, by the same token, there are persons who did wonderfully well as a result of the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, because they were not put out on the street hand to mouth. The pension programme in Caroni (1975) Limited, whatever it was before the closure, it was instructed by the Government and verily put in place that there was an improvement in the pension condition for those who were attached to it.

The land availability: every day the Government is giving out lots left, right and centre, drinking and clinking glass and by the hundreds. Where did it start? It started with the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, but it was not an abandoned exercise. The people of Trinidad and Tobago who were not Caroni (1975) Limited workers supported a programme funded by the State to put in infrastructure to create whole new areas for development where new houses would be built, new roads, new drainage, new sewer plants and new lights and those persons were not abandoned. You do not spend \$2 billion on people and say you abandoned them.

If they were in the private sector, all they would have got was their severance pay, but in the State sector they got their severance enhanced. Dare I say, it was not the ordinary severance on the law book, you know! I was in the Cabinet as part of the Cabinet that took a decision to offer an enhanced severance. They got access to land, and not just raw land they had to walk on tracks, you know, land made available only when proper infrastructure was put in place, and even as we were putting in the infrastructure—it took some time to do it—while it was being done, people like my friend, the Member for Chaguanas East, was there behaving as though something bad was happening to them, and when he was done, they are now giving out the lands by the “grap”.

They got training, those who wanted to train in other issues. The Government funded that. So, it is wrong to say that the Government shut down Caroni (1975) Limited and abandoned people to hardship. That is not true, Mr. Speaker. It is just not true, and it is just not right for anybody to be saying that, especially an officer of the State like a Minister of Government, because this country expects that as Ministers, when they speak, they will speak with some semblance of knowledge of what they are talking about, and some modicum of accuracy so they can educate people as to what has happened.

What has happened to Caroni (1975) Limited—my colleague, the Minister started this afternoon saying that—he started it in the historical context, that we came here 300 years ago and we started a sugar industry. That is the history. But the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited is also part of the history of this country, and it ought to be accurately portrayed, and not misrepresented by self-serving persons, whoever they are, in or out of Parliament. Our history has been written, and that history in our lifetime is what we know and some of us impacted upon it.

I do not know; they talk about feelings. I was a Member of the Cabinet. As a matter of fact, I was a Member of the Cabinet as Minister of Agriculture that had the tripartite approach where the Government, the union and the company came

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 17, 2013

together looking for a solution in the first Manning Government. And I dare say, Mr. Speaker, we got an agreement, and it was signed by all parties: the Government, the union and the company, but at the same time the wheels were turning outside. I am talking about 1994. The politics happened, and guess what? My friend who I admire tremendously from time to time, Basdeo Panday, it suited him fine. You know what he said? “I’m taking back my signature from the tripartite agreement.” That was politics! Politics! And he walked up and down Trinidad and Tobago taking back his signature from the agreement but, of course, we know Panday is Panday.

In the meantime, they won the election in 1995, they got into Government; what happened? What happened? Maybe they can get up and tell us what happened between 1996 and 2001 at Caroni (1975) Limited, but prior to that a signature was being taken back in the political arena, in the political cut and thrust, in the political opportunity calls. That is what happened, Mr. Speaker, but they would never say that. They would not say that. They would try to tell the children of Trinidad and Tobago that they got pressured by a Government because of their race. That is what they tell people, you know. That is what they say. It is wrong. It is wrong, it is wrong. [*Desk thumping*]

He gets up here this afternoon and says that Caroni (1975) Limited was providing health services. And as a result of Caroni (1975) Limited closure, what happened? I want to ask my colleague, the Member for Chaguanas East this afternoon, as a result of the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, who in this country, anywhere in this country—Penal, Debe, Carapichaima, Chaguanas—who cannot access the health services available to all the people in Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] Who? Tell me who? [*Desk thumping*] Where is it in this country that as a result of the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited there are people who cannot access health services which are available to others in this country?

I represent Carenage; I represent Four Roads, Diego Martin. What health services they are getting there that people in Chaguanas East are shut out from? Tell me! It is pure mischief to say something like that. He talked about flood, “And they padlocked a gate and it caused flood.” Who caused the flooding in Diego Martin? Who padlocked the Diego Martin gate?

Hon. Member: PNM!

Dr. K. Rowley: I have no doubt that there were unattended drains in Caroni as there are all over the country. Sometimes we have to beg here, as I am begging now, to clean the Point Cumana River mouth. [*Desk thumping*] It has nothing to

do with sugar, with race, with VSEP or closure of any company. It is service of the State to the various drains around the country. But to come here and talk about the reason why there was a flood in Chaguanas is because somebody padlocked Caroni (1975) Limited and then he went and cleaned the drains. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, this kind of insult to our intelligence is what brings this Parliament into disrepute; and we should take him seriously?

Dr. Douglas: Like the no confidence Motion will bring the Parliament into disrepute.

Miss Mc Donald: “Why yuh doh hush?”

Dr. K. Rowley: You in a hurry for the no confidence Motion? A Motion of no confidence will bring the Parliament into disrepute. Who is talking down there?

Mr. Speaker: Ignore.

Dr. K. Rowley: I will take your advice, Mr. Speaker. You have always given me good advice. I would ignore him.

Miss Mc Donald: Ignored!

Dr. K. Rowley: I would ignore him because, Mr. Speaker, you see, we have to get serious in this country about our history, because if we do not know our history, and worse, if we misrepresent our history to ourselves and, particularly, to our children, we will never get out of the quagmire that we seem to be spiralling downwards into all the time.

Hon. Member: And we will go to hell!

Dr. K. Rowley: And what the Member for Chaguanas East did this afternoon was an attempt to contribute to an approach where you can misrepresent the country’s history for short term narrow-minded gain. He thinks that would make him popular in Chaguanas East. He thinks that would help him win a seat in Chaguanas East, but I want to tell him, the battle is not in Chaguanas East just yet, it is in Chaguanas West [*Laughter*] and he has no value there. [*Desk thumping*] And he is of no value there [*Desk thumping*] or I dare say anywhere. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we have not done everything right in this country as a people. We have not done everything right in this country as the PNM serving this country, but we have done a whole lot well [*Desk thumping*] and I would not allow [*Desk thumping*] any carpetbaggers to come and rewrite this country’s history to the detriment of the intellect of our children who they would want to keep in

ignorance, telling them that this did not happen and that did not happen, so that out of ignorance they may respond in a particular way. We are quite capable of defending ourselves, and we have precious little to be ashamed of as a developing country that did quite well between 1956 and 2010.

4.00 p.m.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: Quite well! Mr. Speaker, this matter as it represents a continuation, it is only a continuation of public administration, and public administration in Trinidad and Tobago is something that, by and large, as compared to other places we do not have some of the kinds of problems that other people have automatically. You get those kinds of problems when people like my friend from Chaguanas gets up and misrepresent the facts—misrepresent the facts.

Hon. Member: He was ill-prepared.

Dr. K. Rowley: He was well prepared. He came prepared to talk about the food import bill, but his idea of the food import bill being attacked is that you can only attack it through the state sector production. The PNM says no, there is a role for the State and you can attack it through the private sector as well, especially with the support that the State provides to the state sector. And we have the proof, Mr. Speaker, we have the proof.

He mentioned mega farm, let us talk about that. I am not an advocate or a great supporter of state mega farms in Trinidad and Tobago. As a matter of fact, the whole of Trinidad and Tobago cannot be a mega farm. The whole of Trinidad and Tobago is not a mega farm, if you make the whole island a farm. I was talking to an Australian MP who came here a little while ago, and he told me that he has a small farm in Australia and I said, “Small, what size?” He says he only has about 10,000 acres and 10,000 sheep. Mega farm? In Trinidad and Tobago there is no such thing as a mega farm. *[Interruption]* And since when we are teaching you? But what it meant is that the State—50 acres, 100 acres, 200 acres, which is big in Trinidad and Tobago, the State is the producing and funding driving force. I do not think that is the best approach, but I will tell you one thing, my colleagues when they were in the Opposition, they vehemently opposed this concept of this Trinidad mega farm.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition has expired.

Hon. Member: Praise Jah.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As they raised the issue of mega farms, I said, when—the idea of the mega farm in the PNM was a response [*Crosstalk*] to the need for the State to play a larger role, but largely in demonstration, because that is why the Cubans were brought into Chaguaramas into that particular mega farm to demonstrate what can be done at short notice, bringing this technology which could be transferred very quickly to people who may produce on that scale as the lands become available out of the Caroni pool of land.

What happens? My colleagues were in the Opposition, they vehemently opposed the concept of this mega farm. There were a few of them that were operational and the best of them I may say was the one in Chaguaramas because the environment was the best, best soil, acreage available, and so on and so on; that is in my constituency. When they came into office, coming with their position that mega farms are bad, and we expected that mega farms would form no part of their forward movement as a new Government, guess what happened?

The successful mega farm of the mega farms in Chaguaramas was shut down, so mega farms are being shut down. I could not argue with that because the Government said before that it does not support the concept, but lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, outside of Chaguaramas where they shut down the successful mega farm, they went down in south/central Trinidad and opened up and expanded new additional mega farms.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to interpret that for me. They opposed the concept as they met in operation of a PNM Government mega farm operation, which was the most successful one, without any let or hindrance they brought it to an end. It provided employment to people for my area. It provided an expansion in food production, which people in this area would have consumed and they opened new—they did not even just continue what they met in their area you know, they opened new ones in their area.

So my question now is, does this Government support mega farms or is it opposed to mega farms? Or is it only opposed to mega farm in the Chaguaramas area in the northern part of Trinidad? That is the question I ask. And I dare any of

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 17, 2013

them to get up here and contradict what I have just said, because what I have said, Mr. Speaker, are the facts. Those are the facts. And against that short, sorry record of this Government in only their two-year period, I have my colleague from Chaguanas East getting up here from Maraval trying to play “cane farmer advocate”.

Mr. Imbert: “He from Arima.”

Dr. K. Rowley: You understand? That is the kind of thing “you got” to put up with. I would have to be careful with my language because I have to control that I do not say the appropriate description for that. Something that should not have detained us at all this afternoon—as a matter of fact, this particular Bill should have been a rider on a normal parliamentary day. At the end of a normal parliamentary day we could have stuck this on to any matter and in 15 minutes we could have dispensed with this as we do sometimes with land acquisition. That is how the Parliament is run.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank God you did not intend to speak.

Dr. K. Rowley: You stick this on. I spoke to correct the record; I will not let the record remain [*Desk thumping*] as he has put it. The only reason why I entered this debate today is to ensure that the *Hansard* record does not remain the way he has left it.

Ms. Mc Donald: “Yeah.”

Dr. K. Rowley: So when researchers come in the future to look at the history of Trinidad and Tobago they will not be guided by the falsity of what he has said and the misrepresentation, but they would look at what I have said and when they check the facts elsewhere the corroboration would be with me for I have spoken the truth. [*Desk thumping*] And in his sanctimonious, self-righteous way he gets up and says, “The reason why we are objecting to him getting up and doing what he is doing is because we are afraid and we cannot take, and every time he gets up he will tell the country what the PNM did.” Then you go doing that. You keep doing that. I love you doing that.

The people of Trinidad and Tobago seem to have an inexhaustible appetite for your wasting of their time. They hired you to come and talk about the PNM; you keep doing that; I love that. But, Mr. Speaker, every time they get up and misrepresent the PNM’s record, I, and those of us on this side, will get up and [*Desk thumping*] rectify that. We will rectify it because it is important for the country’s record to show what happened in this Trinidad and Tobago.

He is there talking now about the Member for Diego Martin North/East had a box under his desk with how many million dollars—okay fine.

Hon. Member: Five-hundred million.

Dr. K. Rowley: All I want to ask him, since he is so resolutely opposed to any approach to a mass transit system in this country, on what day and in which year in this country will your Government treat with the traffic problem [*Desk thumping*] that is chronic in Trinidad and Tobago, and by what means? And by what means? Because so far in two years we got from them two proposals on transport, one local, one regional. The local one was to expand Caribbean Airline. We now know where “we gone” with that and we will come to that sometime in the not too distant future. That was theirs.

The other one was to provide a regional ferry service announced by the Prime Minister at a Heads of Government meeting in St. Kitts. The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Head of the perfect Government, who knew that everything the PNM did was wrong and they have come to save us from ourselves, she went to St. Kitts as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and made an announcement that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has put in place, is putting in place, will be putting in place a regional fast ferry service, and where the fare would be in the order of US \$10.

Miss Mc Donald: “Um-hmm.”

Dr. K. Rowley: I want to ask them this afternoon, when you get up this afternoon, tell us what has happened to the regional fast ferry service that the Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister [*Desk thumping*] announced in St. Kitts.

Hon. Member: When it started?

Dr. K. Rowley: Because the part that is frightening is that they actually tried to do it you know. They got some other carpetbagger from somewhere, friend, family and other to try to do it.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure you are not imputing improper motives here?

Dr. K. Rowley: No, I am talking facts. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: “Yeah, yeah,” Member, we could be talking facts, I am not arguing that, but do not impute improper motives.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I thank you very sincerely, and I want to point out to my colleagues in this House, I am the most experienced Member in this Parliament and if anybody in this Parliament knows the Standing Order, I know it.

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 17, 2013

I do not know that if somebody is your friend or your family that that is an improper imputation. It is a fact that cannot be disputed, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago attempted to put in place a fast ferry service which came to naught because it was not feasible. [*Desk thumping*] What is he objecting to? That the Government did not announce one in St. Kitts? They did not indicate a fast ferry service? They did not indicate a fare? They did not find people unknown to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and tried to put it in place out of Barbados?

Mr. Imbert: They wanted a fuse—

Dr. K. Rowley: Is anybody in the Government prepared to challenge me on that? These are all undisputed facts, and I started by saying that those were the two initiatives on transportation that this Government came with so far. Is that a fact or not?

In fact, if they were paying attention and they were on the ball they would have corrected me, it is not two, it is three; there is one more. They got up one morning and invited bids, proposals for a rail to Arima. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hypolite: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: After they said everything bad about a mass transit system and used it politically to fool people, they realized that a chronic problem has to be addressed in a fundamental way and Minister Devant Maharaj, Transport Minister at the time, supervised the invitation. I want to ask them this afternoon, what has happened with that? And getting up and telling me about imputing motives. I do not have to impute, the motives are already there.

Hon. Member: And they are very proper.

Dr. K. Rowley: I do not have to impute anything, all I have to do is to state the facts. And there is one common thread that runs in all of this, Mr. Speaker, one thread that runs in all of it, is that even when “yuh catch them naked on the potty you cannot believe nutten dey tell yuh”. [*Desk thumping*] That is what it means.

The only persons here who I think understands me this afternoon is my colleague from Tunapuna [*Laughter*] because these are the issues that he tried to talk about from time to time—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “He trying to geh ah coalition.” [*Laughter*]

Dr. K. Rowley:—about economics.

Ms. Cox: “He say we trying to get a—”

Dr. K. Rowley:—he had his say. He had his say, he had his day, and I am sure if he gets up to join this debate he will find some common ground with what I have said here this afternoon because he has some knowledge of it. He has some knowledge of it. And no sane person, no person who properly understands how this country is being run or is to be run will get up and say what was said by my friend from Chaguanas East this afternoon. None!

Nobody who knows anything about this country would get up and say that. [*Desk thumping*] It has been nothing short, Mr. Speaker, of an embarrassment. And with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I would have corrected the record. Thank you.

Mr. Roberts: Praise God!

4.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Caroni East, Minister of Education. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: We will correct the record. [*Laughter*]

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Mr. Speaker, what I saw demonstrated from the other side by the Member for Diego Martin West was [*Crosstalk*] an attempt, of what he said, to sanitize what was said on this side. What we said on this side is true, [*Desk thumping*] factual and it could never be disputed, and I will reinforce what we said on this side to be truthful [*Crosstalk*] and reinforced. [*Crosstalk*] We will make sure that the *Hansard* record is not sanitized because it will be there for posterity.

I sat here astonished for a long while, astonished of the contemptuous nature of the discourse [*Desk thumping and laughter*] and the disdain that was heaped upon an important aspect of the civilization of Trinidad and Tobago— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Ooh!

Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—and we became a wounded civilization as a result— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Wounded.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—of the hurt and pain that they caused on the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] And when one speaks about

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

self-righteousness and accuses others on the other side, I see it being properly represented on the side that spoke just a while ago; arrogance, contempt, disdain, hate.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: No. No. No.

Miss Mc Donald: Strong words there.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, 36(5).

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Hate? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right. I take back that word.

Miss Mc Donald: Imputing. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Imputing.

Mr. Speaker: Let us not get personal here. Let us deal with the issues. Withdraw those things, please.

Dr. Moonilal: Move on.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, the People's National Movement is well known for its relationship with agriculture.

Hon. Member: They despise it.

Mr. Indarsingh: No relationship.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They despise it. They hate it. [*Desk thumping*] The records will show that years [*Crosstalk*] past the agricultural sector contributed to about ½ per cent of the GDP. Under successive years of PNM administration that went down to less than 0.5 five per cent, ½ per cent under PNM's administration. From year to year they—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—allowed the agriculture sector to go worse and worse. And I wonder—they put agriculture to the lowest extent on their thing [*Crosstalk*] so that they even appointed the Member for Diego Martin West to be Minister of Agriculture at one time. [*Laughter*] That is the disdain that they had for agriculture.

Hon. Member: That is the disrespect.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—and the disrespect they had; from 4½ per cent down to ½ per cent over the number of years. Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: That is a classic.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They must understand how the people felt about what they did to agriculture and especially to Caroni (1975) Limited. I wonder if they stay on that side and anyone get up and say that this is not true, that in 1999 at a PNM convention in Chaguaramas when the former Prime Minister said, not a cent for Caroni (1975) Limited—in 1999. So it was in the making that they wanted to close Caroni (1975) Limited. You know why? Because they saw it as a bastion and a strength for the UNC at that time to be able to topple them, and they wanted to topple the UNC by closing down Caroni.

Hon. Member: Preach.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And the former Prime Minister, in Woodford Square, also said in a statement that if UNC did not come to Parliament and vote for a Speaker—that was the 18-18 tie, you would remember that as well—Caroni (1975) Limited would have to close down. That was the former Prime Minister who said so; that if UNC did not come to Parliament and elect a Speaker in the 18-18 tie, Caroni (1975) Limited would have to close down. That is the spite and the vindictiveness of the administrations of the past, their administration, and that was their *raison d'être* for closing down, Mr. Speaker, Caroni (1975) Limited.

It was the Minister of Agriculture at that time, John Rahael, who said in a post-Cabinet Press Conference on July 21, 2002, he announced plans to “reorganize Caroni (1975) Limited” which would take place through a process of revesting the assets of Caroni into the national community. He said he shall guarantee employability of persons—we will speak about that. “We are creating entrepreneurs in central Trinidad moving cane workers to become farmers, not just in cane, but in food products like citrus, rice and beef. They will all have the first options to lease lands and become farmers in their own right.”

Mr. Speaker, what this PNM administration did, they created snow cone vendors and sellers of doubles for our people in central Trinidad. That is the hate and the spite that they had against our people in central Trinidad. That is the entrepreneurship that they created. That was the entrepreneurship that Minister Rahael spoke about in the agricultural sector.

It was the former Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday, who said to him then at that time in Parliament, he scorched the earth of the plains of Caroni and a piece of land will be there for him to rest his soul six feet down. That is what they did to people of Caroni, the people of central Trinidad.

Miss Hospedales: That is not true.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Almost 100,000 people who depended on Caroni (1975) Limited for their livelihood and for their movement in life, they were thrown into the darkness and the wilderness, they do not know how they survived.

And you know, Caroni (1975) Limited was seen as the richest company in Trinidad and Tobago as it controlled almost 77,000 acres of land, including a profitable rum distillery, a research station, a feed centre, citrus, dairy, rice and beef divisions as well as sugar, engineering and transport sections, buffalypso, as spoken by my colleague as well. That was Caroni (1975) Limited. When Minister Dookeran in '86—'91 spoke about a re-engineering process for Caroni (1975) Limited, if they had continued in Government, we would have seen something different with Caroni, but they came in '91—95. They mashed it up, and then 95—2001 we had to pick up the pieces again.

It was their former Prime Minister—the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the hon. Dr. Eric Williams who said—in 1970, you remember the rise of the Black Power Movement? Tate & Lyle were ready to hand over the reins of control of Caroni. And in July 1970 the Government acquired, at that time, 51 per cent of Caroni land from Tate & Lyle. And in 1975 the then Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, saw what economic prospects Caroni had and economic gains to the national economy that he acquired the other 49 per cent held by Tate & Lyle. It became a state-owned company under Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, who believed at that time that purchasing the fortunes of Caroni would add to the economic fortune of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the PNM administrations, from administration to administration—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Successive.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—successive administrations, slowly, motivatingly decapitated Caroni and closed it down because of their own individual and collective—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Agendas.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—agendas. And they knew what their agenda was, and it is for everybody to see, nobody could hide that. So it has to be written back into the *Hansard* publications, that it was PNM Governments—successive Governments—that destroyed the agriculture sector, continued to destroy it from administration to administration and massacred the population and created a wounded civilization in central Trinidad, extending from way up north, from the northern area, even down to Princes Town, 77,000 acres of land.

Stakeholders; they destroyed stakeholders, sugar workers, farmers, suppliers, manufacturers, feed and poultry industry, distillers, supermarkets, villagers, all spin off industries that related to Caroni (1975) Limited. Then when they closed it down they said they were going to bring on the Sugar Manufacturing Company which they said was going to form the basis of an annual production of 80,000 tons of sugar, operation of a sugar milling and refinery operation at Usine Ste. Madeleine, and purchase the total cane requirement from the private cane sector. They closed down Caroni in 2003. Their administration eh"; 2002—2010 was their administration.

In 2007, what had happened to the sugar milling and refinery operation at Ste. Madeleine? They closed it down as well, Mr. Speaker. It became non-viable. They closed it down because of the pressures they put on the private cane farmers who were trying to still eke out a living. They mashed up Caroni (1975) Limited which was the public one held by the Government, and they mashed up the private sector people as well so that—and they closed the sugar milling.

So they destroyed Caroni (1975) Limited and they destroyed the private cane farmers as well. And when they did that in 2003, you know what they did? They created healing houses located at Millington Estate in Couva, and they began to offer psychological counselling for all of the shareholders of the sugar industry. Mr. Speaker, they wounded the citizens of Central Trinidad—the sugar cane workers. They created emotional and psychological—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Trauma.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—trauma to these citizens. They hurt them. They wounded them. They inflicted serious punishment on them. These people had health services so that they could have gone to the health centres and get their medical treatment, and they closed it down.

Sugar cane farmers and workers worked as teams and they offered solace and social support to each other. They mashed them up, so people could not be together; people could not help each other. These people in Caroni (1975) Limited, the workers, also contributed to community life by sponsoring sporting activities, performed infrastructural developments by taking charge of cleaning cemeteries, recreational grounds, roadside drains, clearing watercourses and rivers and agricultural estate roads in the Caroni, Victoria and other districts; they left those—they mashed up Caroni, all these things went into—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Ruin.

Hon. Member: Despair.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—ruin. Nothing was done. So they looked at Caroni (1975) Limited in terms of a loss—a loss of \$300 million or \$400 million—but they forgot or deliberately forgot—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Ramadharsingh: The linkages.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—“yeah”—what Caroni (1975) Limited was doing for the people in central Trinidad and south Trinidad and even part of north Trinidad, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Indarsingh: The country.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—and the country as a whole.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Holistic.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Caroni (1975) Limited also helped in aerial spraying of froghoppers during the wet season, assisted in killing mosquitoes and other insects in the deep rural regions of south Trinidad thereby alleviating the spread of diseases, such as dengue fever. And Caroni’s research station conducted experiments to improve agriculture and livestock production, the production of new kinds of feeds boosted poultry production. They had credit unions as well. Mr. Speaker *[Crosstalk]* that is what they closed down Caroni and caused.

They always looked at Caroni as what they said was a loss. They forgot that Caroni was bringing in almost about US \$160 million; at one time nearly—today’s currency would have been \$1 billion in net foreign earning.

Hon. Member: Oh yes, Lord.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And when they juxtaposed the \$400 million loss by Caroni, not even thinking about what it was doing for the people and the communities in central Trinidad, they had at that time WASA that was—in 2003, WASA had a loss of close to \$10 billion that year; almost \$10 billion and the Member for Diego Martin West was part of that administration. He forgot that, and he seems to want to forget it, but we must remind them that WASA had over—when UNC demitted office in 2001 there were only 2,200 workers, and when they took over, within two years, WASA had 4,300 workers and was losing \$10 billion. So on one hand WASA was losing \$10 billion, “yuh doh” want to do anything about it, when their own Prime Minister said that WASA was a big headache, \$28-billion headache, but they closed down Caroni because it was losing \$400 million, but bringing in \$400 million more in foreign net earnings. *[Crosstalk]* That was

the vindictiveness of PNM [*Crosstalk*] and they must be remembered as that; as an administration which was contemptuous and which inflicted terrible wounds on the population of this country by the closure of Caroni Limited.

Mr. Speaker, during 2003—2008 there were many newspaper stories depicting the pain and suffering faced by cane farmers, sugar workers and their families. Eighty per cent of former sugar workers between the ages of 35 to 55 said they had no fixed salary and were unable to get a permanent job because they were unskilled. Fifteen per cent said they had received temporary employment, and only 5 per cent of those people obtained permanent employment.

Mr. Speaker: I think it is a good time for us to suspend. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before we broke for tea I was making the point, and of course rebutting the statements made by the Leader of the Opposition and the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, when he was making the assertions about how many good things that they had done in agriculture, but just the impact of the closure in terms of unemployment following the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, I made the point that almost 80 per cent of former sugar workers between the ages of 35 to 55 had no fixed salary and had been unable to get a permanent job because at that time they were unskilled, and only 5 per cent had permanent jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the *Trinidad Express* reporting in 2003 that the closure of Caroni Limited had left some parts of south and central Trinidad in cardiac arrest. That was the description that was made in the *Express* newspaper at that time.

Mr. Speaker, what did they offer the former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited? They said that they were offering them a voluntary separation plan—a VSEP—a package to 9,697 employees of the company; nearly 10,000. These employees were employed in various professions including cane cutting, cultivation, processing, transportation, administration and non-sugar operations. They also promised that they will give alternative employment with a different organization: never materialized, Mr. Speaker. Training for a new career: that training plan failed; be a new business person: very few people emerged with the assistance of the then administration.

Hon. Member: What new business?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, how many new business people they created?

Mr. Sharma: None!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The former employees had to go for themselves and help to train themselves without getting any assistance from the then Government. Be self-employed: they said they would help them to be self-employed, self-sufficient cane farmer. *[Interruption]* How could they be cane farmers when in four years they closed down everything, and the sugar milling and everything was closed? *[Interruption]* So, it is a contradiction.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Be a self-employed, self-sufficient farmer producing alternative crops. Mr. Speaker, never did any of these things materialize. *[Interruption]* The PNM Government failed the people—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Put it in the record.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes—and they created unemployed citizens in central and south Trinidad.

They spoke about packages of lots. They said they will give two acres for agricultural land and residential lots. When they demitted office, seven years from 2002 or seven years after they closed down Caroni, 2003—2010, they had only distributed 200 lots.

Hon. Member: Oh God!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Two hundred lots were distributed out of a promise of—close to about 7,000 people had enlisted for lots.

Mr. Sharma: What percent is that, 200?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Two hundred out of 7,000; that is 135th, less than 3 per cent. *[Interruption]* They said that they will help private farmers. You know, the private farmers were not entitled to any type of separation package. They abandoned them. So, hundreds of private farmers were left on their own, abandoned. They did not get a cent. They did not get anything and they closed down the private farmers as well.

Now, let us talk a bit about the VSEP. There was an article by Miss Radhica Sookraj, with a four-part series—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: Very good writer.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—“The Closing of Caroni (1975) Limited” [Interruption] when she said that the actual calculation of the VSEP payout was flawed, as such, workers who spent over 25 years as seasonal workers received a mere \$40,000 or even \$35,000 VSEP payoff. People who worked for 25 years received \$35,000 or \$40,000 VSEP package, Mr. Speaker.

Minister Rahael at the time said the packages were based on the application of a bell-shaped percentage incentive ranging from 10 per cent to 50 per cent with the lowest enhancement going to the youngest and the oldest age groups to get the highest. This meant that workers were given a mere fraction of what they deserved as they were not adequately compensated for the years they worked. That is the VSEP. Then they forced the VSEP on them. They said either you take it or leave it. People were treated like dogs. Take a package of \$35,000 or \$40,000 for 25 years that they worked with Caroni (1975) Limited. Mr. Speaker, after a few months of having to spend this money the people were left penniless. That is what they did to these people of central Trinidad.

The pension scheme: the articles also went on to say and this is a fact:

The pension scheme was in shambles at the time when the VSEP was offered.

Mr. Speaker, Caroni Limited had three pension arrangements; two for daily-paid workers for the period before 1995 and one after January 1996 and the staff pension. They said that they were going to put in \$500 million into a pension scheme to ensure that workers were given their pensions. They never did it, Mr. Speaker. They promised but they never did it. Minister Rahael promised to inject \$300,000,000 into a tranche for pensioners which never materialized. Some people went home with a pension of \$100 per month.

Hon. Member: Paltry.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: One hundred dollars per month. Shameful, disgraceful, by the administration at that time. The Member for Diego Martin West was part of that administration, and he was a Minister of Agriculture at one time and he knew what was supposed to be done. [Interruption]

Hon. Member: Real brass faced man!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It was shameful and disgraceful by that administration, the way they treated the people. [Interruption]

The offer of land, the retraining and the financial aid that they spoke about also turned out to be impractical and deficient and a fiasco. And as late as April

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

2009 former sugar cane workers of Pranz Gardens in Couva complained that the agricultural plots of land which were promised to them by the Government at the time, the PNM administration, had been earmarked to construct the Essar Steel Mill plant; land that they had promised the people was now earmarked for the Essar Steel plant; so those were promises, unfulfilled, broken promises by that administration.

Even when the 200 plots that they gave to the people, the distribution of those agricultural lands to former workers took four years to get off the ground, and when it did workers were unable to cultivate the plots because of the absence of infrastructural facilities such as electricity, proper roads, water supply and security. So people were not able to go to their plots, and they gave the plots far away from their homes; the people had to get up early in the morning to try and go to the plots miles away from their place.

Mr. Sharma: “Discriminate right through”.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Impractical, impossible, widespread discrimination, according to my colleague.

Minister Rahael said that the new Caroni would rehire 75 per cent of the labour force on contract. However, only 160 workers were rehired by the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited.

Mr. Sharma: When you hear these people is contempt, you know.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That was contempt, yes, Mr. Speaker. At a UNC meeting—I want to quote my distinguished and hon. Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for Siparia in 2007, October 16, 2007—at Freeport Junction the Member for Siparia, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, said that the PNM Government shamelessly deceived the sugar workers by offering them an unfair VSEP package based on a flawed payment scheme. That was 2007, our distinguished hon. Prime Minister made mention of that. She went on to say that Government issued an \$80 million payout to cane farmers which resulted in a mere—if I calculate it—\$28,000 for each cane farmer.

That was the treatment meted out by the PNM Government under which the Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West was a Member of that Government and a Member of Cabinet, when they did this to this country and today he is coming to tell us—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: He distanced himself.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—yes, and trying to say how well they treated the people. So, when they said take the VSEP, leave it; people were treated inhumanely. You know what else? Much of Caroni 77,000 acres of land went into the hands of politicians; their friends and families who continue to strangle the life out of the agricultural communities—their friends and families.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(5), imputing improper motives. How could you say it went into our—you have the empirical evidence? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I think in the context of it and so on it is overruled. Continue, please.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, there were over 4,500 acres of land that were distributed for commercial ventures and commercial properties and if you look at the land research now you would see who own these lands. It is their friends and families, and it is something they cannot doubt. They will get up and try to say that is not so, but that is just camouflage. They know in their own minds that that is a fact. [*Desk thumping*]

And my distinguished Leader of Government Business and Member of Parliament for Oropouche East, in 2003, during the debate on the Leases of State Lands (Validation) Bill stated—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What about Rao, he spoke? What about Uthara Rao?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: He said he spoke. In July 1999 the Cabinet of the UNC agreed to a plan for Caroni (1975) Limited that involved phased participation of the private sector operations. We were offering a phased participation of private sector enterprises. We were moving with a public sector/private sector partnership for the development of Caroni lands and for the development of Caroni (1975) Limited.

He also at that time referred to the former Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams' statement, and said that Caroni (1975) Limited workers would not get an increase in their wages unless Caroni (1975) Limited made a profit. That is what Dr. Williams had stated and Dr. Moonilal made mention of that in the debate in 1973—the Leader of Government Business.

Caroni's lands, we know stretch from Orange Grove down to Princes Town in the south, and these include places even up to Mayaro and even down the Islands. It comprised 77,000 acres which is 6 per cent of the entire land acreage in Trinidad and Tobago. And the distribution of the land during Caroni (1975) Limited was: 38,942 acres had been occupied with agricultural produce; with

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

27,081 acres under sugar cane at that time; 2,640 acres were under commercial and residential built-up development; 5,266 acres were for roads, traces, playgrounds and cemeteries; 2,188 acres under citrus cultivation; 3,171 acres set aside for rice cultivation; 4,175 acres for livestock and pasture; 340 acres for tree crops and 284 acres for aquaculture.

Mr. Speaker, that was the state of Caroni (1975) Limited—aquaculture, livestock, tree crops, pastures, rice cultivation, citrus cultivation and sugar cane cultivation; 38,000.

Hon. Member: “Where de tilapia and de duck?”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is the aquaculture. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, they gave 200 lots from 2003—2010. As soon as our hon. Prime Minister—she came into office in June 2010; within a short period of time the hon. Prime Minister together with the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs at that time, Minister Vasant Bharath, gave out 480 two-acre leases, in a few months. [*Desk thumping*] They gave out 200 in seven years.

Mr. Sharma: Oh, what a shame!

5.15 p.m.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Minister Bharath named seven sites from which the land were to be distributed, including: Cedar Hill, Reform, Mc Bean, Esmeralda and Picton 2. That was reported in the *Trinidad Guardian*.

Mr. Roberts: How many in seven years they gave out?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Two hundred, [*Crosstalk*] and within a few months we gave out—hear the rest, on March 11, 2013, Minister Seemungal, Minister of State in the Ministry of Food Production stated: As of February 22, 2011, the Chief State Solicitor’s office has noted that some 6,793 leases have been offered by the Commissioner of State Lands to former Caroni workers. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Good job, good job.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Four thousand, eight hundred leases have been received by the Chief State Solicitor’s office, and 4,584 have been prepared, and about 2,000 have been distributed. [*Desk thumping*] So, as at this time almost 2,500, two-acre plots have been distributed to the former workers, Mr. Speaker.

It was the former Prime Minister, Mr. Manning, the Member for San Fernando East, who had announced that VSEP will be offered to workers and steps would be taken to transfer all Caroni lands to a new state enterprise called the Estate Management and Business Development Company (EMBD).

Mr. Roberts: “Da Rao.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The whole country knew the fiasco under EMBD, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Mc Donald: Uthara Rao? I never met him you know.

Mr. Roberts: Good, good for you.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Almost \$1.2 billion was spent by the EMBD without any accountability and transparency in the expenditure for the development of the plots. Mr. Speaker, it was so nakedly corrupt, and today we have the audacity of the Member for Diego Martin West to stand and speak about almost \$2 billion spent by EMBD [*Interruption*] fine, \$2 billion spent by EMBD. But how was it spent? It was corruptly spent without any transparency and accountability by someone. Everybody knows who it is, and we have to ask, how did Uthara Rao—did he flee the country? He had to flee the country, Mr. Speaker.

We have not heard or seen anything about him again. My understanding is that a private jet, a private aircraft was leased for him to leave the country. He left the country in the middle of the night; \$1.2 billion spent, corruptly at the EMBD, and today we have the audacity of the Member for Diego Martin West to speak about EMBD producing plots for farmers. We gave out 2,500 in a short period of three years. In seven years they gave out 200, two-acre plots. [*Crosstalk*]

The Prime Minister at that time, Mr. Manning, said that Caroni will remain in the sugar-processing business. It stayed for four years—and land will be leased to cane farmers. To do what? There is nothing to be done on it? He also said EMBD will facilitate new business activity in the areas of light and heavy industrial manufacturing—colleagues, Members of Parliament I want you all to hear this.

Mr. Sharma: Tell us, tell us!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: He said EMBD will facilitate new business activity in the areas of light and heavy industrial manufacturing, agricultural estates, housing estates and commercial complexes. These must be on Mars, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*] They are hidden somewhere. This is what Mr. Manning at that time, the former Prime Minister, spoke about, the promises that he made. He said X workers would receive a two-acre plot of agricultural land to be used only for agriculture purposes. I dealt with that. He said:

“Within three years we will give lie to the prophets of doom and gloom to Central Trinidad.”

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

And went on to say:

“They have prophesied doom and gloom. Caroni is about to see an explosion of new types of economic activity.”

Mr. Speaker, what economic activity have we seen almost seven years when they were in Government? He said this in 2003 and it was reported in *Trinidad Newsday*, March 18, 2003. The headline was “Caroni can’t compete...”

And you know what, he even went further, what was worse, the Caroni workers were told that they will get the residential plot free. But however, in 2006, Prime Minister, the hon. Patrick Manning, at that time, announced that the plots will be sold for \$30,000. At first he told them that it would be free, “hmm,” they get only \$30,000 for their VSEP or \$35,000, and then he said that they would have to pay \$30,000 for the plots of land. That was the hypocrisy of the administration at that time.

I want to go into a few things which the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about, that Caroni (1975) Limited had to be closed in response to the international pressures, and who closed down St. Kitts and who closed down Antigua. Mr. Speaker, let me give you and the House some information as to what is happening in the sugar industry now, worldwide.

“Total world sugar trade is projected to increase by 6.0%”—

I am quoting from a document: *Agribusiness & Applied Economics Report 692, April 2012—2012 Outlook of the U.S. and World Sugar Markets, 2011-2021*—by Won W. Koo and Richard D. Taylor, Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies, Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics, North Dakota State University...” It states:

“Total world sugar trade is projected to increase by 6.0% from 39.9 million metric tons to 42.2 million metric tons between 2011 and 2021.”

Here it is, it is climbing, 6.1 per cent, but we had to close it down. And the Member for Diego Martin West speaks about they closed it down in response to international pressure. Let me move on:

“U.S. sugar consumption is projected to increase by 14.8%...”—they have—
“increases in sugar imports from Mexico.

Brazil's production is expected to increase by 7.1% from the 2009—2011 average of 36.8 million metric tons to 39.4 million metric tons in 2021. Exports could increase by 6.1% to 26.1 million metric tons in 2021..."

Brazil is exporting sugar, Mr. Speaker. Who are they exporting to?

If Trinidad's sugar cultivation was still going on we would have had export markets, and the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about response; they closed it down in response to international pressure. He then went on to say the people who decided to close down; the people decided to close down Caroni (1975) Limited. It was the PNM administration and the former Prime Minister and his Minister Rahael who decided to close down Caroni (1975) Limited and he said the people decided to close down Caroni (1975) Limited. How laughable that is, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: Walk in the factory and close it.

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: He was not part of it?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And he was part of it, he was part of the administration and he admitted that people had hardships. He even went on to admit, well yes, we know that the people had hardships, but he caused the hardships on the people. He imposed the hardships on the people but today confession is good for the soul and "he confess" that he imposed hardships on the people.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, and that is an administration that wants to come back and talking about this Government, Mr. Speaker. Not in any day that you all will ever see the corridors of power again.

Hon. Member: Never! Never! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Never, never they will hear that and we on this side will work as hard as we are working serving the people and making sure that things work well for the people to make sure that they will not even dream to see the corridors of power again. [*Crosstalk*] Never will you see the corridors of power.

"Canada's production is predicted to increase...Canada's imports are expected to increase by 11.1%..."

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

If we were producing sugar we would have had ready markets available, ready markets. But hear:

“The European Union (EU) is expected to remain an importer due to the EU-27 sugar policy reform. Their production is predicted to increase by 2.4%, while consumption will increase by 3.6%.”

Mr. Speaker, it is the same EU (European Union) that is expected to remain an importer. You remember the ACP-EU, Lomé Convention that we had. We had Lomé 1, then Lomé 2, then Lomé 3, then Lomé 4 and we had accessible markets in the European Union in the ACP countries and that had been going on for years and there was no need to close down Caroni (1975) Limited because we had ready markets available and we even had subsidies from the European Union. They insulted our population, Mr. Speaker; that is why the people voted them out in 2010.

Hon. Member: And they will put them out.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And they will prevent them from ever coming back into the corridors of power to be on this side. Never!

Miss Cox: Dream on, dream on. That is a dream.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is reality, it is not a dream it is reality. The article goes on:

“Exporting countries, such as Australia, Thailand, South Africa and Brazil are predicted to increase their production and exports during the forecasting period, while Cuba and Mexico are expected to reduce exports during the same period.”

They are utilizing the sugar for themselves, but hear the countries—Australia, Thailand, South Africa, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Guyana next door to us, improving their sugar-cane cultivation. They are increasing the acreage of sugar-cane production—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Why you all did not do it?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And you all close it down, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: I did not understand that part. We are the responsible type—

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I continue:

“Most importing countries, except for Japan and the FSU are predicted to increase their imports for the 2011—2021 period.”

Mr. Speaker, everybody needs sugar. We had ready markets available for us and they made the flimsy excuse because they had the agenda to close down Caroni (1975) Limited, flimsy excuse. [*Crosstalk*]

The agenda, if you want me to spell it out—so you will “lick up” central Trinidad, you will get the people in poverty—[*Crosstalk*] yes, yes, you will “lick it up”, that is a bastion and a UNC stronghold. So you will “lick up” the UNC stronghold, yes.

Hon. Member: Shame, shame.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The article goes on:

“During late 2005 and the first quarter of 2006, world sugar price increased from about...”—Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Yes, please, I am getting difficulty in hearing the Member and the Hansard reporters are equally having some difficulty. So could we observe 40(b) and (c) respectively. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I was debunking the statement made by the Member for Diego Martin West that they had to close because they had no export markets and the subsidies were reduced and they were losing money and they had to close it because of international pressure, and see what is happening in the world today.

“During late 2005 and the first quarter of 2006, world sugar price increased from about \$0.12/lb to over \$0.18/lb because of increased use of sugarcane for ethanol production in Brazil.”

Hear now:

“The yearly average price was \$0.187/lb in 2009 and increased...”—Mr. Speaker—

This is a person who said the Member for Diego Martin North/East in usual opening statement begins his opening paragraph by trying to be insulting. A normal set, and you hear him now very disruptive, having spoken already, continues to be disruptive, wants to speak about everything, a master of—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Deception, deception.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—a master of deception, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] Okay I take that back. Mr. Speaker he said that this is something that we can deal with—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please, Member for Caroni East could you take your seat please. You cannot describe a Member of Parliament in those

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[MR. SPEAKER]

Friday, May 17, 2013

derogatory terms. It is disorderly and unparliamentary. All right, so I ask you to withdraw that.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I have no hesitation in withdrawing it.

Mr. Speaker: And your time is up, your first 45 minutes has expired. Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Caroni East, has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

5.30 p.m.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you very much, hon. colleagues. I would not utilize the entire 30 minutes, but it is important for us to debunk a number of statements made, particularly by the Member for Diego Martin West.

I just want to give this thing about the pricing. The yearly average price went up from \$0.187 per pound in 2009 and increased to \$0.27 per pound, that is, 27 cents per pound in 2010—that is US, “eh”, and increased further to 0.32 cents in 2011. So, it moved up from 2009—to 2011 by US 14 cents; multiplied by 2,240 pounds per tonne, one tonne of sugar cane would be astronomical at this time had we continued the production.

“Both the U.S. and world sugar economies are predicted to...” [grow] “over the next ten years. Sugar prices increased...”—as I just spoke about.—“World sugar production increased in 2010 along with consumption. World demand for sugar is expected to grow at a similar rate to world supply, resulting in Caribbean sugar prices,...”—Trinidad and Tobago if we were there, moving close to—“28.0 cents/lb—“range throughout the forecast period. The U.S. wholesale price of sugar is projected to remain in the 38 to 45 cent/lb range throughout the forecast period...World trade volumes of sugar are expected to increase throughout the forecast period.”

Mr. Speaker, this is just a little chart showing the increase in consumption and the increase in production along the years. This is the chart, Mr. Speaker, and you see an increase in consumption and an increase in production over the number of years. [*Minister shows a chart*]

Mr. Sharma: Enlarge it next time.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Long-term sugar market trends point to significant potential for demand growth. The UN and the World Bank estimate that global

demand could surpass 240 million tonnes by 2013 from around 156 million tonnes per day.

In other countries continuing improvements in yields also facilitate production growth from existing acreage. Accordingly, much of the growth in consumption will equate to growth in the global trade in sugar, particularly, reflected in increased West to East flows. We were exporting from West to East, from Trinidad to the European Union and the ACP countries, and it is still continuing.

Given the global drive for fuel security, the desire to reduce harmful emissions and the demand for sustainable consumer products from plastics to pharmaceuticals, these market uses could potentially create a large source of new demand for sugar cane. That is the existing situation now as we speak in 2013.

And summing up, there is one Mr. Greenfield, Director of Commodities and Training Division of FAO who said, sugar earnings were usually vital for the food security of the farmers particularly the small farmers.

Mr. Speaker, there were many small farmers who engaged in sugar production and were able to have a good sustainable human lifestyle, and if they were allowed to continue, they would have reaped the benefits of this increased pricing on the sugar market. All of these people have been knocked back into the corner, in a process that has rendered hundreds and thousands of them under the poverty line. This is what these people did to them.

Miss Mc Donald: “These people, who is these people?”

Miss Cox: “Who is these people?”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You know.

Mr. Sharma: “All yuh”.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You know, you know.

Hon. Member: PNM.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: PNM. Mr. Speaker, they have the audacity and the temerity to speak about mass transit. The Member for Diego Martin West—that is the same administration that started the rapid rail and went for an evaluation of a rapid rail system.

Hon. Member: Pre-feasibility study.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: A Pre-feasibility study. Thank you. Thank you, Member.

Mr. Sharma: The most expensive one.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Five hundred and forty seven million dollars spent for a pre-feasibility—most expensive feasibility.

Hon. Member: No, no, no.

Mr. Sharma: Most expensive.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You could imagine, Mr. Speaker—that is rape on the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Roberts: No man. No man.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Five hundred and forty seven million dollars on a pre-feasibility and you have the audacity to talk about a rail. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And you were trying to go through the heartland of development in central Trinidad.

Mr. Roberts: They shut down the railway.

Mr. Sharma: “You eh shame.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They shut down the railway and they talking about it.

Hon. Member: You all did not want it.

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh eh shame?” What a shame!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And they talk about traffic; the Member spoke about what we did about traffic.

Hon. Member: Forty seven million dollars. Waste of money.

Hon. Member: You get nothing.

Miss Mc Donald: What is your recommendation?

Mr. Sharma: Donkey cart—\$47 million.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, you remember a pile, a mound of dirt and gravel. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: “I did not say cyart.” I said cart.

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh ha no shame boy.” [*Inaudible*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: After cart.

Mr. Sharma: “I didn’t say cyart—cart.”

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please. [*Laughter*] Allow the Member for Caroni East to speak in silence please. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, they spoke about the traffic situation. A mound of gravel was piled up east of Arima on the highway—

Hon. Member: When last you make—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—for about five or six years—

Mr. Sharma: Sunday.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: —and they had paid contractors a huge sum of money. The contractors sued the PNM administration at that time. They failed to provide a defence on time. The Member for Diego Martin North/East was the Minister of Works and Infrastructure at the time.

Hon. Member: All fall down.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And he failed to provide a defence to the contractor who sued them.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, he is imputing improper motives.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No, No. I am speaking the facts.

Mr. Imbert: You are not speaking the truth. [*Crosstalk*] Not speaking the truth.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego—Port of Spain South rather, I am hearing you.

If you are imputing improper motives in the context—I did not hear exactly what you have said, and if you know what you said is imputing improper motives, I ask you to withdraw. Otherwise, I will call for the *Hansard* record. But you must know what you have said. I did not actually hear what you said.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I said that the Member for Diego Martin North/East who was Minister of Works and Agriculture failed to produce—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Roberts: Only Works. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—Works and Infrastructure, failed to produce a defence in time—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Correct.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—so that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, had to pay almost \$29 million—almost, as a result of inefficiency by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, that is untrue. He is imputing improper motives.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Facts. That is a fact.

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Mr. Speaker: All right. The Member has denied that, and in any event you are reflecting on the conduct—[*Crosstalk*] Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Member: He has no behaviour.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego North/East!

Hon. Member: “He still carry on”.

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

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. I think you are reflecting on the character of the Member for Diego Martin North/East and you are bordering on conduct, and I have also advised Members if you want to raise a matter of a Member’s conduct or you want to reflect on the Member’s personal character, please file a substantive Motion. Do not take ordinary debates to take what I call unnecessary or engage in unnecessary attacks on any Member’s character. So please do not go down that path; withdraw that statement and let us move on, please.

Hon. Member: Withdraw it.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: We have maturity on this side. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, let us move to Caribbean Airlines. The Member for Diego Martin West, spoke about Caribbean Airlines, how they did a tremendous job and so on. Mr. Speaker, it was during the PNM administration that \$1.5 billion was given to the Caribbean Airlines under their watch for a restructuring programme for Caribbean Airlines, and what was their restructuring, Mr. Speaker? To paint the colours of a bird on the tail of the aircraft. Nothing they did—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Absolutely nothing!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—to consider a restructuring, but \$1.5 billion went down the hatchet. The Treasury—the people of Trinidad and Tobago had to pay \$1.5 billion and no improvement had taken place under their watch of Caribbean Airlines, and today they will want to come and talk about Caribbean Airlines under this administration.

But, I want to remind the country, that under their watch \$1.5 billion was given by the State, the taxpayer's money, to Caribbean Airlines, when they knew, and the head of Caribbean Airlines, the Chairman of the Board knew, that it was going down a path of uselessness because there was no restructuring.

Mr. Sharma: A former Minister becoming a consultant.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, he was a consultant for them. [*Crosstalk*] What is even worse, to rub salt into the wound, a wound that was already infected—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: A PNM sore.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—you know what, the Board of Caribbean Airlines sold the two Heathrow slots at \$5 million each. They give them away.

Mr. Sharma: Slots.

Mr. Speaker: Member, just one minute. I think that the Member for Diego Martin West knew he was going off course when he talked about CAL, and he said he will come back to that. So he made it en passant. So you just continue, but you are going already into—so I ask you to confine your debate to the matter before us and not get into CAL. This is not about CAL. Okay. Please.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Just responding to, en passant.

Mr. Speaker: I know, but I am saying do not go too deep—en passant.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yeah, we spoke but it.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, yeah, en passant.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And today those slots are worth about US \$100 million each.

Mr. Sharma: You were going sweet on sugar.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, then he went on to speak about the mega farm, en passant. But, I will deal with it en passant as well. Two hundred

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

acres of land in Chaguaramas for a mega farm that they spent over \$100 million, and the Minister of Agriculture could have come to Parliament and just show two tomatoes, a baigan and a cucumber—a long cucumber—for all that they spent a hundred million dollars.

Mr. Sharma: What a total waste!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Everybody knows that. Everybody saw it. A hundred million dollars spent on a mega farm and they want to talk about “we are developing mega farms.” We are dealing with mega farms in consultation with countries around the world that have tremendous experience on it.

Mr. Speaker, he spoke at length—are we better off now? The people are asking, are we better off now than before? There is unequivocal assertion to this statement, that Trinidad and Tobago is way better off now in 2013 than it had been between 2002—2010.

Mr. Jeffrey: “Da’is a dream.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, he said, what did we do to say that we are better off? Where are we taking the country? He spoke about a stagnated economy. We the People's Partnership Government and the hon. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, we had to deal with a 25 billion-dollar mess that we inherited from that administration—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: What mess?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—from Clico and HCU—\$25 billion that we are still having to try to pay out and find ways and means and mechanisms—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: That is not true.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—to deal with that \$25 billion that was plundered from the Treasury. We also inherited \$5 billion in debt owed to contractors. So close to \$30 billion, we had to deal with during our first year in the financial areas in Trinidad and Tobago. He said what did we do?

Mr. Speaker, this book here, *Fulfilling the Promise—The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2011—2012*—Mr. Speaker, just one year. They ask where we are going and what we have done? It is important for me to respond, Mr. Speaker.

Over 51,000 students have received laptops and only 4,500—[*Crosstalk*]—teachers have benefited from the laptop distributions.

Hon. Member: Irrelevant.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Children's Life Fund has assisted some 43 children. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I know where you are going, but remember a question was posed, because I guess the speaker knew, on who he was speaking, he could not go there, so he asked a question. You are now responding to a question and you might make it part of the debate. Again, I want you to—whatever you are raising, link it to the Bill, and do not create arguments that are not relevant to the debate. That is all I am advising. Continue.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, we would not have closed down Caroni (1975) Limited. We would have continued to work with what was established at that time.

Mr. Sharma: Capture the growth.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And we will capture the growth that is being experienced around the world in the sugar-cane industry. This book speaks for itself. We can give them the copies. It is about 42 pages, in fact, 45 pages, for 2011—2012. We have our achievements of 38 pages for 2010—2011 and we will show them another 40-page document for achievements in 2012—2013.

5.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, so therefore, in closing this Bill that is before us, which seeks to repeal Act No. 15 of 1995, which is the Act to repeal the Sugar Industry Control Board Act which was under Chap. 34:03, is a means of dealing with the assets of Caroni (1975) Limited subsequent to 2005 when PricewaterhouseCoopers had to come up with the determination of the assets.

So they came up with only 800 and something thousand dollars in assets of Caroni (1975) Limited in 2006. But, could you imagine, you all closed down Caroni (1975) Limited in 2003, and between 2003, which had millions and billions of dollars of assets, by 2003 when it was closed down, and PricewaterhouseCoopers was only able to show that you had less than \$1 million in assets by 2006.

What happened to the assets in three years, Mr. Speaker? Who plundered the assets? Who were the assets given to? Who took care of the houses? Who took care of the machinery all through the country, which Caroni (1975) Limited owned? You mean to say that in 2006 when Caroni had billions of dollars in

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. DR. T. GOPEESINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

assets in houses, in machinery, in plant and equipment, PricewaterhouseCoopers could only find less than \$1 million in assets, and those assets were supposed to be shared amongst the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited?

So, in the ending up, 10,000 workers have to share less than \$1 million, when if the Government of the day—the PNM administration—was managing the assets of Caroni (1975) Limited, even after the closure, you would have had hundreds of millions of dollars in assets. Where did they go? That is the question we have to ask, Mr. Speaker. Where did those assets go and to whom did they go? Why did they go to the people that they went to? What were the transparency and accountability in that? So this Bill here brings about the naked fact that after billions of dollars held by Caroni (1975) Limited up to 2003, 10,000 workers could get \$889,000 in assets. What a shame and disgrace, Mr. Speaker! With that, I do not need to say anything more, but to say thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Amery Browne (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I shall take the good advice of the Member for Diego Martin North/East who counselled this Chamber that this Bill really should not detain us very long at all. But, Mr. Speaker, it is our responsibility on this side when we hear some of the audacious arguments being advanced on the other side, and some of the dogmatic statements being made by Members such as the Member for Caroni East, we see it as our duty to respond and to set the record straight. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, I would just contribute for a few minutes but I must say that there was very little of relevance to this Bill that I could find in any of the contributions on the other side, [*Desk thumping*] beginning with the Member for Couva South. Very little of relevance, and I could bundle their entire several hours of contribution into two attempted points. One, Trinidad and Tobago has to always blame the PNM for the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited—point number one; and the second point that they have tried to manufacture is that the UNC is a friend of the farmer.

Mr. Jeffery: No way! No way!

Dr. A. Browne: We are the farmers' friends! Hold on, we will get to—so we have two points to deal with. As far as I am aware, after hours of contribution, two attempted points on the other side. But, Mr. Speaker, this Government is immersed in irony, they are drowning in irony, because even as we speak about one failed state entity, even as we speak about it, another UNC board has collapsed in Trinidad and Tobago—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Caribbean Airlines?

Dr. A. Browne: Yes, of course—but the Member for Caroni East stood up and did his little en passant reference to Caribbean Airlines, and did not find in his speech any space to admit that yet another board has collapsed, and they have made so many attempts to put some kind of management structure oversight for Caribbean airlines and they failed yet again. To stand here on this Bill crying crocodile tears for Caroni (1975) Limited when you cannot even breathe any life into Caribbean Airlines, which you are driving into the ground as we speak, I would have to say that is another admission of failure on the part of the United National Congress. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: We inherited all that!

Dr. A. Browne: Yes, well, we will talk about inheritance shortly. The Member for Couva South, [*Continuous crosstalk*] very early in his contribution, made a very alarming statement that we all came here because of cane. We all came here because of cane? Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. That is not true! There are many persons and their lineage that came to Trinidad and Tobago for other reasons beside cane, many, many other reasons, and there are some of us who did not come from elsewhere. When you make those statements in the Parliament, we are supposed to represent all the people of this country.

Hon. Member: True!

Dr. A. Browne: Have you ever heard of the first peoples of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean? They did not come here for any cane.

So, I hear the talk and the Member for Caroni East talks about attacking the civilization of central Trinidad and all of this scaremongering—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffery: Sad, sad, sad!

Dr. A. Browne:—and referencing which is very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: True!

Dr. A. Browne:—but I wanted to start with the Member for Couva South. So, I want to know if the Syrians and the Lebanese and all of the Chinese and other ethnicities in this country came here, no—[*Crosstalk*] Did they come here for cane? [*Laughter*] Because, Member for Caroni East, let me remind you, a statement was made in this House that we all came here because of cane, and I am just making the point that that is not true. It is not true! [*Continuous Crosstalk*]

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, May 17, 2013

Mr. Speaker, the UNC is a friend of the farmer. That was an attempt made here in this debate. I want to say that no Government has betrayed the farmers of this country more than this United National Congress Government. [*Desk thumping*] No Government has deceived the farmers of this country more than this United National Congress Government. [*Desk thumping*] No Government has destroyed more crops—where is the Member for Oropouche East?

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

Dr. A. Browne: What?

Mr. Imbert: He is not talking about the people!

Dr. Gopeesingh: No Member—

Dr. A. Browne: I was referring to the Government.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Government has deceived”, we are members of the Government. You speak about deceit.

Mr. Speaker: “Yeah, yeah”, let us—continue, please.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] We have a live example even as we speak of such attempts from the Government. This Government has destroyed more crops than any other in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Jeffery: Yes, yes.

Dr. A. Browne: It is the truth! It is the truth and even has gone to the extent of viciously attacking the farmers’ representatives and then stands here—[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Jeffery: Yes.

Hon. Member: True!

Dr. A. Browne: That is happening as we speak, this week, and to stand here and pretend to be friends of farmers of this country. Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow that to stand. [*Continuous interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Nah, nah, doh come with dat!”

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Member for Diego Martin Central, I need to protect you from your own team. [*Laughter*] “Yeah”, please, please, allow the Member to speak in silence. Member, continue, please.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I know I can count on you at all times for protection, thank you.

So, Mr. Speaker, we were talking about the goodly Member for Couva South who really gave us some of his trade union credentials today in this particular contribution. I would have to say that it is the fault of the Government that we are still here at almost 6.00 p.m. today, because they really did not do justice to this Bill. It was actually the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who, in my opinion, piloted this Bill, gave us the background and gave us the justification here. That is a fact and a reality.

The Member for Caroni East talked about the contempt for our civilization that has been shown by the PNM, and I just want to give you some references, Mr. Speaker, because there is a particular point that I need to make before I take my chair: 100,000 people of central Trinidad were thrown into the darkness and the wilderness by the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. I am quoting Members on the other side: it was the PNM—Member for Caroni East again—and the former leader and the Member for Diego Martin West—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Yes!

Dr. A. Browne:—who closed down Caroni (1975) Limited and imposed hardships on the people of central Trinidad.

Hon. Member: True!

Dr. A. Browne: I asked the question from my seat: Why did this PNM close Caroni (1975) Limited? The Member for Caroni East immediately rejoined, it was to impoverish the people of central Trinidad. It is giving you an insight into the mentality on the other side, but hold on, a few more references. [*Crosstalk*]

The Member for Chaguanas East was not to be left out. Those on the other side took the decision to close down Caroni (1975) Limited and he berated the PNM for lack of due care and attention to the cane farmers and there was a quote. The former leader of the PNM was quoted: the socio-economic—and I am referencing the quotation used on the other side, not verifying it—implications of closing Caroni were too horrendous to contemplate; and they brought this theory that to solve the future of 18-18, to break any possibility of a tie, this was the PNM's scheme to deal with that, and the Member for Caroni Central got very excited during that type of talk, and he was cheering on the other Members as they spoke.

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, May 17, 2013

The Member for Chaguanas East rose to a crescendo: they need to apologize for what they did to Caroni. I mean, come on! [*Desk thumping*] A crescendo! Keep your pounding hands ready. Mr. Speaker, I go on:

“After 18-18, somebody decided that getting rid of Caroni was the best way to deal with it. Three hundred thousand people devastated.”

Not so, Member for Couva South? I mean, these are serious accusations.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Accusations?

Dr. A. Browne: Yes.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Those are realities.

Hon. Member: Ha!

Dr. A. Browne: Realities, very good. Mr. Speaker, but I just want to demonstrate to you here this afternoon, that you cannot trust anything this UNC Government tells you. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot trust anything this UNC Government tells you, and they tried to draw maximum emotions from this Bill. It is an opportunity, because you know why? The Bill had—the word “Caroni” in there and let us use this—UNC colleagues—to draw maximum emotion, and the Member for Caroni East, I saw him straining, squeezing the Bill, to try to get that.

Back to the Member for Chaguanas East: “what kind of governance was that? What kind of people would do that to the people of central Trinidad?” Oh, Mr. Speaker!

Mr. Jeffery: Sad, sad, sad!

Dr. A. Browne: He said: They destroyed all the stakeholders, they destroyed the distillers—not so, Member for Caroni East—the millers, the harvesters, the wholesalers, the shopkeepers, they wounded the people of central Trinidad and Tobago—all of this language being used. But, Mr. Speaker, who did all of this? Who did all of this?

Dr. Gopeesingh: PNM!

Dr. A. Browne: Then the Member for Caroni East gave me the entry to my next reference, I am quoting him:

“We would not have closed down Caroni (1975) Limited.”

Who is the “we”? Silence. Mr. Speaker:

“We would not have closed down Caroni. We would have kept the sugar industry alive.”

And I thought he was going to end saying, and we are now going to revitalize and reopen sugar cane in Trinidad and Tobago. He did not quite get there. But, he said, “we”—he did not say who the “we” was—“would not have closed down Caroni.”

Hon. Member: La Brea, La Brea!

Mr. Jeffery: “I eh so brave.”

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I want to draw reference to a columnist who gave this country an opinion in 2010 on the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. This was a column written on January 18, 2010.

Hon. Member: Colm Imbert.

Dr. A. Browne: Who wrote it? Who you said?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Colm.

Dr. A. Browne: No, it was not the good Colm Imbert at all [*Laughter*] but maybe you will recognize the language. [*Continuous crosstalk and interruption*] Mr. Speaker, may I?

Mr. Speaker: What is the name of the columnist?

Dr. A. Browne: The name—I will give you the title of the column and I will give you the name of the columnist very shortly, Mr. Speaker, I am asking for a little latitude. It was the *Guardian*, January 18, 2010, the column is entitled: “Black and White Facts”, and already you see what the column is about. “Black and White Facts”; stark facts—that is what that means.

Here we go, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

“Although I was pilloried and vilified in the last general election for saying Panday was responsible for the closure of Caroni, Kamla has now made a similar criticism.”

And I will remove the word “Kamla” wherever it is referenced and I will say the Member for Siparia—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Yes, please.

Dr. A. Browne:—because in January 2010, she was also the Member for Siparia, so I will start again:

“Although, I was pilloried and vilified in the last general election for saying Panday was responsible for the closure of Caroni”—the Member for Siparia—“has now made a similar criticism.”

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, May 17, 2013

This was in the build-up to the 2010 general election in January. Hold on, Mr. Speaker. I quote again:

“It is a fact.”—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: “Come nah, man, we ha to go home.”

Dr. A. Browne:—“Panday mishandled Caroni.”

I go on, Mr. Speaker, quoting:

“The closure of Caroni was started by the Panday government...,” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Raffique Shah—[*Inaudible*]

6.00 p.m.

Dr. A. Browne: And the Member for Caroni East is saying Raffique Shah. Mr. Speaker, I will now tell the name of this columnist—this was not 1980, 2010, January 18—Anand Ramlogan, the current Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: “Oooh! Whoa! Woo!”

Dr. A. Browne:—not, Raffique Shah. Mr. Speaker, allow me to proceed.

Hon. Member: “Awww!”

Dr. A. Browne: “Although I was pilloried and vilified in the last general election”—referring to 2007—“for saying Panday was responsible for the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, the Member for Siparia has now made a similar criticism. It is a fact Panday mishandled Caroni. The closure of Caroni was started by the Panday government, which was ready to dismantle it and sell it off.” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Who wrote that?

Dr. A. Browne: The Member for Diego Martin North/East did not write this.

Hon. Member: Who wrote that?

Dr. A. Browne: Hold on, hold on. Do not—hold on, hold on. This is an important article. [*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “You and all doh believe that.”

Dr. A. Browne: You hear them. They said it was Raffique Shah. They were hoping it was Raffique Shah. This is a member of the UNC educating us. [*Desk thumping*] Hold on.

“The closure of Caroni was started by the Panday government”—the Panday government of which many Members here were a part—“which was ready to dismantle it and sell it off.”

I am going to ask the Member for Couva South to respond to this reference.

“The budgetary allocations—*[Interruption and crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Please, I do not want to have—please, both sides. Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, let me just put this in context. We were just treated to several hours of discourse blaming a political party for the—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: In the worst way.

Dr. A. Browne:—in the worst way, with all sorts of side references—for the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. I am quoting a Member of the Government, a Member of the ruling party, the current hon. Attorney General, who is giving us a definitive opinion on this matter and I will proceed. *[Desk thumping]* I will not be stopped by any distraction here today; and I am quoting:

“The budgetary allocations needed to revive the company were not forthcoming, and the company went from bad to worse.”

So you talk about rewriting history? Listen, this is the Attorney General, the current Attorney General, on January 18, 2010.

“Panday, once the champion of the barefoot labourers in the sugar cane estates, was a different man as Prime Minister.”

These are not my words, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: “Who words?”

Dr. A. Browne: I continue:

“When Penal and Barrackpore flooded out, he and Oma left on a plane to attend the christening of Lawrence Duprey’s grandson.”

I go down further.

The Member for Siparia—this is in the column—“launched a scathing counter-attack this week”—he was complimenting her—“and made a compelling critical assessment of Panday’s leadership. She recited ‘the black and white facts’ about his failing leadership. A critical review shows:”

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[DR. BROWNE]

Friday, May 17, 2013

And then the columnist, columnist Ramlogan, listed 10 points highlighting the failing Panday leadership.

Mr. Roberts: But Panday is a PNM now.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, what kind of—all right. Yes, indeed. Number seven on this list prepared by columnist Ramlogan is:

“The dismantling of Caroni 1975 Ltd, started under his administration.” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I gave you the references from the Member for Couva South, the Member for Caroni East, the Member for Chaguanas East, the Member for Caroni Central sitting in cheerleading support and they try to blame the People’s National Movement. They are in direct contradiction to the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and the Prime Minister because she is referenced here.

Mr. Speaker, my message to the farmers, my message to anyone who was ever involved in the sugar-cane industry in this country and my message to the wider public, through you, is that this current Government cannot be trusted at all. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, you understand what is contained here? Let me break it down for you and the members of the public. Caroni (1975) Limited, as referenced in this Bill, is the most precious political opportunity for Members on the other side. When they wanted to crush and destroy Mr. Panday that was the weapon they used against him. They said he was the one, his administration, the UNC under Mr. Panday, started the destruction of Caroni (1975) Limited. The closure of Caroni (1975) Limited was started by the Panday Government. Now that they are in Government they have erased that memory and are now trying to use the same Caroni closure and pin it on the People’s National Movement. That is political schizophrenia. We cannot take them at their word. We cannot.

Anyone associated with Caroni (1975) Limited who is listening to me or who was associated needs to recognize that the UNC members, the UNC Government, see that company and its history as a very useful political football. That is why we are here at 6.00 p.m. because they tried to use this same political football today against the People’s National Movement. We are having none of it. We are having none of it. [*Desk thumping*] They are indicted by their own words because they pin the blame directly on the UNC itself and the former leader, Mr. Panday.

We do not have any problem with this Bill but we take strong objection to every single contribution that was made on the other side. They have done a disservice to the very Bill on which we will vote shortly and they have done a disservice to the workers of the cane fields. They have done a disservice to the listening public of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]* Sorry?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The truth will set us free.

Dr. A. Browne: The truth will set you free. That is the answer after all of this, that the truth will set him free. Mr. Speaker, my advice to the Member for Caroni East, that cliché is not going to save you at this stage because you gave us a song and dance about Caroni (1975) Limited. Your words are now being used against you.

The Government needs to realize that you cannot prosecute a case against the PNM when your lead prosecutor is saying the opposite. You just cannot do it. It is not going to fly, Member for Caroni East, and he is saying the opposite. I gave you his words. You said you were hoping they were the words of Raffique Shah. This was just a few months before the 2010 general election. He told the country categorically the closure of Caroni is the UNC's fault.

Mr. Roberts: With those few words.

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, the Member who introduced this Bill, the Member for Couva South, who will wind up at some point on this very Bill, needs to know that you cannot rewrite history if at first you do not know how to write in the first place. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. *[Desk thumping]*

Mrs. Thomas: Well said.

Mr. Jeffrey: Well done, well done, well done!

Mr. Roberts: That was not a good ending.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I want to agree that that was an unfortunate ending. Member for Couva South, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Roberts: “Wrap him up like crab.”

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The very fact that the

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. R. INDARSINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

Member for Diego Martin North/East wanted this Bill to be dealt with in three minutes this evening—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Two minutes.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—two minutes this evening was because they do not want the population to be reminded about the sins of the PNM, as it relates to the sugar industry. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: All right, you beg to move. You made your point, you beg to move.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—and it is important, in my winding up here, to continue to write the history of Trinidad and Tobago and set the record straight about what the PNM did to the sugar industry and its workers, and I challenge any one of them on that side to contradict what I have to say in this winding up statement because none of them was involved in the actual process. I was involved and I lived the actual process. [*Desk thumping*] So I have—[*Continuous interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, again, I am having difficulty in hearing the Member for Couva South, so I appeal to Members to allow the hon. Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to make his contribution in silence. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In dealing with them and their track record on the sugar industry, while I welcome your protection, as I said, I have the liberty and actually having lived the experience none of them can contradict what I have to say in this particular winding up because—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: “Ah like how he speaking.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—the important thing, Member for Diego Martin North/East and Member for Diego Martin Central, is to understand that the PNM never had the interest of the development of the industry.

When the Member for Diego Martin North/East focused on the issue about the Government spending billions of dollars to deliver the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited to the former workers from a residential and agricultural point of view, he failed to tell this House and the country at large that he was part of a Cabinet that challenged the ruling of Justice Lennox Deyalsingh.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, yes.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: He was part of a Cabinet led by the Member for San Fernando East. When the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union was of the opinion that Government was dragging its feet on the delivery of lands and the completion of the infrastructural works on these lands, the Government sought redress in the courts of Trinidad and Tobago and they will not tell you that Justice Deyalsingh mandated through a ruling that all the infrastructural work should have been completed by July of 2008. The Prime Minister at that time and the Member for Diego Martin North/East were in the Cabinet and instructed the then Attorney General to appeal the ruling of Justice Deyalsingh—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—and they went so far as to carry the matter to the Privy Council.

Mr. Sharma: What a shame!

Dr. Moonilal: That is the record. That is the record.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: That is the record and that is the history we must write this evening, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] The Privy Council—and what they will not tell you is that they instructed the Attorney General to leave the matter hanging there in the Privy Council; and what they will not want the population to know is that when this administration came to power, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet gave the current Attorney General instructions to withdraw the appeal against Justice Deyalsingh's ruling. [*Desk thumping*] That is what they will not want us to know, in terms of how they behaved in a dictatorial and highhanded manner.

Mr. Sharma: Very shameless.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: They were prepared to go against the rule of law during their tenure as the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Ineptitude!

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Contemptuous!

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I heard, in his delivery, the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Diego Martin West, indicated to this House this evening that the Government gave an enhanced package, the Government gave lands, the Government gave training and so on. Well, again I want to write the history correctly. The important thing to note is that Minister—[*Interruption*]—Member

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. R. INDARSINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, listen very carefully, you will get the lesson; you were not here this afternoon. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Listen very carefully. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] You will get it. "Doh worry", I will take my time and deliver that lesson to you. [*Laughter*]

6.15 p.m.

Mr. Sharma: Please do. Please do. [*Crosstalk, interruption and laughter*] And sugar coat it.

Miss Mc Donald: Member for Fyzabad, why you so, what you know about sugar coating? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Please! Please! Please! "Ah want you all to go behind de Chair when you are talking about dat." [*Laughter*] Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Yes. So, Mr. Speaker, it was not any enhanced offer to the ex-employees of Caroni (1975) Limited. In fact, Minister Rahael at that point in time, threatened the very workers through the print and electronic media, and went beyond the call of duty to become the human resource manager of Caroni (1975) Limited in that actual process. He went down and he held meetings in Waterloo, he held meetings in the Brechin Castle Club, and he held a meeting at Woodford Lodge field engineering department, and also Usine Ste. Madeleine. He went physically there, holding these meetings, and telling the workers that if you do not accept the VSEP, you will be forcefully retrenched. That is the track record of the PNM in terms of their whole meeting and treating with the labour movement in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: "Put dat on de record."

Hon. R. Indarsingh: So I want to put "dat on de record", Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. You do not have a sense of history about the sugar industry.

Hon. Members: "Ahhhhh! Ohhhh!"

Hon. R. Indarsingh: If you want to meet me on equal terms, listen this evening. [*Desk thumping, laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: "Ohhhhhh!" [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: "Parlez! "Parlez!"

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—that was the Minister of Agriculture at that point in time—

Hon. Member: Bullying!

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—becoming the human resource manager of Caroni (1975) Limited and bullying and intimidating the workers—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Bullying? I thought we could not say that.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—going from place to place within the geography of the sugar industry, and not wanting to engage the union, again not being prepared to adhere to good industrial relations practices. I am sure my colleague from Pointe-a-Pierre can further educate you on the principle of collective bargaining and good industrial relations practices, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk, interruption and laughter*]

The Government at that point in time did not want to meet and treat with the union, and the union had to go to the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago. When the full quorum of judges ruled in favour of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union at that point in time—and I see my friend of long standing in the public gallery here today—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: “Nah! Nah! Nah! Nah!”

Mr. Sharma: Proceed! Proceed!

Miss Mc Donald: “Read yuh Standing Orders. Yuh cyar go there!”

Hon. Member: “Doh go dey.”

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that.

Mr. Sharma: Go back St. Ann's. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Mr. Speaker, when the full quorum of judges ruled in favour of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union, Minister Rahael, when interviewed by the press within minutes of the ruling handed down by the Industrial Court, Minister Rahael's response was: We do not care about the Industrial Court, we as a Government will retrench all the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “Ohhhh!”

Hon. Member: Arrogant.

Hon. Member: High-handed!

Hon. R. Indarsingh: That was the contemptuous behaviour, the arrogant behaviour of the PNM in dealing with the stakeholders within the sugar industry—

Mr. Sharma: “Still de PNM mode of operation.”

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—and that is what they do not want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to hear tonight. That was why the Member for Diego Martin North/East—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: “Dus it!”

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—was attempting to bully “de” Government to dispatch with this particular piece of legislation within two and three minutes. They cannot set the agenda of this particular Government—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, no, no, no. *[Desk thumping]* I am on my feet. Mr. Speaker, I rise—*[Continuous desk thumping]*—on 36(5). *[Interruption]* What? Well, of course, imputing improper motives. *[Desk thumping]* Mr. Speaker, “dey have no manners”, 36(5) imputing improper motives *[Crosstalk]* exactly, using that word “bully” too.

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh eh know wat is bully?”

Miss Mc Donald: It is unparliamentary.

Mr. Sharma: “Wat bullies?”

Hon. Member: “Wat bullying? Da’ is a word.”

Mr. Speaker: You rose, but—

Miss Mc Donald: “Dat describes you.”

Mr. Sharma: “Ent yuh is ah lawyer?”

Mr. Roberts: “Look de Speaker talking.”

Mr. Speaker:—Member for Port of Spain South, you rose, you sat. I rose, but you are still standing, you are talking. *[Laughter]* I did, in fact, indicate some time ago that we ought to be very—at least we ought to be a little more elegant in our language. So consistent with my earlier advice, just use more elegant language and you are capable of doing so. Continue.

Hon. Member: “Dat is a legitimate word.”

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will be guided by your ruling and pronouncement. But again, the point has to be established and this not only has to do with the sugar industry, but the track record of the PNM in dealing with the labour movement in this country—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: That is right. Yes.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—because within minutes of a ruling of a full quorum of judges from the Industrial Court, Minister Rahael who was a Member of the Cabinet, a Member of this House, part of the legislative framework of this country, the constitutional framework of this country, who took an oath of office to uphold the law, the Constitution and the Industrial Court, the Industrial Court which is part of the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago, within five minutes of a ruling being handed down by the court—

Hon. Member: Contempt!

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—of this country, he said we will disregard the ruling. That is the track record of the PNM—

Hon. Member: And Rowley’s choice for Chairman of the PNM.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—that is the track record of the PNM and they carried it out during their tenure, their term, against the labour movement.

Miss Mc Donald: “What is all yuh choice?”

Hon. Member: They were anti-labour.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Whether it was at PTSC, whether it was in relation to the Transport and Industrial Workers’ Union, whether it was at TSTT, with the Communications Workers’ Trade Union, they had no respect for the collective bargaining process and the rule of law. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as a Cabinet, they instructed the Minister of Labour and so on, during their tenure to go to the courts and attempt to decertify these two unions. [*Crosstalk*] These are things we must not forget about the PNM in this country. That is the legacy of the PNM.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Remind dem Rudy.”

Hon. R. Indarsingh: And I will continue as I fulfil my responsibility as Member of Parliament for Couva South, and by extension my responsibility to Trinidad and Tobago, to continue to remind about the ills and the track record of the PNM.

Mr. Sharma. Well done! Well done!

Hon. R. Indarsingh: We have heard about economics. We have heard about the economic arguments which were put forward about why Caroni (1975) Limited was closed, and the need because of international pressures, and so on in

Sugar Industry Control Board Bill, 2013
[HON. R. INDARSINGH]

Friday, May 17, 2013

the trade arena and so on. Well, I want to tell you all again here this evening that is the furthest thing from the truth. There was an inter-ministerial committee headed by Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith, who was the Minister of Planning at that point in time, and I challenge any one of them to tell me I am not speaking the truth. When the union was afforded one meeting with that particular inter-ministerial committee, Minister Saith told me in his remarks and I want you, Mr. Speaker, to listen very carefully to what he told me and, I want every one of them to listen because the Member for Diego Martin North/East was present in that meeting—

Mr. Sharma: “Aha.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—and the Member for Diego Martin North/East behaving in his usual manner, when I walked into the room, with the executive and the general council, “yuh wasting our time”, that was his exact— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Ohhhh!” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, imputing improper motives; not true, not true. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: The Member is saying it is not true, and I have to abide by that, so do not go down that road, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Let him withdraw that. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I will not emphasize again, once you want to deal with the conduct of any Member of this honourable House, or you want to raise or reflect on a Member’s character, please file a substantive Motion, okay? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Mr. Speaker, while I am guided by your ruling, there were certain things that took place in that particular room there [*Crosstalk*] that has to be told to the national population and community.

Hon. Member: Relevance!

Mr. Sharma: Tell us! Tell us!

Mr. Speaker: The only person who deals with relevance here is the Speaker. I need no help, I sought none. So until I rule on relevance, or a Member rises on 36(1), you have the right and you have my protection. I do not want Members to be usurping the role of the Chair.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair is in charge. Continue. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am coming back to the point and the comments that were made by the then Minister of Planning, Dr. Lenny Saith, he said to me, that the time had come to break the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Ohhhh!”

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 36(1). [*Crosstalk*] It is irrelevant, man.

Mr. Speaker: Overruled! Continue. Continue! Overruled!

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—the time had come—[*Desk thumping*]— [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: You knew what somebody said?

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—to break the All Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union because it was a breeding ground for young and aspiring politicians [*Crosstalk*] and also Rienzi Complex was a rallying point for the people of south and central Trinidad.

Hon. Member: “Ohhhh!” [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Shame! Shame!

Hon. Member: That is not true, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Moonilal: As shocking as that is, I do not think we could continue after hearing that revelation. Unbelievable!

Hon. Member: Wow!

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): As shocking as that is, I do not think we could continue after hearing that revelation. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House [*Interruption*] adjourn to Monday, May 20, 2013 [*Desk thumping*]—it is very disturbing—[*Laughter*]— at 1.30 pm, and to serve notice that the Government will debate to its end Motion No. 4 on the Order Paper, as amended, the Motion dealing with confidence in office holders of the Government; on Monday, May 20, 2013 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.29 p.m.