

*Leave of Absence**Tuesday, May 21, 2013***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Tuesday, May 21, 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 hon. Nizam Baksh, Member of Parliament for Naparima. He is ill and he has asked to be excused from sittings of the House of Representatives during the period May 20—27, 2013. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Administrative Report of the Mayaro-Rio Claro Regional Corporation for the year 2009/2010. [*The Minister of Local Government and Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan)*]
2. Administrative Report of the Ministry of National Security for the year 2011. [*The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal)*]
3. Administrative Report of the Ministry of Sport for the year 2011. [*The Minister of Sport (Hon. Anil Roberts)*]
4. Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and its subsidiary, Premier Quality Services Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2011. [*The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh)*]

**PRIME MINISTER AND GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
(LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN)**

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 20, 2013]:

Be it resolved that this House confirms its loss of confidence in the Prime Minister and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Dr. K. Rowley*]

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The list of those who have spoken thus far: Dr. Keith Rowley, mover of the Motion, the Attorney General, Member for Port of Spain South, Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, Member for Diego Martin Central, Member for Oropouche West and Member for Point Fortin.

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute on the Motion before this honourable House tabled in the name of the Member for Diego Martin West and Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I begin by stating that Motions such as these, because of the very character of the Motion and the fact that these Motions are special in the culture of Westminster, it is by practice incumbent upon governments to meet and confront these Motions in a timely manner.

There are Motions, Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, that will be placed on the Order Paper, qualify for Private Members' Day or as a Government Motion, and may not be debated readily or may even be allowed to lapse on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, I wanted to state that this Motion was received in the honourable House on May 07, 2013. The day the Motion qualifies for the Order Paper was yesterday, May 20, 2013. Yesterday was the first day this Motion qualified to get on the Order Paper. The Government decided to debate this Motion on the very day it qualified for the Order Paper. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, Mr. Speaker, another government in another time, would have looked at this Motion, and, on the eve of acknowledging its third year in office, which this Motion is timed to appear on the Order Paper during the very week when the Government acknowledges three years in office—another government at another time would have sought to take this Motion and bury it on the Order Paper and debate it sometime next week, next month or possibly leave it right there for it to lapse.

The Government led by the Member for Siparia took the decision that we will waste not one day more by confronting the issues on this Motion filed by no less person than the Leader of the Opposition. So, Mr. Speaker, we were eager to debate; we were eager to debate. We came to the House yesterday and the Government, but also members of the national community, came to the House, and there was high anticipation as to what would be the content of the argument filed by the Leader of the Opposition.

You see, Mr. Speaker, these are Motions that are not taken lightly. When we did our research it demonstrates to us that over the last three years or so, we have had more Motions of no confidence filed than they had in the last 10 years or so.

You see, Mr. Speaker, these are serious matters. They are special and serious because they speak to the character of those identified; they speak to the conduct. In the normal course of debate, one cannot raise an issue that speaks to the conduct of a Member, but in this special debate you can.

And so, Mr. Speaker, Oppositions throughout our political history have been very careful as to when they would file this Motion, when they believe that the moon, the stars and the planets are in alignment, and the moment has arrived when you can come to the House with this Motion with an exposé of one kind or another, and you will cripple the Government in office that will trigger either an election that is around the corner or will trigger an early election.

But, Mr. Speaker, nothing prepared us for what we met yesterday, and if you would have seen the front pages of the newspapers today and you would have felt that I was looking shocked, I was [*Laughter*] because I sat here in awe with my mouth agape staring incomprehensively at the other side because I just could not believe that Parliament had reached that all-time low.

Mr. Sharma: What a shame! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I could not believe. [*Desk thumping*] I could not believe that we had reached a point where any Member of this House, far less the Leader of the Opposition, could have come to the House and seek to build a foundation on a matter of no confidence based upon a few pages of typewritten script purporting to be emails among persons in Government office. Mr. Speaker, it was a bewildering day. The country looked on and many of us, the majority of people, were astonished that that was the issue.

1.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when I read and when I studied this Motion, I asked myself—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We studied well.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—which we spent enormous time in our caucus and so on, studying, reflecting and discussing—and when I looked at the Motion I looked at this Motion which stated:

“Whereas”—the “actions”—of the Government—“under the leadership of the Prime Minister...attacked and conspired to undermine key institutions of State, namely:

- The Judiciary;

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- The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- The Parliamentary Opposition;...
- The Media”

And it goes on to express lack of confidence.

Mr. Speaker, I asked myself when we were preparing, what evidence is this? Where would the mover get the evidential support to bring a case that is meekly compelling? Where would you get it? Did we intervene to fire judges as they do in other countries? The Attorney General told us about some countries of the world where, by executive order, they dismissed Chief Justice and judges, and so on. Did we intervene in matters before the court so that we can be accused of perverting the course of justice? Mr. Speaker, did we discriminate against any public institution in a manner that is calculated to undermine their effectiveness? I looked again, I said, did we tamper with any matter before the DPP to arrive at a certain outcome?” When I saw the Opposition named here, I was even more bewildered.

Mr. Speaker, you see, the Motion reads, if we extrapolate, that the Government attacked and undermined the parliamentary Opposition. Now, I would challenge anybody to find where in the world you have a similar Motion. How does a Government attack and undermine the parliamentary Opposition—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They are doing a good job themselves.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—which is defined as a key institution of State—let us assume we do not want to debate that.

Mr. Sharma: It does not obtain anywhere else.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah, it does not obtain, but let us assume we do not want to debate that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: But Lee Sing undermine “dem”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—but the parliamentary Opposition? Mr. Speaker, how ludicrous! Could you imagine if the Government files a government Motion that the Opposition is undermining the Government? [*Laughter*] But that is the role. In Westminster politics it is adversarial politics. Their job is to raise critical matters, and in a manner that they deem fit. That is their job. The Government’s job is to respond, and respond in a manner we deem fit.

You cannot accuse a Government of undermining the parliamentary Opposition. So I said, “no, no, the Opposition Leader would have his evidence to support this because he cannot in a frivolous, reckless manner state that. So there would be some evidence that the Government—Cabinet—used its power to deny resources to the Opposition, to fire workers in the constituency office, to undermine their preparation for debates and so on. Mr. Speaker, nothing was forthcoming. The media—when I saw this I again thought, is there evidence that members of the media were hauled before the Privileges Committee?”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And banned from Parliament.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Banned from Parliament; members of the media have been persecuted in the conduct of their duty.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion is frivolous, vexatious, irrelevant and null and void. [*Desk thumping*] As if that was not bad enough, then came an exposé of some sort, and while I thought the Member opposite was being mildly humorous I discovered that he was very serious, when the Member sought to place on record typewritten pages purporting to be emails and exchanges of emails, purporting to be sent and received by state office holders, government office holders, and sought to build an argument on that. But I want to go back.

Before the emails came about—the Member made a statement in his *Hansard* record. The Member made a statement. Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from the Member yesterday. The Member says, and I quote:

“...when I saw the emails my first reaction was to ensure that it was not frivolous and, therefore, I did not take it to my colleagues, I did not take it to the media, I did not publicize it; I wanted to be satisfied that what this whistle-blower had presented...was information that”-could-“be taken seriously. Mr. Speaker, and when I was satisfied that”-it-“was so I took the information to the Office of the President.”

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continued. He said:

“Mr. Speaker, I waited for six months. I waited for six months to see what would happen with the information” – which - “I” – considered -“extremely important, because it points—if...accepted”

And the Leader of the Opposition would have accepted it.

It points “to grievous wrongdoing...Mr. Speaker, after six months and the offices of State to the best of my knowledge not treating with the matter”—I

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assume that is the Office of the President, because there is only one office that this is sent to, so I assume that—“not treating with the matter in the way I expected, I thought”—I would come today and of course indicate this to the Parliament.

So, Mr. Speaker, the first point I want to make here is that the Leader of the Opposition considered that the information was accurate enough. It must be taken seriously and would have cross-checked this matter.

Mr. Seemungal: It took six months to do that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It took six months to do that. So, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, for all intents and purposes, believed that this was accurate enough to bring to the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, you recall, during the events yesterday, on more than one occasion I called across the floor for the Leader of the Opposition to share this information with the Government. I called on more than one occasion. On the fifth or sixth occasion when the Member opposite graciously condescended to give the information, I wanted to spring out of my seat and collect it, you held me back, and through the proper officers of the Parliament it came to our attention.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General responded, who did not get to see it or study it, who would not have had view of this document before, but, Mr. Speaker, we looked at it and I want to put on the record—the public record must reflect—that in the discussion raised by the Leader of the Opposition it was portrayed as if high officers of government were conspiring to conduct very serious criminal offences—Mr. Speaker, I want to say these offences—suggesting that there was a conspiracy to commit murder, to pervert the course of justice, to illegally wiretap the office and the officer of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Speaker, these are very, very serious accusations, anywhere in the world. In six months—and we will get to the content of that in a few minutes—in six months, having knowledge of this, where my friend opposite verily believed that it was accurate enough to come to the Parliament, at no time did I hear that my friend took this matter to the police to seek to protect the life of someone who they believed and alleged was threatened—their life.

Mr. Speaker, I will come to the email just now, I “ent” reach there yet. This matter came to the Prime Minister at in and around 3.00 p.m. By 6.00 p.m., in less than three hours or so, the Prime Minister caused a letter to be drafted to the Commissioner of Police and sent [*Desk thumping*] the emails to the Commissioner of Police for an investigation. This is the responsible approach.

Any other approach of leaving this matter, which you believed to be true, for six months, is reckless, is negligent and such a person is unfit to hold office.

1.50 p.m.

Assuming, but can never be admitting, that this had some truth in it, that means a reporter, a citizen of this country, may have been killed. On whose hands would the blood fall? Who had knowledge of it and did nothing, and believed it to be true, having verified that someone's life was at stake? But the life did not matter; the politics mattered. Politics trumped human life, because we had to prepare to "gallery". So somebody could have been dead, no problem with that. We need to get the political juice out of it. I ask the national community: would someone do that and qualify to offer themselves to lead the nation of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Members: No, never!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But that is not the only wrongdoing here; not the only one at all. There was no interest in saving lives. There was no interest in investigating alleged criminal conduct of a dastardly manner; when you talk about illegally wiretapping the DPP, and they made reference to Nixon, Kennedy, Roosevelt, maybe Washington. They made reference to that and created this feeling that state officers were in the dark of the night contemplating all of these matters. No one took it upon themselves to send to the Commissioner of Police to say, "Could you conduct an investigation into this? This is very serious; I believe it to be true." If that is not negligence, what is?

I want to re-emphasize, we were told that no member of their caucus knew of this, none, but later in the evening Point Fortin stood, and, having heard it for the first time with us, said "she agree with everything". "Did not hear it before, she agree with everything." I have something to say about Point Fortin later.

These emails came to our attention and we looked at them, and we have had the opportunity to pass them on to the relevant people who know something about these things. I want to make another point for history: all that has changed is the electronic technology. In 1981, those with the considerable experience, such as the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, a youth himself then, remembered when the ONR contested the election. There was a letter circulating called the "Baptist letter" in which the intent of that was to tell the Baptist community that if Karl Hudson Phillips became Prime Minister he would destroy that community, undermine it and not recognize that community—the Baptist letter of 1981. "All that has changed is some people get iPad. [*Laughter*] This worse, but we get iPad now. De

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Parliament give out iPad, so this is the electronic version of those things, but is the same DNA that did that in 1981.” [*Desk thumping*]

By 2001 or thereabout, a former Minister of government found cocaine and missiles in his water tank. “All that has changed is we get iPad.” It is the same DNA. There are persons in the national community who are prone to this type of behaviour. “But what happen, dey learn to use iPad, and regrettably they have not learned to use it good, because it was only given, I think, a few months ago.” This is what happens when you do not have IT knowledge but you want to go back to your dirty old past. You think you can get away with this.

We have looked at this matter, and there are such glaring inconsistencies. I do not know where to begin, but I have to begin. I do not know about others, but I cannot remember receiving emails where the subject comes first. [*Laughter*] You have emails where the subject comes first, and then it says to who and from who. But the subject comes first in all these emails:

“Subject: Deal with the problem.”

And that comes first; first. We do not know of that.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest one that caught our attention of course, and the Attorney General responded to, is that there is an email address here: anan@gmail.com, which is not “Anand”, the AG pointed out that. Those who know about this thing told us and confirmed what we knew, that when you apply for a Gmail account, I think you need to use six characters minimum, not less than six. So Members of the Opposition could apply for two email accounts. They have 12 characters. [*Laughter*] They have 12 characters. They can get two. [*Laughter*]

So, Mr. Speaker, your “anan” is four characters. “They forget that they needed a minimum of six if you doing this.” You know, every political party that is in Government or Opposition would have certain IT experts around them, people who you hope, if in a nightmare you come into government, you have a Minister of Technology, because he could use an iPad. [*Laughter*] But where did you check this to understand that you cannot have an email account with four characters, a Gmail account? You did not check that.

As if that was not the only one, in this document kindly supplied by the Leader of the Opposition, in one of these emails: “Subject: Help needed”, the email comes from—hear this one: “anan@gmail.con”—C-O-N. [*Laughter*] Now that is a con job. [*Laughter*] That is a con job. I do not know which email account could be “.con”—

Hon. Member: “And it reach.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Convict maybe, concoction? [*Crosstalk*] “Whoever tried to do this, you should send dem to—wha is dat place called, SABC or something?”

Hon. Members: SBCS!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—SBCS. They do courses in these things, to help you.

Mr. Sharma: YTEPP!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, YTEPP. Mr. Speaker, C-O-N—I want to tell you something, because we have it. This is no typographical error. This is no smudge on the printing; this is very clear, the C-O-N, so we had a con job that came to us, and this speaks about threatening.

As if that was not good enough, we continued to look at these emails. The one that really got me is when I saw an email here purporting to be addressed to the Prime Minister from the Attorney General, and it began “My dear lady”. “The Attorney General doh talk like dat. In fact, with great respect, I doh think he could talk like that.” [*Laughter*] What is that? Clark Gable, Errol Flynn, Humphrey Bogart, Rajesh Khanna? “What lover talk is dat?” “My dear lady”.

Hon. Member: Rishi Kapoor!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “De AG doh talk like dat. I doh think he could.” If you put it on paper he would not say it, but that is how they concocted this matter.

They got a date wrong as well, believing something to be a Tuesday when it was another day. But then maybe the computer they were doing this with, of course, had the wrong date typed in, so we will give that. Maybe it is the wrong date they had on the computer. They did not properly set it up. “Dat could happen when you now get an iPad.”

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, another one—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Two days with the same date.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—they had two days with the same date, the 10, a Monday and Tuesday—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Then the Wednesday.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and the Wednesday 11—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is really Tuesday.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—is really Tuesday, 11 September [*Crosstalk*] but, Mr. Speaker, “so they cudden tell date neither, dah is the point.” But the one— [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Wednesday or Thursday.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah. “When you are doing this thing you doh care if Good Friday, you know, fall on Ash Wednesday”—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Or Thursday. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—you see, because you just doing this—“yuh hustling”.

The one that I thought was another very significant matter is that they are sending emails but the email is being sent from two addresses at the same time.

Mr. Roberts: “Dah is what ah tell yuh. Two one time.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: How can you send an email—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You cannot.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—from two email addresses at the same time?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They did [*Inaudible*] and delete the other one.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see? They did that with the anan@gmail and the anand@tstt.net.tt.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The tstt one also has A-N-A-N-D.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes. [*Crosstalk*] So you see when you see “FROM” and you see two email addresses you know that this is a fake. This is a fake.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is impossible to do.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It is impossible to do that. In one of them they have “FROM anan@gmail.com@gmail.com” again. So if these are real emails that you print, would they have the false information like that if they are real?

Then the one that really annoyed me is when they have the Member for Siparia and alleged that the Prime Minister sent a note and used some of the most—what, how to describe that—obnoxious and foul language possible, which my friend was happy to abbreviate in the Parliament, well then you knew that it

was not the Member for Siparia. You knew that. That language does not emanate from the Member for Siparia, [*Desk thumping*] provoked as she may be at times— [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The best place, “Go to hell”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Never.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Never.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Those of us know the boundary of that language and it is nowhere close to that. We know the boundary.

Hon. Member: It might be Anand.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Mr. Speaker— [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Well, there is a possibility.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So you are attributing to the hon. Prime Minister the most foul language, writing, “eh”.

Hon. Member: You cannot believe it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And you think that is believable; that is believable. Then there is a reference to someone who, it was alleged, was an officer at the US embassy. The allegation is made on September 10— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Um-hmmm.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—September 10 in the purported emails. When you look at this, the gentleman arrived in the country in November, late November of the same year. [*Crosstalk*] He arrived in late November when the email with the reference to him is September 10. [*Crosstalk*] You see, Mr. Speaker, this is the problem. This is the problem we have.

Mr. Sharma: Always mixing dates.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It was a cut and paste, placed on a letter and so on and properly copied to demonstrate certain events. You see, there is something deeper here. It not just some amateur person who now get an iPad, it is an attempt to demonstrate and to argue that the section 34 matter had deeper, darker origins, and the Opposition would like to keep that matter alive— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: They have nothing else to do.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and they reached a point where they do not know how to do it, so they got their hands on this and deemed this to be credible, “huh”. This was deemed this to be credible to be here.

Mr. Sharma: Because they created it themselves.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, last year there was a gentleman—I remember reading in the papers—the Lotto number announced \$6 million. “You know what de fella gone and do? The next day he went an buy a Lotto ticket with the same numbers and he goes around by everybody and say, ‘Look, I win \$6 million. Lend mih \$50,000.’ He goes by a next fella, he say, ‘Listen nah, ah win \$6 million. Lend mih 75. Look ah collecting this’,” but nobody checked. That thing is on the wrong date, but it was the same number. [*Crosstalk*] What he did is he tried to make up when the fact was finished.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: What they did with this—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: After the fact.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—terribly, they did it terribly of course, is to connect after the events—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Ex post facto.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—ex post facto, a series of emails to synchronize with events that happened. That is it. That is the fella who went and put the Lotto number, the winning number, the next day and was able to con businessmen to lend him \$25,000 and he will pay it back; “Look, ah win.”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Huh.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It is the same hand, the same thinking. So, Mr. Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] this matter was sent to the police and the police will investigate, which is the responsible approach from the Prime Minister, which is responsible, but, you see, we could not get the responsibility elsewhere. It was left to the Prime Minister, within hours, to refer this matter to the Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*] You know, in an odd way that demonstrates good governance in a debate that speaks to governance. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Repeat that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The best practices. [*Laughter*] So it took this faux pas for the Prime Minister to demonstrate responsibility and good governance because

that is what it is because it came from nowhere else. For six months this was in hand—six months.

Hon. Member: Potential—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “Yes, with allegations here that they were looking for reporter to kill”, tapping the phone lines of the DPP, perverting the course of justice. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Six months.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Six months we had this information and did nothing. Even at the end of the presentation I waited. I waited for some type of announcement that the matter was referred to the police.

Hon. Member: Irresponsibility.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It was not forthcoming. This matter speaks of negligence—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Responsibility.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—irresponsibility—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Recklessness.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and an unfit for office—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Poor judgment.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—poor judgment and worse, a level of a lack of fitness for high public office—

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—when you come to the Parliament and make this your contribution without trying to save somebody’s life—

Mr. Sharma: Shame. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Six months ago.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—six months ago. But you see, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Unfit to rule.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—the country will judge this matter, as they have already done, I imagine. They will judge that matter. And you know my

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honourable friend opposite I want to let you know that, you know, those of us, we also receive emails. We also receive emails. “We doh receive emails and come to Parliament and prattle out everything. There are some things that you get information, you doh know, look, whether this is true, whether this is not true.”

Dr. Indarsingh: True.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I got an email about the Member for Diego Martin West. What do I do? Come to Parliament and read it?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: File a Motion. Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Do I file a special Motion and bring it?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: There is an email from Cazim Hosein 943@yahoo.com to the Leader of the Opposition. Do I read it? What do I do? There are allegations here [*Crosstalk*]*—is email, speaking to two issues.*

Hon. Member: You have to.

Hon. Member: One.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: A recent vacation undertaken by the Leader of the Opposition. “I doh know if the Leader of the Opposition went on a recent vacation”, and the construction of a—I cannot pronounce the word—a Jacuzzi. That is how you pronounce it?

Mr. Roberts: Correct.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:*—and repairs to your porch—that is the thing—also a point about DMV. “I doh know what DMV means.”*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Diego Martin West.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: DMV and collecting funds for—to add to DMV from San Fernando. And this person says, “I look forward to greeting you as the mayor of San Fernando.”

Hon. Member: Hmm.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Now, Mr. Speaker, I do the same. I do the same. These things you cannot take seriously. But what do we do?

Mr. Roberts: “But he steups at that one.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Could I make a Motion in Parliament and bring this? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: That is the rubbish. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “Dah is irresponsible. Whether people fix their house or not, da’ is their business.”

Mr. Roberts: “You shudda steups.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “You put a Jacuzzi or not, da’ is your business.” But, Mr. Speaker, that is the point I am making. You cannot come with these type of things that are not corroborated [*Crosstalk*] that people write about each other all the time and pretend is this and is that, and decide that you will make that a Motion, and seek to taint the character and undermine key office holders. When you undermine key office holders you are undermining the State because those persons are in a position of responsibility.

2.10 p.m.

So Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you this email here is a fabrication, the way they cut and paste. My hon. friend opposite, he may know the fabricator and I want to tell him I was happy enough that I have brought for him a helmet, a pair of gloves and “a goggles.” [*Dr. Moonilal takes items out of bag*] This is for you as a fabricator. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Member! Member! Member, please! Please. [*Laughter*] This is not theatre. I want to advise Members, do not display those matters in this honourable House. [*Continuous laughter*] All Members are guided accordingly. Okay!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the helmet, the gloves and the goggles. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I rise under 36(5). My colleague is accusing me of fabricating documents and laying it in the House. I rise for your protection under 36(5), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: You are a fabricator. He has proven it.

Mr. Speaker: I would want to advise that in the cut and thrust of this debate, which is a substantive Motion and not an ordinary Motion, that there is a certain latitude that is permissible that would not be permitted in an ordinary debate, and this is why it is called a substantive Motion. Therefore, I would want to advise

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Members that this is a debate that our skins have to be very thick, because it is a substantive Motion before this honourable House. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. The Motion speaks to the undermining of key state institutions with three institutions named, and it speaks about undermining the parliamentary Opposition.

We forget my friend opposite was a member of a Government and a Cabinet where, in 2002, the Government did not pay Members of the Opposition so basic a necessity as their salary.

Hon. Member: For a year.

Hon. Member: “Oh good”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: For one year, Mr. Speaker, Members of the parliamentary Opposition were denied a salary, duly elected, and a Government of which my friend was a member failed to pay Members of the Opposition so basic a necessity, so we had no money. “You had to go and have bar-b-que and cake sale and so on to raise money for office; to raise money for you to put gas in your car.” That is what you call undermining a parliamentary Opposition.

It took the Privy Council, I think 10 years later, in a matter launched by the very Attorney General, to deem that the political Opposition, the Members, deserved their salary and it was lawful to pay them. Imagine the Privy Council had to tell the Government, pay the Opposition—

Mr. Roberts: The PNM, boy.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—the PNM Government.

Mr. Sharma: Do not forget the role of the Member for Fyzabad.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fyzabad, at that time [*Interruption*] was a serial litigant and regularly put his neck on the line for democracy and equality and fairness by going to the court. [*Interruption*] But imagine that, they failed to pay the political Opposition for one year, and today they file a Motion about undermining the parliamentary Opposition.

Mr. Roberts: Shame! Shame!

Mr. Sharma: “Doh forget they lock up the Speaker.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, in 1995, a Government of which my friend was a member in the Cabinet, [*Interruption*] moved to lock up a Speaker of

the House, under house arrest. This little lady was somewhere in St. Clair. Thank God they had coconut in the yard. I think somebody picked a coconut and gave her. They denied her food and water, of which my friend opposite was a member of the Cabinet that did that, and they talk about undermining parliamentary Opposition and undermining Parliament.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This Government gave them iPad.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, as you know, Cabinet takes decision on expenditure for Parliament and other institutions. Today all Members opposite feast their eyes on the iPad that they have now to better conduct, you know, they are pounding out on that keyboard. What, we do not know. But, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: I had one before.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: What you had before?

Hon. Member: I had one before.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I am sure you had one before. [*Interruption*]

So, Mr. Speaker, we provide, through Cabinet, funding for strengthening Parliament, enhancing its management. Members opposite, when they go to parliamentary seminars and so on, once they are nominated to attend, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago approves that because of the expenditure. We never sit in Cabinet and say, “Look, this Member is going somewhere, you cyar go.”

Miss Mc Donald: “Is you all start that, come on colleague!” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We never attempt to undermine the political Opposition that way.

Mr. Speaker, we have promoted the parliamentary agenda; we have promoted the Parliament. This is a Government that demonstrates its commitment to democracy and the rights of all citizens. My friend opposite—you know somebody else should have filed that Motion—sat in a Government where, on more than one occasion, they came to the Parliament and used their majority to postpone elections for local government officers—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Repeatedly.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and therefore denied citizens their fundamental right to representation. Whether you like the system or not, whether it works for you or not, or it is in need of reform—the very distinguished Minister of Local

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Government is now conducting a comprehensive reform programme in local government. But they used the Parliament to deny citizens the right, and when you ask them why, they say, “Well, we discussing reform.”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is right.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Reform! Reform! Reform!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Three times.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Tell them Reform is a place in south Trinidad next to Palmyra. “They postponed elections how many years, three?”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Three years.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Three years. That is a second term they postponed. Mr. Speaker, on this side democracy prevails. Regardless of the consultation we will have local government elections this year—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:—when they are due.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—when they are due. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, they really do forget their sins. They talk about undermining Judiciary and so on, and you know what, all of these things were based on this email business, you know, no other information.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Bogus emails.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Forget the evidence. These fabrications by a fabricator were the basis of this entire Motion. When you remind them that the former Attorney General in 2009 criticized the conduct of Mr. Justice Rajendra Narine in a decision concerning the parties’ use of the Jamaat al Muslimeem and their help in election campaigning. Judges have been attacked in this House by Members opposite. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition in 2012 publicly attacked the acting President of the Republic—publicly! *Trinidad Guardian*, Saturday, October 20, 2012; page 7, when the Opposition leader condemned the acting President. They did this in daylight and then accuse a Government of all these allegations based upon these fabrications.

Mr. Speaker, in the matter of questions and so on, the Parliament has certain instruments available to you, particularly Members of the Opposition. When you are in Opposition you file questions; you file Motions and there are several types of Motions; Private Motion, of course, but you have something called Motion on

the Adjournment which Members opposite, when we were in Opposition, you raise a matter that in 15 minutes a Minister must answer. Generally it is a matter of a constituency nature. It is an important tool. You have questions to file. But, Mr. Speaker, there is something else.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

2.20 p.m.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, I thought I would mention to you that the instruments available to all Members of Parliament include questions, Motions on the adjournment, Motion for urgent public importance. If you would just look comparatively at the period 2007—2010, 2010—2013—if you would just use those two periods which essentially would be three years each, more or less, and you look at the questions filed in the 2007 period, the 9th Parliament, the number of matters filed as urgent public importance—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: By us.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—by the then Opposition, the United National Congress, we filed 30 Motions, urgent public importance. How much did they file in the 10th Parliament, Mr. Speaker? Five in the 1st Session.

Hon. Member: Shame.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: In the 2nd Session the UNC filed 17 Motions. How much did they file in a corresponding period in the 10th Parliament? One.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Only Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: One. Mr. Speaker, on Matters on the Adjournment which is an important tool to use for the Government to account particularly on constituency matters, the Opposition in the 9th Parliament in one session filed 47 matters on the adjournment—UNC Opposition. In the corresponding period in the 10th Parliament they filed 19, less than 50 per cent.

In the 2nd Session of the 9th Parliament, the UNC Opposition filed 50 matters, urgent on the adjournment, 50 matters, busy representing our constituents, 50. In

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corresponding period in the 10th Parliament, the Opposition here today, we filed 50, they filed 12, and maybe all by the Member for Diego Martin North/East—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He usually does that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—who is not present for the debate, Mr. Speaker—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Why is that?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—because he fled. He knew this was frivolous and vexatious. They send him an email and he thought it was fake.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I rise on 36(5), 36(5), imputing—36(5). [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: I want to sustain that point of order. Hon. Member, I do not think it is proper to say that a Member fled. He was properly excused from this honourable House and therefore do not go down that road, please.

Mr. Sharma: He did not fly across, he flew.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your guidance. Needless to note for the public record that the Member for Diego Martin North/East is properly excused from participating in this debate.

Hon. Members: He flew away.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He flew on Caribbean Airlines.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not want to say anything more about the Caribbean Airlines. Mr. Speaker, the Parliament, the very Parliament they speak about undermining, the previous Government left the Red House abandoned with a tarpaulin over the Red House.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: First they wanted to take the Red House.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, Mr. Speaker, first the Red House was earmarked for the Office of the Emperor. That was the first problem. If that was not bad enough, they put a tarpaulin under the Red House—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Over.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—over the Red House and spend about over \$200 million for this tarpaulin over the Red House.

Mr. Roberts: That is a big tarpaulin.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Visitors coming to Trinidad and Tobago, moving around Port of Spain, went with their cameras to take a picture of the Red House, they see a blue tarpaulin over, like a hat on the Red House.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: For years.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: For years, money spending, no work. It was left to this administration to quickly move the Parliament and start construction. [*Desk thumping*] And you know we sometimes forget “eh”, upon taking the oath of office, the Member for Siparia, the first act—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Put on she boots.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, that was the second. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Roberts: You have boots?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The first act was to remove the Coat of Arms from the official vehicle, of the Prime Minister—[*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: “What you talking about?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—in a symbolic gesture to demonstrate humility that the Office of the Prime Minister is not the Office of Head of State.

“Mr. Speaker, the second act was to put on boots and attend to flood.” That was the second act. We sometimes forget that. Then this Prime Minister indicated that the Red House will remain the seat of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, they talk about undermining Parliament and parliamentary Opposition. Today, when we look at the salaries of Members of Parliament, this Government, through the various institutions, is called upon to review those salaries. The last time there were any salary adjustments for Members of the House, the Parliament, was in 2005. What happened in five years? A report from the Salaries Review Commission went to the former Prime Minister and recommended increases for Members of Parliament to better conduct their duties. He flatly rejected it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He said Opposition was part-timers.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Because you know who was in Opposition? [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We were.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We were in Opposition. The then Prime Minister rejected it. He said, “That is for part-timers. You all come and talk for an hour and go home.” Today, all of them recognize that the Government has to act to bring some decency to their own terms and conditions, and they call upon us to so do.

Miss Mc Donald: “And what happen?”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, and we will treat with that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is being done now. The SRC is doing it now.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The reform agenda of the Government—you know, and sometimes you read one or two of these agents of those opposite in the media, and they talk about the Government have no policy and so on. “If you talk policy for 24 hours they will still write it have no policy.” They will still do that.

Mr. Sharma: That is their policy.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is their policy. Mr. Speaker, in Parliament so far we have dealt with the interception of communications, the very issue raised, where today—do you know a report was presented to Parliament already, an annual report on the interception of communications? So all elected members can see how much, where, in what context. You could never dream of that happening before, when there was evidence to suggest that Members all over, Government, Opposition, everywhere—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Trade Union.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—trade union, Judiciary, cultural artistes and so on, they were tapping their phones. For what purpose, we do not know. Mr. Speaker, we passed legislation on the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, Anti-Gang, Trafficking in Persons, the financial intelligence legislation—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: We supported all of that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker—

Miss Mc Donald: We are responsible.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—shout harder. I am not hearing. We passed legislation on the electronic transaction, the Data Protection Act.

Another area of governance that we need to point out, when we were in Opposition, Mr. Speaker, I give you my personal account of that now, at some

time I was Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. It is now a matter of public record. There was a great morning that the heavens determined that the Opposition would have a majority. Members of the Government then, as they often do, failed to show up for the meeting—

Mr. Roberts: As usual.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and the Opposition and the Independents had a majority. And we moved to carry the business of the Public Accounts Committee live so every citizen can look at their TV, listen to their radio, and understand the workings of State Enterprises. Before, heads of state enterprises and so on, they were like czars around, they scoffed. They treated with scorn and contempt parliamentary institutions. One did not want to go and he told them he will never appear there to account—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And he never did.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—on UDeCott. A next one from the energy sector—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Ken Julien.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—treated with contempt the institutions of Parliament, and they condoned that. When we got a chance, Mr. Speaker, to bring those meetings live, by the next meeting they came to throw me out, live. [*Laughter*] They threatened to put me to the Privileges Committee and throw me out of Parliament—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: You and Bhagoo. [he is a Newsday reporter]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, at that time, because I have taken the initiative to bring parliamentary proceedings live. “Today everybody turn on their TV they see one committee, that committee, the other committee, is because of the work of the United National Congress [*Desk thumping*] for which they nearly throw me out. And today they talk about governance and undermining state institutions. We also in Opposition called on the then Government, of which my friend was a prominent member, before begin fired, called on them—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: By email.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—to ask that Independent Senators chair these committees, Joint Select Committee of Parliament. We felt that the Government had the majority and an Independent Senator should chair, so that the Government has the majority in any case, but not the Government member. You know when

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they were in the office, Government members chaired the Joint Select Committees. When we got in Office the first thing we do is reverse that, that Independent Senators chaired. [*Desk thumping*]

2.30 p.m.

So the very Opposition who is complaining now would not be at the mercy of a chairman of the Government, they would work with the Independent Members and that, we believed, was not only symbolically important, but in a real sense it was important for democracy, for transparency. God forbid, Mr. Speaker, they get back in office, they will revert, where the Government will chair all those committees.

Mr. Roberts: Withdraw that statement!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I withdraw that nightmare! [*Desk thumping*] I withdraw that nightmare!

Mr. Speaker, we have strengthened the institution of Parliament, a stronger management structure. Today, after 50 years, we are about to bring new Standing Orders to the Parliament to reflect modernity. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, you know, today when we talk about fabricated emails, I remember in the Parliament some time ago the then Leader of the Opposition was thrown out of the Parliament because he dared open a laptop to do some work. He was hauled out! The next day he cut a poor picture standing by the iron gate and the police preventing him from coming in, [*Laughter*] for a laptop because you want it today. “My friends opposite, look at them, man, [*Desk thumping*] emailing, googling, Mr. Speaker.” Today they benefit, but it was a struggle from the Opposition just to get electronic technology to be introduced so you can better do your work or, you know, read whatever gossip and so on, there.

But, Mr. Speaker, this was a struggle of the Opposition at that time. “What they struggle for? What they struggle for?” They struggle with emails, and fabricated, and the most no confidence motions, hoping that people out there would listen to that and they would say, “Wow, look at these evil members of Government.” Mr. Speaker, that is what they are hoping for.

This country will not forget—and will not forget easily—that, you know—they talk about promoting citizens’ rights. There is no passion for rights, Mr. Speaker. There is a DNA which we know. We know the DNA: the Baptist letter; cocaine in the water tank; today, fabricated emails. We know the DNA.

Mr. Speaker, it was in 2000 or thereabout, the then Government passed equal opportunity legislation to protect citizens, real whistle-blowers, not these people in hard hats and glove and goggles, not fabricators, and in 2000, Mr. Speaker, that legislation was not implemented by the then PNM administration of which my friend was a prominent member. They punished citizens. In 2008 or thereabout, do you know they came with an—no, first, it was the Privy Council that ruled that the equal opportunity legislation was lawful and should be implemented.

It took—I mean, the shame. And you know, my friend the member for Point Fortin—I am ready now. You know, my friend the Member for Point Fortin, last evening regaled us about the CCJ and the importance of the CCJ and so on to development and all this and that and so on, speaking about foreign affairs last evening, when today we have to ensure that Vice-President Biden does not come within hugging distance, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*] The American secret service is on the lookout. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: A real hugger.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So, Mr. Speaker—speaking about the CCJ and speaking with a tabanca and almost a jealousy and envy of the Member for Siparia—you know, speaking last evening, talked about the CCJ. My friend, the member for Point Fortin, will not tell the country that it was the Law Lords in England who declared that equal opportunity legislation was lawful and implementable. [*Desk thumping*] Imagine, people who go with the soubriquet, Lord Woolf, Lord Hope, these are the people who are to declare that the equal opportunity legislation was lawful so you could implement.

Mr. Roberts: Lord Bingham.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Lord Bingham of Cornhill, Mr. Speaker. No, “Lord Rowley” did not do that. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] It was Lord Bingham.

Mr. Speaker, and when it was declared lawful, do you know what they did? People forget. When it was declared lawful by the Privy Council, they brought an amendment to the Equal Opportunity Commission to punish citizens from reporting, where they introduced a fine of \$100,000 and, I think, \$250,000. So if you bring information and the information was deemed to be frivolous or does not have anything in it, you pay. So a poor citizen would have to go now and pay hundreds of thousands of dollars because they did not have the correct—they got the name wrong or the institution wrong.

Mr. Roberts: “So how much yuh fining him today? He get everyting wrong.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, that is their track record. It was left to the Opposition to stand up in defence of the people to ensure that that legislation never passed, so that today persons can make their reports—as they do—to the Equal Opportunity Commission.

So when I hear my friends opposite writing Equal Opportunity Commission, you know, the self-righteousness that borders with hypocrisy—

Mr. Roberts: The audacity.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—the audacity, that you prevented it for seven long years! Lord Bingham had to tell you it was legal, implement it, and then you are taking that now to defend yourself, Mr. Speaker, and they talk about, what, undermining state institutions. This is laughable!

Mr. Speaker, they have no credibility and authority to talk about undermining institutions. Equality of opportunity is there. How many citizens of Trinidad and Tobago had to go to the courthouse to assert their rights against the State in the period 2001—10, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Roberts: Remind us.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Under this administration, just recently in a matter, someone took the Government to court. The court ruled that the Government acted properly and according to the rule of law. Under this administration you are free to go to court; it is there for that, but the court ruled that the Government acted lawfully in doing its business.

Mr. Speaker, who could forget those public officers who had to go to court for promotion, even Ministers in the current Cabinet now, who spent their working life in the courthouse asserting their rights because they did not want to give up? And it is Sen. the Hon. Marlene Coudray, Sen. the Hon. Devant Maharaj and others, who took their time, their resources and their sweat to go to court to stand up against the dictatorship of the PNM, of which my friend opposite was a prominent part. Mr. Speaker, the radio licence, we know of that. There is no need in repeating all of this. We are well aware of it.

Mr. Speaker, you know, they come and talk about undermining the state institutions and so on, and we have had Attorneys General in this country—we have had a situation where, previously, the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago passed a vote of no confidence in a former PNM Attorney General.

Mr. Roberts: Nah!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, in 2009, you recall on July 01, lawyers voted 102 to 82 to declare absolutely no confidence—in fact, it is not, no confidence, “eh”—absolutely no confidence in the Attorney General in the wake of reports that in 2006 he attempted to push the office of the DPP to charge Opposition politicians.

Mr. Roberts: “Waaaaw!”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “Look what de motion they find themselves in. When you dig hole for other people, you fall in the hole.”

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh jump een.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is a logic. In 2009, pushed the office of the DPP to charge Opposition politicians.

Mr. Roberts: “I forgeh bout dat, yuh know.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, a former Attorney General in their administration failed to appear before the Mustill Commission.

Hon. Member: Lord Mustill.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes—when he was found wanting. That is what you call undermining the office of the DPP. That is what you call it, Mr. Speaker. This is the example. They had another Attorney General, I think early in 2002—2003. She did not last long.

Mr. Roberts: Morean?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “Yeah. She went and stop a truck somewhere in Port of Spain, from the EBC, and said de truck had important documents and blocked de whole ah town.”

Hon. Member: A garbage truck.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It was a garbage truck.

Mr. Roberts: “And dem build a pool in England.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “And she should have jump inside there.”

Mr. Roberts: “She jump in de pool in England.”

2.40 p.m.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, these are the facts and there are other issues to be raised. You talk about media. I was part of a committee—the report is

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now a public document—that adjudicated on a Motion of privileges against the editor and reporters of the *Newsday*—

Mr. Roberts: Read the minority reports.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—where they hauled editors and reporters before the Privileges Committee—“these people for the first time in dey life coming to ah Privileges Committee shaking and quaking.”

Mr. Sharma: “Like dey have fever.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And they wanted to throw them out and ban them from Parliament.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Therese Mills.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, the Editor, Therese Mills and the reporter Andre Badoo.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is right.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They had thrown him out in Cuba already, and when he came back to Trinidad, well, they want to throw him out of the Parliament then. They always had it out for Badoo and they came to the Privileges Committee to do that. It was the Member for Siparia who was a member of that committee and signed to a minority report declaring her commitment to freedom of the press [*Desk thumping*] and voting against the Government at the time to throw out reporters from the Parliament and ban them. That was the proposal, to ban them from Parliament. “If you come within the precincts of Parliament, the police could hurl you away on the order of the Speaker.”

Hon. Member: They ban Badoo.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker, well they had it out for him from then, and today they come to tell us about freedom of the press when the Prime Minister just recently I think it was—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Poor Badoo.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—announced the Government’s intention to remove criminal libel.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, to remove criminal libel, so protecting reporters.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Free speech.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Free speech. So in the fabricated emails we heard about reporters this and reporters that. This Government never took reporters to the Privileges Committee. Never! We never went and abused reporters. Whatever differences we have, we talk about it, whether you agree with us or not. We talk about that.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at freedom of information—you know, somebody told me once and I verily believe, but they did not send an email, they said if you look at the history of Trinidad and Tobago and you slice periods when the PNM is in office and when non-PNM Governments are in office, you cannot find one piece of legislation that deals with integrity in all the years that they had been in office, or anti-corruption.

In 1976 the Republican Constitution provided for an Integrity Commission. Correct?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It was left for the Robinson/NAR administration to implement a provision of the Constitution after about 11, 12 years. That same Robinson, I want to remind people, former President and Prime Minister, when he left the PNM, others will remember, they accused him of printing two-dollar bill. Anybody remember that?

Hon. Members: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “Yeah, they accused him of printing two-dollar bill and involved in corruption. When former President ANR Robinson left the PNM, they accused him of printing two-dollar bills—and corruption; then with Hudson-Phillips, the Baptist letter; then the cocaine in the tank and now today we get laptop and iPad, so we fabricate. You see, Mr. Speaker, they do not like to hear that.

The freedom of information legislations, how many times did they come? In 2003, they came here always to amend FOI to further restrict the coverage. Mr. Speaker, well let me, for the record, because I do not think everybody knows. Freedom of information passed in 1999—

Mr. Roberts: Who was in charge?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—by the United National Congress. [*Desk thumping*] They did not pass it. “Today dey writing ah set of freedom of information request”, but, we will have to provide you with the governance tools for you to do your work as well, even if you undermine.

Mr. Ramadhar: They restricted it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, they restricted it on several occasions for members of the Central Bank Board. They did not want us to know about the Central Bank Board and who was travelling—[*Interruptions*]

Mr. Sharma: NEDCO.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and NEDCO—when we asked for information on NEDCO. Mr. Speaker, what was amazing is that there was a moment in history when a question was asked in Parliament as to the recipients of scholarships and the then Minister came to the Parliament and say that is— Parliament cannot ask for that, that is private.

Mr. Roberts: Who was that Minister, boy?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Who?

Mr. Roberts: “Ah cyar say now. Where she is?” [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You know, when the same questions were asked under freedom of information, you got all the answers, you got all the recipients.

Mr. Sharma: Outside of the Parliament.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Outside of the Parliament.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But that did not happen under her watch.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The Member for Port of Spain South, I am not sure if it happened under her watch.

Mr. Roberts: But, she refused to answer.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This was the period before.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, the scholarships were before her.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The previous Minister.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The denial of information was hers. So we are very clear on that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It was the previous Minister. I think it was Minister Yuille-Williams.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, and they used the Parliament, imagine that, they use—tell me how much minutes.

Mr. Roberts: “Look ah write it down.”

Hon. Member: One more.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They used, the Parliament to prevent information from getting to the public. It is very interesting, huh. This Government used the Parliament to promote information sharing, justice, equality, equity. They used it to stop people from complaining, to stop people from getting information, to stop people from voting for their representatives. That is how they used the Parliament, and today we are called upon to answer this frivolous Motion before us on undermining parliamentary Opposition, Judiciary and DPP based upon the fabricator.

Mr. Speaker, they believe, I think, that if they do this every three months the Standing Orders has no provisions for how much Motions of no confidence you could ask. So they believe if you do this every three months we will come here and the national community will hear the bacchanal and the “mauvaise langue” and all these types of things, and it will in some way help them.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I want to tell you, the hon. Prime Minister attended a function, and in that function, in the most transparent and fair procedure ever adopted by a Government in post-independence Trinidad and Tobago, out of 10,000 names represented by numbers, we drew 500 numbers and names for land. [*Desk thumping*] They were applicants and this morning the Prime Minister drew, I think, the first five names. Which Government would have done that? “You wake up one day and you see people geving land here, geving land there and gone buildin’ and you do not know.”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Guanapo church.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah! It took us two or three years to find out about a church. There are places in Trinidad and Tobago you do not know how, when and why land is distributed. This morning citizens looked at their television and saw the Prime Minister drawing their number and they would be granted land and so on. That is the governance that we talk about.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: One minute.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is the governance. So Mr. Speaker, I challenge Members opposite.

Mr. Roberts: Fabricator.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I challenge all fabricators [*Laughter*] that take off your hard hat, your gloves and your goggles and get down to some serious work. If you have something useful to say on this Motion, say it. But, for God's sake, do not come with these kinds of—I do not want bad to use a bad word—do not come with these types of frivolous matters in a Motion and then seek to undermine the Government of the day, and distract us from doing our work, and we will not, because this morning we did our work.

So, Mr. Speaker, we hope they have something more than these fabricated emails to share with us, so that Government Members can reply to something intelligent. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: “All yuh air have nobody else?”

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Prakash Ramadhar): Mr. Speaker, I am not ashamed to tell you that yesterday when I heard what I heard in this House, I left this Chamber, I called by wife and I wept. I wept, not because of any fear other than what happened in this honourable House yesterday. If it is that the allegations are true, it is of the most heinous and grave nature. If it is that it is not, then that is equally heinous and grave.

Mr. Sharma: And worse.

2.50 p.m.

Hon. P. Ramdhar: This country will never be the same. I hasten to say that whatever we do, wherever the truth may fall, there will be those in the society who will forever be divided over this matter, and I ask the question: is this the cheap way that we do things in this nation?

I heard the Leader of the Opposition speaking on behalf of his party, speak to having obtained documents six months ago. If he for a moment believed, when he got them, that they were serious documents and important documents and real documents, then he must have appreciated immediately that those would have been obtained in breach of the Interception of Communications Act which this House passed in 2010 that says that, if you illegally obtained these things it carries a penalty of \$250,000 and three years' imprisonment, [*Desk thumping*] but that is only the very tip of the spear. It gets far, far worse.

As I say, the position of my party, the Congress of the People, is that we need to know what the truth is. We make no pronouncement, but I am deeply encouraged when the Prime Minister made it very clear that all these allegations are fabrications and I am moved as a lawyer to consider what we are dealing with here today.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard from my colleagues. These are allegations of the most serious kind, one of conspiracy to murder effectively, an attack on the Judiciary; not just murder, but murder of a reporter, an attack on the media, the two protectors of democracy in this nation: the Judiciary and a free, unoppressed and fearless media. Sat with it for six months considering whether it was serious or not. I have heard my friends and I will not repeat what they have said.

If it is that these matters were in the heart of the Member for Diego Martin West, if he believed them to be so, then he is guilty, not as a private citizen alone but as a high public officer, of a failure of duty to the people of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and that must not be underestimated, Mr. Speaker.

Had it been that he kept within his bosom, or in his back pocket or wherever, these documents and a murder or some harm did in fact come to a member of our free press, what would he have done then? If it is that he allowed in that six-month period actions to be taken to undermine the Judiciary, what would he be doing now? He has not taken a moment to tell us what action, what steps, what investigations he has embarked on or had embarked on within that period. But I want to give him the respect that I think every Member of this House should deserve, and I imagine when he wraps up he will tell us what steps he took.

Now, these are matters, as I started, of the most horrific allegations, however, what is the basis of these allegations? What we have, Mr. Speaker, is a document or a series of documents printed off emails. Let us stop for a moment and analyze what this means. All of this debate amounts to nothing if this or these documents are fabrications. It amounts to nothing in terms of the allegations made, but it damages the psyche of our people. There has grown in the society a sense amongst the common folk, of whom I am a member—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Common folk?

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—yes, common Trinidadians, that nobody cares in this nation and that the entire system is rigged against their interest, and that in politics we play games with their lives, with their future, with their very being, with their sense of intelligence. But I want to say that that issue shall mark a turning point in the way we see and do things in the politics of this country. Mr. Speaker, I say these things not from a sense of wanting to speak as a politician, but, what shall I say, from a deep sense of duty to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

You know, yesterday I was very depressed, I had a restless night, but this morning as I arose, a new dawn there was, and I started to remember. I remember where this country was, where it is and where it must go. Mr. Speaker, I have

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been a lawyer for 25 years. I have been involved in most of the cases that involved political issues. I am reminded in the year 2000, with an impending election—2000, “eh”—UNC was in Government, there were allegations of voter padding throughout this nation. The institutions of State, the police as an example, launched investigations. They used the homicide department, men and women who are supposed to be the best of the best for investigative purposes, and they arrested many of our citizens. I and a small team of lawyers realized—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: *[Inaudible]*

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—yes, the voter padding—that it was an attack on democracy because they were putting fear into the lives of many that if they should vote, if they had moved for one reason or the other, that they could have been arrested, prosecuted and charged.

I want to congratulate and I must name some of those gentlemen: Chaitram Sinanan, Larry Lalla. The reason I am calling their names—and there are a few others—is that we did it for free *[Desk thumping]* because we knew there was an attack on democracy, because if you interfere with the right to vote, then what is the purpose of an election.

Mr. Speaker, it is about time that a lot of the truths be told. Just a month ago all of the matters were dismissed. *[Desk thumping]* Twelve, 13 years they had to attend court; their lives were put on hold. The reason I want to give some detail is to show you how awful it is if you find yourself on the wrong side of those who believe they have the right to rule, and they must rule with an iron fist or to grind you under the boots of power.

Do you know the charges that were laid were under the Perjury Act, not under the breach of Representation of the People Act which was a summary offence? They chose, by whatever means, not to go under a clear law, Representation of the People Act, but under an indictable offence. Conditions were placed on the warrants that were issued.

Now, understand that were homicide officers, “eh”, investigating a breach of the Representation of the People Act that carried a fine and, you know, a possible small term of imprisonment, but they were charged under the Perjury Act which carried a seven-year term of imprisonment. I argued in the court: on what basis would you forego a clear law and go under a much more serious law? I asked the question: why was it that conditions were put that on arrest no bail unless approved by a Clerk of the Peace III?

Now, understand what this means. It means that if you are arrested on a Friday evening you cannot go to any of the outside JPs; you cannot get them to do like in most cases, come to the police station and have your bail taken. You had to go to the court because only Clerk of the Peace III—they only function in Magistrates' Courts—and they were the most senior of the clerks, for an offence of voter padding which is not really an offence, it is about false declarations under the Representation of the People Act.

We argued it under section 14 of our Constitution and said that there is a breach of the constitutional right to the equality and the protection of the law. That matter was sent to the High Court and the State never pursued it. The people had to wait for 13 years to be vindicated. I just gave you one example. I ask the question: the integrity laws which were passed in this nation, who are the only two persons ever prosecuted under that legislation? I do not have to answer it; the nation knows.

Mr. Speaker, I had the misfortune, or fortune—because every experience in life is worthy—of defending Dhanraj Singh, who was described as a super Minister under the UNC, described as one of the best performing, one of the most loved men.

3.00 p.m.

He was charged for murder, Mr. Speaker, in February 2001. I cross-examined that witness, Mr. Hypolite, for five days.

Hon. Member: Who?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: It was obvious—Mr. Hypolite. I do not know if there is any connection. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Roberts: “Nah, not Mr. Flim!” [*Laughter*]

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—for five days. It was obvious to all who heard the evidence that the case was completely fabricated. It was physically impossible, based on the evidence he gave and the forensic evidence that was observed on the scene for Mr. Dhanraj Singh to have been involved because the account that witness gave was completely without credit.

Hon. Members: “It was ah fabrication.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: A what?

Hon. Members: “Ah fabrication!” [*Laughter*]

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Strangely enough, Mr. Hypolite described himself as a fabricator. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] “That is ah fact.”

Hon. Roberts: “Look ah next one dey.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: But, the reason I am telling you all this, Mr. Speaker, as I think it is about the time that the country is reminded, when Mr. Singh was arrested that morning and taken to Port of Spain headquarters, administration building, I arrived there very shortly thereafter. He told me certain things about promises that were being made to him, that he should turn state witness, that he must then announce to the country that that entire administration, at the time, was corrupt, and that he was the bagman, and they wanted him to do that so that he would not be charged with murder, and “I talk about institutions, eh”, because in Trinidad we have low men in high office. We have institutions that we all want to respect, we all want to protect us, but no institution is better than the people who are there. That is why I speak. The need is to strengthen our institutions.

Mr. Dhanraj Singh, and it is a matter of record, was taken from that police station to the Magistrates’ Court on St. Vincent Street. I had arranged with the senior police officers for him to be driven across—the details are very important—he was taken from my presence, and he said he needed to freshen up to be taken to court. I said, “Ensure that I am told when he is going to court.” “Certainly!” Minutes passed and it went on and I am saying, “Where is Mr. Singh?” A junior officer said they took him to court already.

I rushed out. Administration building is not far from the Magistrates’ Court. “You know what they did?” They drove him from the administration building to the corner of Knox Street, took him out of the car and walked him to the Magistrates’ Court. You would see on footage that he was stopped in front of the media, there was a crowd around, he was pushed a little bit, he said nothing, and after that pause, he was taken into the court.

Mr. Singh is now dead. He has said it to me and to others, that he was told that he was required, when they stopped in front the media, to make a statement that Mr. Panday was corrupt and he used to collect money for him, and that they had organized that little group of people around there for when he made that statement for there to be a riot in Port of Spain. Look at the date! That happened in February 2001. There was an election that year?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Yes.

Hon. Member: Yes, October.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Understand what is happening here and I am speaking from personal experience. I do not like making allegations against anybody but I speak from facts and personal knowledge.

It gets a little bit worse. Of course, he was acquitted. The jury could not have waited to acquit Mr. Dhanraj Singh based on the evidence that was presented to them. A jury, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, through that jury, decided that the evidence could not stand and he was acquitted. We always knew he was set up on fabricated evidence. [*Crosstalk*]

Well, you all remember Sadiq Baksh. The Leader of Government Business just gently reminded us of that situation. Well, there it was one morning, early, an early riser, I got a phone call, “We have ah major problem. They are setting up”—that is—the message I received was that the PNM was setting up Mr. Sadiq Baksh. I say, “What foolishness are you talking?” I will not disclose who gave me that information. He said, “Listen, this is serious. We have it from the best possible sources that there is cocaine and mortars in the tank, the water tank, of Mr. Baksh”. “I was ah sceptic.” They said, “No, this is very serious.” I put on my lawyer’s thinking and I say, “Yuh know what, when you say ‘set up’, what do they mean?”

I was told by that person that the police will be coming shortly to raid Mr. Baksh’s home, search it and discover that which had been placed there. I said, “Where is Mr. Baksh?” They say, “Out of the country.” I called him, he was in Canada. I say, “Sadiq, I understand this is what is happening. Do I have your permission to invite the police to search your home?” He say, “Of course”, he has nothing to hide. Immediately, I left and went down to his home.

On the way, I called the San Fernando police—and there are very good police officers in this country—told them about what was happening, and that there was a squad leaving Port of Spain to come and raid the home and search for this. “I was ah sceptic to the end”, thinking that it was just folly, they could not be doing this—and I say, “they”, I leave it in inverted commas—not in my beloved Trinidad and Tobago.

We went, I arrived there before the police from San Fernando. When they came, I invited them in, I say, “I have spoken to the owner, Mr. Baksh, and there is information that we have that he is—illegal arms and drugs have been placed in his water tank. We would like you to search to confirm or that this is not so.” “But I was kinda joking, really.” We invited them in, the police from San Fernando.

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They came, by which time I got a call that the police squad from Port of Spain, having been informed that San Fernando police already there, turned back. We searched and, to my horror up until today, mortars and cocaine were found in his tank.

Up to now we have not had a resolution as to who put it there and why. Who put it there and why? [*Crosstalk*] We have called upon the police from time to time, “What is going on with this investigation”, because at the time, I said it was the highest crime the country had ever seen apart from 1990. Because if it is that Mr. Baksh was being set up, and the information was by the PNM—names were given to me of the high-ranking officials who were involved in that plan—information which we passed on to the police and up to today that has never been resolved, what a dangerous little country we live in!

Hon. Sharma: Under the PNM!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: What an absolutely dangerous country we live in. I hear the glee and joy in many when they speak of these emails. I want to know what the truth is. Whoever is guilty of it must pay the price, because that is the only way the country will move forward. Let the chips fall where they must.

But I heard yesterday my friend from Diego Martin Central speak about if the glove fit—no, sorry, “if the glove doh fit, acquit”, but he says the glove had fit here, and the Leader of the Opposition, when he went through that narration, “kinda link it with circumstantial evidence and some facts and all kinda mix and make ah callaloo and say, oh gawd, it fit nice”. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Take that!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Well, let me tell you something, anybody who practise in the courts of Trinidad and Tobago will tell you how that works. We call it reverse engineering. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Hon. Roberts: Reverse fabrication!

Hon. Seemungal: “He is ah geologist.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: You know all the facts!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Cut to suit!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “Yuh fix it there, yuh put ah lil circumstantial there, some hard core evidence here, ah I see witness there, and oh gawd, yuh dead!”

Hon. Sharma: Superglue!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “I defended ah woman by the name of Shakeela Sinanan years ago. In that case, we had ah I see witness, we had confession from her, circumstantial evidence, we had, um, you know, you name it! Everybody say, ‘Lord, Ramadhar, that one yuh cyah win.’ Eh-heh? You know what the most damaging evidence in this case was? A person—she had been charged for the murder of her husband, a police sergeant, in his bed with she sleeping on the side with their six-year-old child.” Men had come into the home and shot him dead, right on his bed.

3.10 p.m.

The prosecution’s case was that she had an external affair and together they had plotted to kill this man. They had paid these assassins and that she had opened the door and let the assassins in. One of those men who was charged for the murder got a deal. He pleaded guilty to manslaughter. His name was McDuff. Judge, you might remember the case too.

Mr. Volney: Judge?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Judge, yes, of course, McDuff—“and if you hear McDuff give that evidence, Mr. Speaker, like he was there.” Every single thing fit so perfectly, but it is always important to listen to find the truth.

McDuff was not an educated fella and McDuff gave an account of how he became involved with the other guys, “where dey get de gun and what time and what de lady will do and everything.” And he says: “Whilst I was walking up the steps.” That hit me like a bullet. I rose to cross-examine McDuff. “Ah say: ‘McDuff, yuh know what a parrot is?’ He says: ‘Yes’. Ah say: ‘You know at least two sides to every story?’ ‘Yes.’ I said: ‘McDuff, yuh know parrots does repeat what they are told?’ He say: ‘Yes.’ Ah say: ‘Well you a parrot?’ He say: ‘No. How you can tell me that?’ Ah say: ‘Well tell this jury, Mr. McDuff, what does ‘whilst’ mean.’” McDuff had not a clue what “whilst” meant.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Whilst he was walking?

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “Whilst he was walking up the steps”. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Now we applaud this. Had I not listened to that, had I been disturbed by one of my colleagues and I missed that, the jury, of course, we got one bit, one little string and “we pull it” and we unraveled the whole case. I almost said something else. That is the danger we face in this nation; that you look at the pretty picture and “the glove fitting nice, nice” and you miss that little thread.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: “It fitting too nice.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “It fitting too good.”

I did another case, Dunston, I shall not call his second name.

Mr. Roberts: Not a twine, not a thread.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: And you know, for I sometimes wonder why it is I did all these cases and I realize, as you grow in life, things are put for you to learn for in a moment in history—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: “So yuh could ketch fabricators.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—when you are called upon to bring all your knowledge and experience in a matter of the highest importance, so that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would have a fairer and better appreciation of what is happening in their nation.

A case before Justice Deyalsingh, a man I have the utmost respect and admiration for—Dunston was, to me, the most intelligent client I had ever had. When I tell you that man has super bright and he gave evidence in a way that was so convincing because every single thing he said fit with other things. It meshed perfectly. Justice Deyalsingh was a fella like this, he “kinda” knew who were the players and who were the fellas who were more likely than not guilty. Justice Deyalsingh told me and the jury, he said: “You know, sometimes you have to appreciate that sometimes the evidence is just too good to be true.” He also told me something that I will never forget, and I ask all who are listening to remember this, that the best place to hide a lie is between the truth, understand that, so that when it passes you, that true, that true, “the lie pass you boop” and it gone in.

Dr. Griffith: Like a sandwich.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “Boop, because you hearing truth and it sounding real, it sounding real.”

Dr. Griffith: You have to pay a lie detector.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: These are the things, these are the life lessons we must really rely upon.

Mr. Speaker, I say these things because it is not here, and it will not be determined in this room, the authenticity of these emails, but the damage has already been done.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Once it is heard, it is like an arrow that has been shot; it cannot be removed. It cannot be replaced. It has gone. Is that the intent and whatever happens afterwards, devil take the hindmost as “dey say”? Is this the launch of a political campaign, knowing that local government election is around the corner, remembering the history and the DNA and the fingerprints of the PNM of the past?

Dr. Ramadharsingh: A campaign of terror!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Is this it? Are we then to expect, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition, will he not join forces with those who marched for section 34 in the past and let us not see a repeat of that on our streets to further destabilize the peace and harmony of the nation? Do we not appreciate how many of our citizens want a stable democracy, who want an elected government to do their work undistracted by these things, as serious as they are? Yes, if it is that there is merit—and that is why I ask: what did you do in the six months? And I expect that you will tell us. For a moment I will not say that the Member for Diego Martin West fabricated this himself.

Dr. Griffith: Not by himself.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: He probably helped.

Dr. Griffith: He is not that intelligent.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: But do not be a tool and a pawn—[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Awww!

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—for the evil souls in this nation who wish to steal our democracy, who wish to steal from us our peace of mind and our right to comfort and enjoyment of Trinidad and Tobago.

This is so, so, so important. They call on the COP: what is your position? Do you know that the COP’s position is? Let me tell you as the leader of the Congress of the People. It is that we must know what the truth is. Serious allegations have been made and we know in law and in common sense if you make the allegation you must prove it. But that is not to say that it must be left only on you, Sir.

Miss Cox: “Yuh talking like yuh know de truth a’ready.”

Mr. Roberts: “Doh slap him, nah.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: I know only what I am told, what I hear and I do not take for granted, in politics, and especially from that side, anything other than with a tremendous amount of salt. [*Desk thumping*]

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I have learnt the hard way, when I trusted words said with, you know, what I thought, genuine emotions, that they believe these things and then they go behind “dey and say heh, heh, heh”. “Yuh know, we taking about”—they said that part of the defence would be, oh God, “um the PNM vote fuh it”, section 34. Did you not? That is the truth. You cannot avoid that. We all voted for it. The COP, when we realized the enormity of what had gone wrong, made a statement. The COP stands independent within the partnership because this is the best political vehicle this country has ever seen. [*Desk thumping*] We look on to each other. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: “Fix yuh weave! “

Hon. P. Ramadhar: We look at each other. [*Crosstalk*] If you fall short, the COP is this first to say it. [*Crosstalk*] This is the first time you are seeing things like this, unlike in other historical orientations that not a dog bark when they say. We believe in the checks and balances. We are not perfect. Nobody is perfect. If we should fall short, the COP may fall short, the UNC may fall short, any of our partners may do that, but when it happens we say: “Hold, yuh see dat, we do not agree with this. This is unacceptable and we want things to be reset.” Where in the world have you seen that other than Norway? When I say where in the world—

Hon. Member: PNM.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “This ever happen in the past?”

Mr. Roberts: Never!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: And we work together, committed to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, because we are bounded by the Fyzabad Accord. We are bounded by the promises we made in the manifesto of 2010. That is not a matter—[*Interruption*]

They called—[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*] “Yuh know, meh friend the Member for Port of Spain South, is easily confused when the truth is spoken.” [*Desk thumping*] Listen, they called upon the COP, what I have to say and you are hearing it.

Mr. Roberts: “Now dey doh want tuh hear it.”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They do not want to hear it.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “Yuh doh want tuh hear it?” If it is that there is fault on this side, there must be a consequence. The COP will make a decision at that point in time. That is as basic as it gets. But we will not—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: “Doh worry when dey—”

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, you have spoken already, please. Yes, continue.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You see, I am not in any way offended by them, “yuh know”. There is a sense of desperation because once each of our partners holds firm to the promise we made to our people, once we hold firm to the higher expectations to lift the politics and what Mr. Dookeran always spoke about, the new politics of openness, transparency, equity and all these things, they know that that side will never walk over on this side. [*Desk thumping*]

3.20 p.m.

The attacks that I get as the leader of the Congress of the People have been unrelenting from within and from without. I have to endure all sorts of things, but I endure it, not because I want to be political leader of anything, or anything other than a servant to ensure that my child Urvi, has a far better Trinidad and Tobago, that every citizen of this country knows that there are people who care in Government.

When I was part of the Land for the Landless this morning’s distribution, I felt so proud. When the first act of this Government—well, we have some competition now which is the first act, but the first act of Cabinet was the Children’s Life Fund. [*Continuous desk thumping*] I ask which one of you—what was your position, Leader of the Opposition, on the Children’s Life Fund? We wrote to you, the COP, when we were out of Government, out of power, out of authority and we asked for it to be put on the Order Paper for debate, \$100 million, put it please into an account and let us use the interest to save children’s lives. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, a lover of children, what did you do? Did your influence you party then to do these things? Member for Laventille East/Morvant, what was your position?

Mrs. Mc. Intosh: Leave me out of your mouth.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: I will not leave you alone! [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Because—I cannot leave you alone. You stand indicted—“doh play mas and fraid powder.” This is what is happening.

Mr. Roberts: Yes man, ahhh!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Let me tell you something. I feel unshackled, “eh”.

Miss Cox: “What you getting on so for? How yuh shouting so?” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: No slapping. No slapping.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Mr. Speaker, I feel unshackled here. You know why?

Hon. Member: Stop shouting.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: The hypocrisy of the other side has got to be unmasked.
[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Sanctimonious hypocrisy!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Sanctimonious and they condemn everything on this side. I repeat, we are not perfect, we make “ah lot, ah lot ah mistakes”, and we will pay for that.

Miss Cox: “Why yuh shouting so?”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Sorry, I do not mean to shout. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: Ignore that.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: It is not a shout, it is about rising above the din from the other side.

Mr. Sharma: That is right.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: It is really about wanting to be heard. I wish it as the will for us to be suppressed, for us to be identified, for us to be muddied, “in everything yuh do, yuh corrupt, right, yuh underhanded.” No, no, no. I believe in truth. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Member. Members, allow the Member for— [*Crosstalk*] Members, Members, please, please, please, please, allow the Member for St. Augustine and the Minister of Legal Affairs to speak in silence, please. Continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes. Yes man, yes! “Dey cyar take de truth.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: You know there are so few of you, I do not know who to talk to. [*Laughter, crosstalk and desk thumping*] What was your position? And anybody on the other side ask, feel free—

Mr. De Coteau: “Talk to de Speaker.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Mr. Speaker, I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon, of course.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Defeated already.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: What was the position of any Member on that side on the property tax?

Hon. Member: Correct.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Now, we do not have a problem against charging taxes in proper areas, but the way they were doing in when people were afraid of losing their homes, [*Crosstalk*] what was their position—

Hon. Member: Merciless.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—in terms of using moneys obtained from the property tax not for development in the areas?

Miss Cox: Mr. Speaker, 36(1); what is the relevance of property tax to this Motion?

Mr. Sharma: Nonsense! Foolish! Nonsense! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: This debate is very wide, as you would see in the first recital [*Desk thumping*] that we talk about public authorities and bodies, and he is talking about the revenue matter. So that is clear. Point of Order overruled. Continue. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: “Wow, that was ah slap in de face.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: You see, in my view, when the COP launched the “Axe the Tax” campaign, we thought that that was an attack on the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That property tax was an attack on the democracy and the democratic right of the citizens for taxation without proper representation. So that is why they will not understand what undermines democracy, when you do not have elections, “when yuh want to tax de people and take dey money and not give them the benefit of the thing”. [*Desk thumping*] What was your position on the rapid rail? Because, you know, if I remember, \$25 billion, wow, my Lord, \$25 “real” billions, “eh”—

Mr. Roberts: “Yeah man, to fabricate ah rail.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—to put “ah” railroad?

Hon. Members: Fabricate.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “Fabricate ah railroad.” I do not want to diminish the seriousness “ah this thing, but it is kind ah funny when yuh really think about it”. [*Interruption*] yes, of course, your interventions. Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Roberts: Shhh! Come on.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—the rapid rail, \$25,000 million expenditure—

Mr. Roberts: “Ah will call counsel for yuh, yuh know. Behave.”

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—the alignment of which—

Miss Mc Donald: You come.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—was not along the priority—

Miss Mc Donald: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South—

Miss Cox: Speak to D’Abadie/O’Meara, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker:—yeah, yeah, please, please—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Everyone.

Mr. Speaker:—Member, you are—I think you will have to speak later on, I believe, or tomorrow or maybe next day. [*Laughter*] What I am suggesting, take notes, and Member D’Abadie/O’Meara, I know that you have a good relationship with the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. So, if you all wish to confer, do so behind the Chair, but allow the Member for St. Augustine to speak. Continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank them. “I happy taking ah lil rest ever so often, eh.” [*Laughter*] The point I was making, the alignment of that rapid rail was not along the priority which they could put above it, or along the Churchill Roosevelt, it went right through Valsayn North, down to Central, destroying all the communities in between, into the most valuable, productive agricultural lands. [*Crosstalk*] I understand the recurrent expenditure was \$3,000—\$5,000 million a year.

Mr. Sharma: “It reach St. Ann’s?”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Now, I heard in the budget—sorry, I should not bring other things in, but there is support on the other side for the rapid rail, but I wish somebody on that side could explain to me how you could spend \$500 plus million—

Mr. Sharma: Five-forty seven.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—\$547 million—

Hon. Members: For a pre-feasibility study.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—for a pre-feasibility study. Wait! Wait! Wait! “Doh explain dat yet, explain to me what is ah pre-feasibility study”, [*Laughter*] and then pay for that \$547 million?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: The country is still—I remember we passed in Cabinet not long ago—

Hon. Member: Additional money.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—additional money to have to pay for that, a pre-feasibility study of rapid rail, and that is the vision they have for this country? What was your position, Member for Port of Spain South, \$547 million?

Miss Mc Donald: Leave me out of that.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: “You know wat dey could do with dat? Ah whole hospital”—

Miss Mc Donald: You talk.

Hon. Member: Thank you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is right.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—how many schools, Minister of Education? [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Roads.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: How many schools for \$500 million? [*Crosstalk*] Twenty schools, roads throughout the nation, [*Crosstalk*] medicine—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Beds, water.

Mr. Sharma: “Ah gym for Marlene.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—speaking of which, a great innovation, the provision of CDAP drugs.

Mr. Sharma: “Whey yuh want, ah gym or ah pool?”

Hon. P. Ramadhar: We now are hearing—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, please, please! Member for Port of Spain South and all Members, if I get any further crosstalk, I am going to invoke the Standing Orders. So I am advising all Members, hold your fire until you are called upon to

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speak. Do not disturb the proceedings of this honourable House. Continue, hon. Member for St. Augustine. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes, man!

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Mr. Speaker, so you know, these are the things that we must not be allowed to forget what they have stood for, the dangers where we are placed now and I repeat, I keep repeating, I do not know what the truth is in this; I do not know. Whatever the consequences, they must be borne.

Mr. Speaker, there is an issue I would like to raise. You know, first of all I think we must congratulate the citizens of this nation for having so far reacted in a very responsible manner to an extraordinarily irresponsible situation in this House. In other countries, the statement from the Leader of the Opposition yesterday could have led to matching in the streets—

Hon. Member: And riots.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—and riots throughout. It is to the credit of our citizens who truly want a Government that is stable, they want a country that is safe, a country that builds and grows, and they do not want the sort of “bacchanal” that we seem to be distributing from this high and honourable House.

3.30 p.m.

I want to ask the question, Mr. Speaker, that the privileges that we have as Members here—because one of our own, Mr. Vernon De Lima, his name was called in a most infamous way and he has really no recourse because of what I have written on the matter. We consider it an abuse of privilege, but there is no greater abuse of privilege than to come with a Motion of no confidence without disclosing beforehand to you, I imagine, Mr. Speaker, the nature of what we were to face because everybody sat here aghast, stunned, amazed and expected that because of the seriousness of the allegations, there would have been a serious effort to produce some level of authenticity to us. We have not seen that.

Hon. Member: It is true.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Instead we are seeing all of the discrepancies.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: And as they proceed—thank you Prime Minister—as my friends have moments to reflect upon what would have been a shock to the nation, we are realizing, slowly but surely, the inconsistencies, the inexplicable matters that confront us. Let us look, citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, Members of this honourable House, Mr. Speaker, for the “whilst”—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: For the “whilst”.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Let us look for the “whilst”—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Whilst we are—

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—whilst we are debating these matters—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Sir.

Hon. P. Ramadhar:—because if we do not—and as I say, there are persons already hell-bent on seating themselves in power before a constitutionally due election. The noises have already started about, “Call election now! Call election now! Call election now! “You are getting election in 2015. That is the check, but the perpetual no confidence Motion for those who believe that because they were voted out that they were wronged and that they must come back in at the first opportunity, wait your turn. Let us do our work. Earn your right! Do not create hysteria in the population!

If there is hard-core evidence—and I do not mean in relation to this matter—of terrible wrongdoing at the highest levels of Government, of course, that is a matter that we will all consider; but based upon what we have here, the most serious allegations and the most nefariously inadequate support for it, this is not a case that will pass a preliminary inquiry. No magistrate will send this to trial before a high court. Indeed, the very DPP to whom we have referred, this file coming before him, he will discard. He would not even send it back for further investigation; but I encourage there be further investigation because we need to be clear on this.

There must be no lingering doubt, which is the worst sort of thing in politics because they say perception is reality in politics; and my friends on the other side know full well the evil perceptions that they have created in this society; that good men and women are tarred and tarnished in their reputation by the passage of words. Truth really matters little in this society anymore. We need to restore where truth is first and foremost and even when you have truth, you must restrain yourself because the consequences sometimes have to be deliberately understood—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Augustine and Minister for Legal Affairs has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Had I known I was on the cusp of my time—actually I am done, you know. I just wanted to say that we must not forget our life experiences and for those who have had false allegations made against you, you will know what that means. Like the proverbial question: “Have you stopped beating your wife”, that is put; you cannot answer it either way—“Yes I have stopped”, or “I have not stopped.”

Mr. Sharma: “Unless is a bachelor.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. P. Ramadhar: And these are—I do not mean to make small of domestic abuse, but this is a trick question and once issues are raised like these, you cannot wipe them away. It remains as a stain on the people of Trinidad and Tobago because their elected Government, the most heinous allegations have been made against.

The Leader of the Opposition has made those allegations. I do not know where this country will go if we do not right those things now. What I do know, Mr. Speaker, is that I will be seeking your leave, as I take my seat shortly, to be off to Point Fortin to conduct consultations with the people of Trinidad and Tobago on constitutional amendments, constitutional reform [*Desk thumping*] because, you, know, this Government, contrary to what a lot of people will say—it is not just about box drain, I agree; it is not just about roads, I agree; it is not just about children’s life funds, I agree; it is not just about ensuring that our children have more schools and the health care is improved; all these are the things that we do, but my party, the Congress of the People, we consider ourselves not superior to anyone, but we have a different approach to governance.

We have seen where the politics of the past has left us and we see the need to change these things, and, with the support of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of this country, there is a reform agenda to Trinidad and Tobago. As we complained bitterly over the years about the politics and how politicians conduct themselves and how the resources are used differently and not for the benefit of the people, this is the first Government that is actually bringing procurement legislation to this nation. That will reform the way Trinidad and Tobago does business. So the allegations of corruption and so, there will be a framework within which we could deal with those who are intent on not being truthful; not being honest with the resources of our people.

We complain bitterly about the construct of institutions in this nation. This is the first Government that has a meaningful effort in reforming our Constitution, not by creating a draft document that we present to the people and say, “Listen,

this is what we are bringing”. Under the advice and with the authority of the Cabinet of this People’s Partnership Government, we have gone to the population to find out what they would like to see in their Constitution; what changes they wish. We made promises in the manifesto of 2010 of proportional representation, fixed election dates, fixed terms and a host of other things, but we did not go and prepare a Constitution draft and say, “These are the things we want your comments on”. We have gone out throughout the length and breadth of this nation, Trinidad and Tobago, and you would be impressed at the depth of knowledge and the wisdom in the contributions that have already been made.

But you know what they say, most of our citizens? They say, “You know, all this work that you are doing, you will not get the support of the PNM to change the old rules.”

Hon. Member: They know them.

Hon. P. Ramadhar: You know what they suggested, the people of Trinidad and Tobago; how wise they are? They said, “You do not need the votes in the Parliament to reform your Constitution. Give us the power of referenda first in this present Constitution and then the politicians do not get to decide what the people of Trinidad and Tobago want in their new Constitution.”

Understand what that means. The power of referenda gives the right to our citizens to decide on matters of grave national importance during election dates for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to decide and if it was and is the intent of this Government to produce a Constitution from the people, then it should not be voted upon only by Members of this House, but by the people themselves. So that these are the things, Mr. Speaker, that I am very, very, happy to be involved in to change Trinidad and Tobago, to improve it, to be a participant in a historic move from the old into the new.

3.40 p.m.

I congratulate the Prime Minister and the People’s Partnership Government for all of us working together, not always succeeding together, not always agreeing together, but with the interest of our population today and of the future close to our heart and certainly within our sight.

And as the Prime Minister always reminds us, we should put God in front and walk behind. May I say every citizen and, indeed, all of us here who are leaders, we have been given an almost divine right of authority that the people, and certainly through God, to make laws and to change the direction of our society for

a better Trinidad and Tobago, that maybe we should not just allow God to be in front and we shall walk behind, but in everything we say and in everything that we do, we keep God within us so that our actions and our words are always in accord with a higher order. With those words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Well done!

Mr. Herbert Volney (*St. Joseph*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join this debate because I want to stand first in defence of the Prime Minister. I have known the Prime Minister for the last three years, and I was shocked yesterday to hear certain conversations said to have come from emails from her web, from her email address, purporting to come from her.

What I know of the Prime Minister is that she is very short in what she says in her emails.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Very, very, short.

Mr. H. Volney: Her typical response to just about anything is “Noted”, [*Desk thumping and laughter*] and I could say here—and I say it without fear of contradiction—that what purports to have been stated in those emails, it would seem to me, in my own heart and in my own judgment, having heard all the evidence put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, is nothing more than something that comes other than from the mind of the Prime Minister.

My main concern here, as I stand and speak, is that the allegation of misconduct—what appears to be misconduct; what appears to be misbehaviour, if true, is a matter that cannot be decided upon factually by this Chamber. This is a matter that must be investigated by an independent body in order to provide that degree of comfort to the citizenry that this sort of thing does not happen in the governance of our country. I can commend the hon. Prime Minister for referring the matter to the Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*]

What I cannot accept though, Mr. Speaker—I almost called you Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, I am sorry—is that the one who is most central in these emails, the hon. Attorney General, can remain in the office of Attorney General while such an investigation, very damaging in the allegations against him, remains uninvestigated, and in the process of being investigated.

Today we are short of one Member in this Chamber who has resigned his seat. He resigned his seat after a series of events, some of which were allegations. It matters not the source, but the fact that the allegations are in the public domain,

the principle of it, Mr. Speaker, is that once allegations are there against a member of the Government, it will continue to tarnish the image of the Government and the country until such time as the allegations have been dismissed by an independent investigative body. For there to be any fair investigation, the opportunity to investigate openly and transparently must be sanitized of persons who can influence the investigation itself, and who can, through office, bear pressure upon persons who would likely come forward to give evidence in order to prove or to disprove.

Mr. Speaker, I in my heart wept in this seat 43 as representative of St. Joseph yesterday, when I heard the voice of truth in one little part of a said statement in the email purported to have been sent from the Attorney General or from one “anan” to another person, in which it is said that the writer had advised the Prime Minister to get rid of the Member for St. Joseph as Minister, but this is the part: “...but she had not yet made up her mind” or: “she said that she had not made up her mind.”

As I stand here, and as God is my witness, I can tell this country and I could tell this House, Mr. Speaker, that that was true, because up to the time at 4.30 p.m. on the day of my demise, September 20, 2012, when I left a private meeting with the Prime Minister, the hon. Member for Siparia and the then Member for Chaguanas West, the last parting words the Prime Minister had given me was that “I have not yet made up my mind.” That, if I take that contextually in the body of all the emails is what I can see in it as the face of God, the honest truth, the gospel truth. And, you see, once it is there is a semblance of truth, Mr. Speaker, coming out of that whole body that is so intertwined, a tangled web, so to speak, this warrants an investigation with the scene sanitized of the most important player in it, the Attorney General, whose job it is to defend the Constitution, to protect the rule of law and to see that there is due process of law. [*Desk thumping*]

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I did not come here to bash my Government. I could look across and I could tell you that this is the best [*Desk thumping*] performing Government I have known in this country, the People’s Partnership Government. I was glad to have been part of it. I was deeply honoured to have been there.

Hon. Member: But you would be back.

Mr. H. Volney: I seek no office, Prime Minister. I seek no office. I have been there, you know, but I am prepared to serve in whatever way that you may call upon me because you are the Prime Minister, as I stand here in your defence. But

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Prime Minister I say that we cannot have an investigation that is open, free and fair with the central figure, the Attorney General, sitting in the seat with the power to call up the head of the SSA, the power to call up the Commissioner of Police—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: I agree with that.

Mr. H. Volney:—and all that sort of thing, and the public feel comforted that there is fairness in the process.

Mr. Warner had to go because the public perception is that there were unanswered questions. Mr. Franklin Khan had to go in his day. Eric Williams, not Dr. Eric Williams, Eric Williams, the Minister of Energy, in the midst of his career had to go because there were allegations, and the only way there could be fairness is that the area of investigation must be sterile. It must be sanitized of those parties.

I now want to take the opportunity to take the Leader of the Opposition to task for some of the things that he had said in relation to section 34. I am mindful, Mr. Speaker, of the laxity, the latitude that you have given to speakers before, but I am also quite conscious that certain aspects of this matter remain sub judice, and I shall try not to carry you to the limit in exercising your discretion to allow me to speak on the subject.

However, let me say it right here in this honourable House that section 34 not only had it been debated and understood by all Members of the House, this House, and the Senate, but had been unanimously approved, and one of the provisions of section 34 was one that allowed the Minister, meaning the Minister of Justice, to by order amend the sixth schedule to include any other offence that had not been directly addressed in the body of that schedule and the Act.

All it would have taken is for the Government to have been informed by the Director of Public Prosecutions that there would have been serious consequences for public interest prosecutions then taking place and the hon. Minister of Justice would have been obligated, if not, would lose his job, if he did not take the necessary steps to protect the public interest. In that regard, I want to refer to what is already in *Hansard*. It was given in *Hansard*, and it is a letter that had been addressed by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Justice, which I then led from the front, Mr. Speaker, to Mr. Roger Gaspard, the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In that letter it is clearly stated, and this letter, February 22, 2012, signed by Melba Dedier, Permanent Secretary:

It is the intention of the Ministry of Justice that there should be proclamation of the said Act by the middle of this year, i.e. approximately around the month of June 2012. As part of the Ministry's mandate to oversee the implementation of the legislation and in anticipation of such proclamation, I would be grateful if you can kindly indicate the number of matters to which the said section 34 subsection (3) would apply, that is, those indictable cases to which the exceptions outlined in the cited section would not be applicable in respect of which proceedings were initiated but have not been determined after 10 years of the alleged commission of the offence.

In response finally to it and bearing the initials of the Director of Public Prosecutions and signed by George Busby, Assistant DPP acting, on May 22, 2012, to the Permanent Secretary, herein is what follows:

My letter of March 26, which is an earlier response, refers.

Permit me to indicate that we have now been able to quantify the number of matters for which committal papers have been received by this office for offences not listed in Schedule 6 that were allegedly committed more than 10 years ago. That number as of this date stands at 47.

What was not stated there, Mr. Speaker, to the Permanent Secretary was that there was this public interest prosecution in which there had been a committal, and that was of great public interest, not just to the Director of Public Prosecutions but to the Government. It was not named, it was not stated. No one told the Minister of Justice that there was a case to put brakes, to hold strain, and, given that response, it was then the intention of the Ministry of Justice, which I then led, to have proceeded to proclaim at an appropriate date and time the provisions of the Act.

There was on July 24—this is a May letter—a meeting referred to by the hon. Attorney General in the course of his contribution in this debate. There had been a meeting of the justice sector committee in which it was that there were four Ministers of Government: the then acting Attorney General, Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh, the Minister of National Security, the then Minister, the hon. Jack Austin Warner, the hon. Minister of Public Administration and Member for San Fernando West, the hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan, and the Member for St. Joseph, the Minister of Justice, as I then proudly was.

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At that meeting there were two issues to be discussed, two important issues, one of which had to do with the operationalization of the sufficiency hearing system and scheme of the legislation, and the second one was the issue of section 34. In relation to the operationalization of the Act and the abolition of the old preliminary proceedings system, it was agreed.

4.00 p.m.

I know that I played hardball with the leader of the Judiciary, who was then chairing the meeting, the Chief Justice, that we would work towards implementing on January 02, 2013. I there then gave the undertaking that everything would have been done by Government to ensure that all the parties would have been ready by January 02. The discussion then went into public administration matters, as regards staffing arrangements. When it was agreed between the executive of the Judiciary and the Minister and her Permanent Secretary that the process would be fast-tracked, we then moved to the issue of the appointment of Criminal Masters. This was July, for a January start-up date.

It was then agreed that with the opening the of the law term, the Attorney General would bring a measure to amend the Supreme Court of Judicature Act to allow for the creation of, I think it was, eight additional Masters to be designated Criminal Masters to operate the new legislation. That was agreed and timelines were agreed, including allowing for the advertisement to be placed for suitable candidates to apply to be appointed Criminal Masters.

Mr. Speaker, the Chief Justice had the time for his Judicial and Legal Service Commission to consider applications and to make appointments in time. Those were the undertakings that I had given to the Opposition when I was the Minister of Justice in this Parliament. I gave no undertaking that courthouses had to be built because there was no need for courthouses to be built in order for that Act to be operationalized. That is, I do not know where that came from, because when I pass legislation—when I piloted legislation, it was not to be kept on the books, it was to be implemented because that legislation needed to be changed—the old one—and new ones changed to cut the waiting time from five years to five months; and for persons who are accused of crime to know, with certainty, within five months, whether they go to trial or they do not.

Also, to be mindful that every time an accused went to court, his family was traumatized. They had to dig deeper and deeper into their pockets to pay ruthless lawyers who, just for adjournments, were charging them large sums of money; and witnesses who were traumatized every time they came to the Magistrates' Court. That piece of legislation was groundbreaking and that is why it was passed.

So that is the undertaking that I had given. The issue of me undertaking to consult with the Judiciary, the DPP, on a date of proclamation of anything, did not arise. There was the falsehood that led to my demise, as God is my witness.

I know what falsehoods can do. And that is why I say, when I hear of matters that the Prime Minister can stand and say that that is a falsehood because it would be out of character of the Prime Minister and Member for Siparia, as I know her, I stand in her defence and say that that falsehood has to be put to rest by an investigation that gets to the root of it and finds out who is doing the mischief and whether it is the Leader of the Opposition lent himself to public mischief. These are matters that we cannot decide here.

As an old judge, I know that you need to have a body that is sanitized of any political influence. I am not even sure that the Commissioner of Police, with due respect to his office—he is acting, and once someone is acting, that acting could be removed. That is why I call for something more independent than that. I may be shut down, I may be disagreed upon by the Government—I still support my Government. Look at the amount of good that this Government has been doing.

Look at this morning, land for the landless. Look at that. You know how many people were holding their hearts in their hands this morning? Look at how much work the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre has done in his three years to bring a sense of peace and calm to industrial relations in this country. Look at the Member for Tunapuna, how he stabilized the economy when it was just almost at the bottom of the cliff.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on; the Children's Life Fund. You know, look at the Member for Caroni East, computers; the health sector is being addressed; there is public service reform like never before. I could only go on and praise and say that this Motion must be defeated and this Government must serve its full term in order to deliver on the mandate of the people. I was part of the team that campaigned and canvassed and that is why I am so passionate about ensuring that this Government be given its five years to conclude its work.

Talking about undermining the Judiciary? Look at the amount of work the Ministry of Justice, under me—and now under the new Minister—has done to bring support for the Judiciary. It is nothing further from the truth than for that allegation to be made.

So as I stay here I say, Mr. Speaker, section 34 was meant to bring back balance between those people who have been languishing in prison for 10 years after the claim that they had been committing a wrong. The DPP has 10 years;

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after that it would be oppressive not to allow a man who says “I have had enough waiting” to go to the court, not wait on the DPP to file an indictment, because recently there was a case 14 years old where a young woman 18 years old allegedly—well, she was convicted for committing an offence. Fourteen years afterwards she got 20 years. She should appeal. That is not my sense of justice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a 27-year-old case—I keep referring to it—27 years old, stealing transistors. How many people in this country to day know what a transistor is? A transistor radio; or girdles? That is “ol time ting”. Women do not wear girdles again. [*Laughter*] Well, I know Mr. De Coteau might disagree with me. [*Laughter*]

4.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there must be some correlation between the commission of an offence and the sentence of the court, if there is not to be oppression, if there is to be fairness. That is what section 34 was about, to restore the balance between the right of the State to prosecute and the right of the citizen to a fair trial within a reasonable time. If I am to go, as I know very well from the case of Brad Boyce—which I embrace. I made an error. I admit I made an error. There was the Court of Appeal to correct me, they too made an error, and by the time it got to the Privy Council the case was 10 years old and the Privy Council said, “Too old to be retried.” Ten years.

So this section 34 was not about any particular persons. It was about restoring, as a matter of principle, the balance between the right of the State to prosecute and the right of the citizen to the protection of law, to be tried within a reasonable time. That is to help families to get their lives back together, that victims do not have to relive the trauma 27 years or 14 years afterwards, that the DPP would get down to doing his work in a timely way. True, his wings were being clipped, and there started the beginning of what led to my downfall. I started to clip certain people’s wings.

Why was section 34 proclaimed early? The big question everybody wants to know. Let me answer it like no one can, because I am the one who brought the note to Cabinet. It was proclaimed early because it was a stand-on-its-own provision. It was not related to the rest of the Act. It could have been implemented at any time. Given the backlog of cases in the system—and let me point out, the country does not know the truth about the backlog. There are hundreds of cases on indictment waiting to be tried. If the courts of this country were to try only murder cases already in the system, do you know how long it would take? It

would take 10 years just to try the murder cases. You have the rape, you have all other kinds of cases still to be tried. So that means to say that every year these cases get older and older and older.

That was the reason the Ministry of Justice and Cabinet approved the development of judicial centres, which should have been started already, but for my demise, all over the country, 24 new courts at different points in this country, different places, from Penal, Trincity, Sangre Grande and Carlsen Field, and the next wave would have been in Plymouth, Tobago as well as Mount Hope in St. Joseph, a master's court. That was the master plan. That was supporting the Judiciary, not undermining it.

I could talk about undermining. When I was a judge, and I always remember it, the then Attorney General under the last Government wrote the acting Chief Justice, Roger Hamel-Smith, a letter asking him to reprimand me for giving Abu Bakr the ability to go to a religious pilgrimage in Venezuela. If that was not interference, what was? Until I had to be challenged with this sort of thing—that was interference. What about with Chief Justice Satnarine Sharma? That was interference: “You either resign or I will hunt you out office, push you out of office”, the words of the last Member—the Member for San Fernando East. That is interference; that is undermining the governance of the Judiciary.

Under this Government, no way I tell you. In my years in the Cabinet, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet always made sure of the independence of the Judiciary, and did everything to support that independence. So this claim of undermining the independence, while it is because it is in the public domain and the population would want to be comforted that it is properly investigated, is nothing compared to the undermining of the independence of the Judiciary under the last administration.

Having said that, I do not speak for myself, I speak for my people of St. Joseph constituency, a proud constituency comprising approximately 40 per cent of swing voters who elected me and heartland shared between the other two.

Mr. Speaker, having said so, I ask colleagues all around to dismiss this Motion. It should not have been here in the first place, and it has brought us here at a time when there are so many bits of legislation that we have to deal with.

Having said that, I thank you for the opportunity to make my contribution, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Member for La Brea? Anybody from the Opposition to speak? The hon. Member for La Brea. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (La Brea): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I get down into the roots of my contribution, I think I have to respond to St. Augustine, because I believe in the truth. I believe that you must never use or try to compromise the sanctity of this honourable House.

I heard the Member said that he cried when he went home, and it took me back to June 10, 2009, approximately 4.00 in the afternoon. The Prime Minister then, Patrick Manning, and his team, of which I was a part, went to turn the sod for the construction of the TGU plant when there was a protest action.

A gentleman from Arima, who happened to be the COP candidate for Laventille West, who went up against my good friend, hon. Nileung Hypolite, took a big concrete block, a huge concrete block, and pounded the van in which I was a passenger, broke the glass of the vehicle and rammed the roof of the van. Subsequently he was arrested and taken to the La Brea Police Station. The person who came to his defence was the Member for St. Augustine.

Hon. Member: “De case finish?”

Mr. F. Jeffery: “It finish, yes.” If you saw the anger in the eyes of the Member for St. Augustine looking at me, you would have thought that I was the perpetrator of the crime. And I said, “Listen, here it is a man fighting for his people, the unemployed, trying to get work for them”, and the Member for St. Augustine, rather than apologizing, or as the case might be, you could watch the anger in his eyes. “I wondered, when he talking about he cry, what kind a hypocritical cry that is.”

We need to understand what is before us today.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Ooooh!

Mr. F. Jeffery: Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]* You keep quiet. You keep quiet. *[Crosstalk]* We need to understand what we have to look at.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: You are uncouth this afternoon.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: We need to understand that this Motion before us is indeed a very serious one in which we cannot sit idly by and cast it aside. I am not going to go into the thing I just want to make a point of it.

“I don’t care what you do, just deal with the problem soon. Gary has the file on her. Whatever is done, let it be done through a third party.”

“What did you have in mind? Does she drive, walk, do you know her movements. We should meet and discuss.”

Mr. Speaker, I remember an article in the newspaper in which the former Member for Chaguanas West—let me see if I get the article because I do not want to—yes. This is taken from *Express* newspaper, September 27, 2012 and let me just quote the little part:

“Warner said the articles, published on Sunday, detailed two issues, one two years old, another two months old which was not current news but was written ‘as though they happened last week’.

Asked who wrote the articles by programme host Hansley Ajodha, Warner responded that it was Asha Javeed, who left the *Guardian* and went to the *Express* ‘and you know her history...where she lives and so on...’”

“Mr. Speaker, we could never sit down—we could never sit down—and treat this thing idle.”

Miss Hospedales: That is correct.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Right? “This is a serious thing, and when we look at the article, the email, that going through yuh just cyar help go back and look and see that there is some kind of correlation”.

Mr. Speaker, I want us to understand that Trinidad and Tobago is a democracy and in that democracy we have the freedom of the press which must be respected. We have a freedom of association and so on. I just want to go back to our Prime Minister, at the then time our founding father, Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, in his Independence Day address, listen to what he said. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Cadiz: “That is before email.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “The first responsibility that devolves upon you is the protection and promotion of your democracy. Democracy means more, much more, than the right to vote...”

Which plenty people believe “dat is all what democracy is all about”, but he say it has more than that.

“Democracy means recognition of rights of others.”

Including the press; including the press. Democracy means equality of all in the eyes of the law.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: “You in a bad mood today.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Democracy means the protection of the weak against the strong.”

So not because you are a Government means that you could trample on the rights [Crosstalk] of the weak.

Mr. Seemungal: “That sound like the PNM.” [Crosstalk]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Democracy means the obligation of the minority to recognise the rights of the majority.”

Hon. Member: Good. [Crosstalk]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Democracy means responsibility of Government to its citizens, the protection of the citizens from the exercise of arbitrary power and the violation of human freedoms and individual rights. Democracy means freedom of expression—and assemble of organization.”

Mr. Speaker, if we go on now to look at Canon Knolly Clarke, you might say, listen, the father of the nation is a politician. Well a man of the cloth, this is what he had say. That is taken from article in *Guardian* Sunday, July 22, 2012, and in quoting the *Guardian* he said:

“I am concerned about the lack of democracy and the lack of the democratic process in this country...

Democracy means to me, that people are given the opportunity to benefit from the largesse of our country and one of the challenges we are facing is that too many people feel marginalised.”

Mr. Speaker, from the Member for Oropouche West yesterday, who spoke about all the nice things done by the Ministry of Works; but you know where? In UNC-controlled constituencies. La Brea got nothing. Laventille West got nothing.

Mr. Hypolite: True.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Laventille East/Morvant got nothing.

Mr. Hypolite: Nothing.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Point Fortin got nothing. And, Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on. So democracy is not at work in Trinidad and Tobago at this point in time.

Mr. Seemungal: Under PNM—

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Under the People’s National Movement—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: “La Horquetta aint get nothing.”

Mr. Roberts: “Laventille aint get nothing.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Under the People’s National Movement we showed democracy in full force.

Mr. Seemungal: “La Horquetta aint get nutten under PNM.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Under the People’s National Movement my chief whip—“ah cyar help so I could not call her name”—did three community centres in Mayaro alone.

Mr. Hypolite: That is right.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: She put in Siparia. She put in Penal. [*Crosstalk*] She also did in La Brea as well.

Mr. Seemungal: Nothing in La Brea.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: We had three under construction in La Brea.

Mr. Hypolite: Chaguanas East got more.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: On May 24, 2010 those three community centres they were 75 per cent complete [*Crosstalk*] and, Mr. Speaker, they were on schedule and the hon. Marlene Mc Donald was supposed to officially hand over those centres in 2011.

In comes this UNC Government in 2010, we are in 2013, and those three community centres “cyar finish yet”. On top of that, Mr. Speaker, the Vessigny community centre is a classic. Whereas community centres in Penal and Siparia and Mayaro “those stage they built with teak”, green heart and purple heart, in Vessigny they want to put pitch pine.

Mr. Speaker, listen, [*Crosstalk*] this thing could never be right in Trinidad and Tobago, and therefore—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: What about the Bill?

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—when we look at this whole question that they are trying to mouth we recognize that they only making joke, but, Mr. Speaker, you see, we have to understand that we have to protect this country—from this Government.

Hon. Member: From the PNM.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: We have to protect this country.

Hon. Member: From the PNM.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, people wonder about what is taking place about, you know, this Government, and, you know, how people so good, but you know, during the internal election—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Seemungal: Which one?

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—the hon.—we talking about UNC internal election and so on—when Jack Warner made that famous statement, “she cuss meh and ah cuss she back”. You remember that?

Mr. Seemungal: Which one is that?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Eh?

Miss Mc Donald: “Yeah.” I remember.

Mr. Seemungal: “No, we cyar remember that.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: That was the Member for Siparia. He was talking about Siparia West [*sic*]. “She cuss me and ah cuss she back.” “So when I hear all yuh trying to pontificate as though, well, yuh lily white, careful, because remember that statement—She cuss me so ah cuss she back.”

Hon. Member: Who is “she”?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Siparia. *[Laughter]*

Miss Hospedales: Yes. You know.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Aie-yaie-yaie. Mr. Speaker, aah.” *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Seemungal: “Like he gey up from sleep, boy.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Whew! *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. Member: “Catch yuhself!”

Mr. Seemungal: Take your time. “Yuh making nonsense.” *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, the revelation *[Crosstalk]* by the Opposition Leader has to be taken very seriously, after all that has transpired with this Government—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Seemungal: “He fabricate de whole thing.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—over its three years, and even before that. Mr. Speaker, remember the Dhansook/Franklyn Khan affair. Remember the Resmi Ramnarine fiasco. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Seemungal: “Is only one song yuh have.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Remember the state of emergency; the Anti-Gang Bill, section 34, the older Bill and remarks by the Member for Chaguanas West about Asha Javeed.

But, Mr. Speaker, not only that, we need to look at what is happening with our state companies. In our state companies we see what is happening with a lot of our CEOs and chairman. “They having a good time. They travelling. It is like a race between Government Ministers and chairman and board members to see who could spend more money, who could fly more and so on.”

Mr. Speaker, we see state resources being spent mainly in UNC-controlled areas.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Mr. Speaker, we see cases where high-ranking government officials getting 20 and 25 per cent cut up front in contracts.”

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “This is how the state resources going, and not going down to the benefit of the people in the country.”

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for La Brea, I think it is a good time for us to pause and have some tea. This sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In those emails that were presented yesterday, there is a lot of truth in those emails. And what—the reactions that we are getting from the other side are ones of frustration. Mr. Speaker, they came in on a high on the night of May 24, 2010, mouthing a set of platitudes, “We will rise. We will rise. We will rise.”

Hon. Member: We did.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Serve the people, serve the people, serve the people.” “\$20 minimum wage.” “Three thousand dollars pension for anybody once they reach 60 years and over.” And, Mr. Speaker, what we have seen happen thereafter is down the slippery slope.

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Public confidence is evaporating rapidly, and the nice life enjoyed by Ministers, they see that slipping away, that on or before the year 2015, the nice free trips, the five-star hotels, that would be no more and back to square one. Because prior to 2010, many of them were having problems making ends meet, and oh, how things have gone so nice thereafter and it seems as though what goes around comes around. It is back down to square one.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this whole question of the threat to the media has to be taken into context. You remember that one of the first things this Government did was to offer nice jobs for some of the major journalists in the country. They got nice jobs, all right. Well, as Stalin says, “More gone, more come.” So whereas they take the old stars, we see young people coming on the scene now and, Mr. Speaker, they cannot buy out all. So, because of the power of the press, it is to try to stifle them. And, Mr. Speaker, we heard our dear Prime Minister making this statement, and, one thing, I like to give my sources. This one is taken from the *Gleaner*, Tuesday, March 26, 2013, and this is what my dear Prime Minister says:

“The evidence we have been seeing is that some so-called media professionals...are not being fair to this Government.”—and—“...are not reporting on the achievements and successes of this Government.”

Mr. Speaker, put this alongside what Canon Knolly Clarke says, all right, that people are given—all right!

“Democracy means to me, that people are given the opportunity to benefit from the largesse of our country and one of the challenges we are facing is that too many people feel marginalised.”

Mr. Speaker, it says simply this: if this Government was doing so much, then the media would have had plenty things to write, but because of all the foolishness and the errors that are being made repeatedly by this Government, that the media has plenty negative things to write about the Government and we have to understand the rights of the Government.

But, you know, we had a statement being made by the then Minister of National Security where he told—where he mentions that—let me get the right thing. I do not want to say the wrong thing.

Hon. Member: Say the right thing.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, what he is saying, though, is that if you are going to report, make sure you are above reproach. We all know all men have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God and, therefore, what they

are trying to say is that nobody should report about the negative things by this Government. But one of the things I am glad for is that we have a press here that is not going to take you on. “Is now self” they are going to write and expose some of the foolishness that is happening under this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I want us to look a little bit because, you see, “they are telling you so much of things about how nice this Government operating”, how fair. And when we speak about the threats, “how they undermining the institutions”, I want to look at the Opposition, the parliamentary Opposition, Mr. Speaker, and what is happening to La Brea is what is happening in Diego Martin West, what is happening in Diego Martin Central, what is happening in Diego Martin North/East, in La Horquetta—sorry, in St. Ann’s East, in Arouca/Maloney, in Point Fortin, in Diego Martin Central, in Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, total neglect; total neglect.

Hon. Member: It is the truth; they have to take it.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I filed a question in the Parliament to the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, I am just showing how you all are undermining the parliamentary Opposition. And I asked the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs then, “Could the Minister state when the following recreation grounds would be upgraded with pavilion, bathroom facilities and water?” And I asked about Brighton recreation grounds, La Brea community recreation grounds, Lot Ten Village recreation grounds, No. 4 Road, Palo Seco, Arena village council, Los Bajos, KTO, Mr. Speaker. And you know what was the response?

Hon. Member: What was his response?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Thank you, Sir. The answer to question 6(ii) is, no”, in arrogance, and he took his seat.

Hon. Member: But louder than that.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I went on to ask him, well, when? “The answer is, no, to the question”, and he sat down. And, Mr. Speaker, and I went and I checked through from *Hansard* go right back, as far back as, you know, the record could show, and nowhere in the history of the *Hansard* have we seen such arrogance displayed by a Member of Government; total disrespect for the Opposition Benches. [*Desk thumping*] But, Mr. Speaker, they could not care less. They could not care less. They could not care less.

I have begged, I have begged. In Aripero where the Member for Point-a-Pierre and the Member for Caroni Central live, I begged them to fix a bridge, right, that

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is causing some problems in Paria Gardens, and they promised, Mr. Speaker, and they promised, and they promised. They passed money and nothing happened—total disrespect for the Opposition.

Hon. Member: He is the Opposition.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I asked again with the Minister of Works and Drainage, and I asked him when he will pave the Siparia Erin Road, the Southern Main Road from La Brea to Point Fortin, Grant Trace, Roussilac, Sobo Village Road, Sobo Circular and Boodoosingh Circular Roads. Mr. Speaker, hear the arrogance that was displayed on the other side:

“No work on the Siparia Erin Main Road has been scheduled for this or the forthcoming fiscal year.”

That is what he told the Parliament. The people—listen, if it is one community that follows the parliamentary channel is the people of the La Brea constituency. [*Desk thumping*] When they heard that reply, the next morning they blocked the road, they burned tyres, they blocked the road.

Hon. Member: Provoking the people.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Mr. Speaker, within seven days, you know de road pave.” They couldn’t pave it for this fiscal year nor the next fiscal year. They blocked the roads and the road was paved.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I listened to my Prime Minister talking again Tuesday, March 26, 2013. She says:

“Our detractors have tried to disrupt the economy by strikes and marches. Tyres have been burning all across the country’s streets. Roads have been blocked disrupting economic activity and creating moments of chaos...”

And she kind of alluded, Mr. Speaker, it is the Opposition.

5.10 p.m.

Well, the record is clear that the Member for Mayaro came in this Parliament, boast how he used to “burn tyre and block the road to get it done in Mayaro. Mr. Speaker, if it good in Mayaro, it good in La Brea.”

Mr. Speaker, look at the gravity of the situation. I asked for the La Brea to Point Fortin Roads to be paved. It is the most haphazard, the most lackadaisical piece of paving you could see anywhere in this country, and between Vessigny and Vance River no paving was done. So, you know we have a high

unemployment down there, so you know the problem with our taxi-drivers, and so on, the high cost of car maintenance and so on, things are hard, but they refuse to fix it.

“But you know what happen, Mr. Speaker? Grant Trace Road, which is in my constituency and I have asked to be paved, if even though is a UNC-controlled area, you know they fix dah one. They went and they fix the Grant Trace Road. I glad they fix it, you know, yes, because they are a part of my constituency, right, but Grant Trace Road is a village road. The main road, you ain’ want to fix dat, and then you talking about you for all de people. Which all de people yuh talking about, Mr. Speaker, which all de people?” Right?

“The Minister of Works and Infrastructure, I brought him to Sobo, and I show him some landslips in Sobo. He promised to fix it, Mr. Speaker. Two years gone, nothing has happened. I sorry the Member for Caroni East not here as well.”

Hon. Member: “Nah, we glad he leave.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Rousillac Hindu School, ah beg them.” Mr. Speaker, if you go to Rousillac Hindu School and you see the conditions under which those teachers teach and those children sit, “tears will run down yuh eye”. “Ah beg them to come and build over the school. We were told that, yeah, man, by May 2011 that will fix up. Mr. Speaker, we in 2013, not a bucket a sand yet on de site.”

Hon. Member: Not a nail.

Hon. Member: “Not a bucket ah sand.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I have asked for a number of things, a number of things, and it is not a question that you are not trying, that you are not asking, but more than that, I have been reliably informed, and I want you to see this—

Hon. Member: By email.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—“there are no email, huh, no email, right.” But, Mr. Speaker, from some top people in self-help, PSAEL, HDC, CEPEP—

Dr. Browne: What were their instructions?

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—and CISL. “You know what is de instructions?” To frustrate the requests of PNM MPs—

Hon. Member: Oh no!

Hon. Member: What!

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—what! What? To frustrate and I dare challenge—

Miss Ramdial: Mr. Speaker 36(5), 36(5), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I don't think he has made reference to anyone. Continue, continue. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Browne: I think it bears repeating. He wants to hear it again.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, people know me quite well in this Parliament. “Ah doh make idle statement and statement that cannot be backed up. Not me.” [*Desk thumping*] This Parliament, Mr. Speaker, is a sacred place, and our word must be our bond. “I not in for no skylark and no propaganda.”

Hon. Member: And make sure your leader knows that.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, when I heard it for the first time, I say, “man, dah is ol' talk, you know, people politicking.”

Ms. Gopee-Scoon: You gave them the benefit.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I heard it from self-help, “PSAEL tell me the same thing, HDC tell me the same thing, CEPEP tell me the same thing. Mr. Speaker, nah man, something ha' to be right here, something ha' to be right.” And, Mr. Speaker, I challenge anyone here, check Port of Spain South; check Laventille West; check Port-of-Spain North—

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Doh leave me out.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—St. Ann's East; Laventille East/Morvant; Diego Martin Central; St. Ann's East, Arouca/Maloney; Point; La Brea.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Port of Spain Corporation was protesting and—

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, that is the instruction they gave to the director to frustrate the requests of people from the Peoples National Movement. That is clear-cut, Mr. Speaker. “All yuh love de people, serve de people, serve de people, serve de people.”

Mr. Speaker, I will keep repeating this, the Minister of Housing and the Environment has a 5 per cent allocation to give out. I do not know if you remember recently the sextuplet husband and wife got a house and so on. Mr. Speaker, as the Member of Parliament for La Brea, I have written the Minister on eight occasions. Seven houses were destroyed by fire and one, a hog plum tree fall across a house and damage it, people homeless. I wrote the Minister, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Nothing.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Nothing, nothing, nothing.

Ms. Gopee-Scoon: Oh my goodness, but I believe you.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: But, Mr. Speaker, I read the papers. “Subsequently, and I see people in other constituencies, particularly UNC-controlled constituencies, they getting, Mr. Speaker, they getting houses. Dey cyar fool nobody. Dey not fooling La Brea, dey ent fooling Laventille, Port of Spain or anybody.”

Hon. Member: “Go down Point Fortin.”

Hon. Member: “Doh worry. Time longer than twine.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, that is not all. “You know I begging for jobs for the people in my constituency, begging, ah begging, ah begging and we have had some firms who came down or that were existing already on the estate, and I approached some of them for jobs for my people. And two of those contractors told me that they have instructions; just take a token from La Brea, right, but make sure you take people from we area, in other words, from Penal, from Siparia, from Fyzabad and so on, but just take a token from La Brea and so on. The excuse is that La Brea people ent skill and all kind ah ting.”

“Well, Mr. Speaker, I putting you on notice, three weeks from today, this Member of Parliament would be mobilizing a team of people, and we going from village to village, [*Desk thumping*] registering every single unemployed person in the La Brea constituency, from Aripero to Salazar Trace; from Quarry to Erin, from village to village, so we will know who unemployed, dey skill, dey age, et cetera, because enough is enough. [*Desk thumping*] Enough is enough.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You want to represent effectively.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Enough is enough.

Hon. Member: Three years too late.

Hon. Member: Seven years you in the Government, you know.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Quarry, you better keep—I mean, Fyzabad, you better keep quiet.”

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no, address the Chair, please.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, in the case of the so-call environmentalists, some of them opposite, they opposed the Alutrint smelter. “Fine, okay, that good, that gone. They came and they make promises upon promises upon promises to

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the people of La Brea knowing full well that nothing coming; nutten coming. And I ask the question, why dey doing that? People unemployed, children cannot go to school, parents, dey lip dry, Mr. Speaker; light bill cut because they cyar pay the light bill; water rate, dey cutting water, Mr. Speaker. Dah is in La Brea. Why? Dey cannot get employment.”

5.20 p.m.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “They get food card? They get food card?”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: The food card is a next story. Mr. Speaker, I have told them, three years of suffering but in two years’ time there will be joy. [*Desk thumping*] There will be joy. They could continue to frustrate the people of La Brea and the other PNM constituencies, but “time longer than twine”. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: “Time longer than rope.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: If in Fyzabad they say rope, no problem.

Mr. Speaker, recently I had a meeting in my constituency and I asked, because I really want to ask that question: tell me something, in April—because that was in April I asked the question. April 2013, I raised the question—are you better off now that you were in 2010?

Hon. Member: “You better off.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Meh ear bell nearly burst”!

Dr. Browne: “You better off”. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin Central and Member for Couva North, show some more respect for this House, especially when a Member is on his legs. I say no more! Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, “meh ear bell nearly burst”, a resounding “No”. I went down to Point Fortin, Techier to be exact, by the recreation ground, I asked the same question—“No”. I went Quarry, outside by the Catholic church, I met a young man, I asked him. The answer again—“No”.

Mr. Speaker, you could disregard it at your own peril.

Mr. Sharma: They said no to you. “You ain ask nobody in Fyzabad.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Fyzabad will get a new MP just now, doh worry.” [*Laughter*] “Fyzabad will get a new MP just now.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the signs are there. In the three years, 2010 to now, 2013, I have never seen so many people from Fyzabad come into my office. Careful! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: I sending them.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Good representation, Mr. Speaker. “I not turning them back. If even you come from Oropouche and you come to my office, I attend to you because you belong to Trinidad and Tobago.” PNM style. [*Crosstalk and desk thumping*]

Dr. Browne: The PNM way.

Hon. Member: It is a pity you did not know that.

Miss Ramdial: Oh, come on.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: All I am asking, Mr. Speaker, is, let us try and think seriously, because what is before us is that Motion which we must never lose sight of, because the future of Trinidad and Tobago is at stake. When threats are being made, whether veiled or overt, we have to take stock.

You see, Mr. Speaker, “they bad talk the PNM”—

Dr. Browne: They love to do that.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: —but from 1962 up until the PNM demitted office, Trinidad and Tobago was a nice place.

Hon. Member: Oh, come on. Cool it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: It still is, a nicer place.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, when you look at the education system, oh, many of those who sit down on the benches, if it was not for the PNM they may not have been here.

Dr. Browne: Amen. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Tobago West.

Dr. Browne: The furture of the children in their bookbag.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, we always boast about interracial solidarity, how we live together as one, and they tell you that one of the largest percentage of the population now is the mixed population. This is one of PNM’s urging. We all try to incorporate all and live together as one, not divide.

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[MR. JEFFREY]

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That is why, Mr. Speaker, we could have gone to Point Lisas and put down the largest industrial estate in the English-speaking Caribbean, because “we wasn thinking PNM, we was thinking Trinidad and Tobago”. [*Desk thumping*] We could have gone to Siparia and put down a health facility, “we wasn thinking about PNM, we thinking about Trinidad and Tobago”. [*Interruption*] We went to Mayaro and put down community centres and Penal and Siparia because we were thinking Trinidad and Tobago, and all I am asking is, why can we not return the favour now? Mouthing platitudes will not save you.

Dr. Browne: Take notes, please.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Serve the people! Serve the people! Serve the people! “ “We will rise and we will rise” and you smile and so on. [*Interruption*] But, you know, the Member for Chaguanas West made a statement sometime ago [*Interruption*] and he talks about, you know, smile, how smiles could be the most deceiving, and, Mr. Speaker, that sounds so true. That looks so true.

Dr. Browne: “They lurking outside the door.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Because, Mr. Speaker, rather than try and look at Trinidad and Tobago, take your criticisms. Right! “You want to hound down de press; all kind a threat going down to the press and so on.”

“Mr. Speaker, I could tell you something, some of those people in the press is now self they go write. Now self they going to write. You know, like you have a dog sometime and you get the dog real work up? Now self he go bite you. [*Interruption*] The people now fed up. They fed up with the threats being made by this Government. Similarly, the people in the constituencies and them, they getting crazy; they getting riled up. You know why? What this Government is happening. Why the Ministers and them travelling, and, Mr. Speaker, I challenging them, you know.” In any three-year period from 1962 to now, which Government has travelled the most? [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Browne: Not even close.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Which Government has travelled the most? [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, any five-year period under the PNM, I am certain the Ministers travelled less than in the three years under this Government. “Having nice time; five-star hotel, and listen, they eh going Grenada and St. Vincent, you know. [*Crosstalk*] No, no, no; Singapore, China; Sweden—

Dr. Browne: Japan.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—Norway; Japan.” Have fun. [*Crosstalk*] Have fun. Have fun. Have fun, man. Have fun.

Hon. Member: Dubai.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Dubai. “All yuh travelling, man. Travel.” [*Crosstalk*] But, Mr. Speaker, “I am very mindful that when people dying they does travel.” [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mrs. Thomas: Say it again. [*Continuous crosstalk and laughter*]

Dr. Browne: You have them on the ropes.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Just repeat it.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Mr. Speaker, we laughing, but this is real serious. It is real serious because it have a lot of unemployment in this country and poverty.”

This morning, Mr. Speaker, before I came here I went to a house in La Brea by the fish market. I am sorry that the Member for Caroni Central is not here to go and visit that gentleman’s home and see what poverty is like. But, under the PNM we had the Alutrint that was under construction; we had plants in operation in La Brea; things were looking up in La Brea; houses were going up. We had a housing development under construction. Poverty was not that bad.

But since this Government came in, they came in with a distinct policy to frustrate PNM MPs.

5.30 p.m.

Dr. Browne: Guava season for the people.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: But, Mr. Speaker, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. [*Desk thumping*] If ever there were 12 strong MPs in Trinidad and Tobago on the Opposition Benches, we have them now. [*Desk thumping*] We remain resolute. We have our political leader, and I wanted to make that point as well, we stand full square behind our political leader. [*Desk thumping*] “All yuh could try wha all yuh want”, our political leader is the Rt. Hon. Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Which one.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Put in yuh pipe and smoke it.” [*Desk thumping*] We are rallying behind our political leader, and all those who are trying all kinds of things and so on, it would not work. It would not work. [*Interruption*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I trust that those opposite—because one of the things, coming back to La Brea, you know we have all these things about the environment.

Miss Ramdial: Yes.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Good. I have no problem with that. I asked for tourism development in La Brea, right. We have no emissions and so on.

Mr. Cadiz: Thank you, I am glad you bring that up.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: But, Mr. Speaker, you know something, “nothing eh happening in La Brea, you know. [*Laughter*] Nothing eh happening.” I asked, I raised the question, and I think the Member for Chaguanas East, I hope you will forgive me for that, but that is the truth, I raised the question about the La Brea Pitch Lake.

Now, tourist, one of the major areas, one of the main areas that people come to La Brea for is to visit the Pitch Lake, right. So, as a tourist attraction, the La Brea Pitch Lake is it, but the condition of the La Brea Pitch Lake is in a mess. Moss in the water, overgrown vegetation, and all I am asking, listen, give us two CEPEP gangs in La Brea, station them there. You will be doing two things: you will be keeping the lake clean and providing employment. Mr. Speaker, three years now I am asking for that. The bad thing about it is, under the PNM we were just about to do that. “Election call, we lost election and in comes this UNC-led Government, and, nothing, nothing, nothing.” CEPEP contractors come from outside, even though we have people here, contractors from La Brea who could do the work, but you are bringing them from outside. “What you expect the people from La Brea to do?”

“But dey mamaguy we, and what they tell us? Cruise Ship coming to La Brea.” To do what? What they coming to see, the road bad, the drainage bad, the beach in a poor state. What they coming to see in La Brea?” If they were to pump some money and do some infrastructural work in La Brea, Mr. Speaker, will help the unemployment situation in La Brea. “But dey eh care.”

Hon. Member: “They fooling yuh.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “They eh care at all about addressing the needs of the people of La Brea.”

Dr. Browne: They are uncaring.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: So this thing about environment, throw that through the window. [*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: “Doh come with that.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Throw that through the window.

Dr. Browne: That whole Ministry is in—

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I have already made a request—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: Yes.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—as far as drainage is concerned as well, right, water piling up in my constituency in the coffee in La Brea—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: And it will be dealt with.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—and I am begging them to fix it, to see about it.

Miss Ramdial: We are going to fix it.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Thank you very much. [*Shakes hand with Miss Ramdial*]

Miss Ramdial: You are welcome.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Dah why yuh sitting dong behind.” Very good.

Hon. Member: When, when, when? [*Laughter*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Ask for a timeline.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Could you tell us when?

Miss Ramdial: I will inform you later on.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Okay, all right, but—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “How many bus you get?”

Mr. Speaker: Ignore, ignore Fyzabad.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Okay, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*] Nobody in La Brea expects the road in La Brea to be like on the Churchill Roosevelt Highway. We do not expect that. All that we are asking for is regular maintenance; regular maintenance whereby you cut off the humps, you fill in the hollows and so on, and people in La Brea comfortable. We are not asking for much. All that we are asking for is due attention and recognize that people of La Brea have sacrificed for this country. The first industrial town in the English speaking Caribbean was La Brea. We took Trinidad and Tobago on our shoulders.

Dr. Browne: We have history.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: The oil from La Brea helped finance the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. We provided for the country. The pitch was used to pave all those roads in Port of Spain and so on. And you know what happened? Those workers were paid very small wages. We did not mind. We thought about the national interest.

Dr. Browne: Patriotism.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: What happened now, Mr. Speaker? Now that those people are in the winter of the years, they want to throw them off.

Dr. Browne: A lot of talented people came from La Brea.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Now, Mr. Speaker? That could not be right. That could not be right. The people in La Brea deserve due care and attention. Just like in other PNM Constituencies, that is all we are asking for.

Dr. Browne: Fair is fair.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Treat us equally. Treat us equally.

Hon. Member: Yeah. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And I challenge this Government, tell us—I could tell you, under the PNM we built the Point Lisas Industrial Estate in UNC heart land.

Dr. Browne: That is correct.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “Tell meh, under this UNC-led administration which PNM area all yuh help. Tell meh. Tell meh what all yuh did in Port of Spain South.”

Dr. Browne: Siparia.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Laventille West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Port of Spain North.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Port of Spain North, Diego Martin West—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Let us not go Diego Martin.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Diego Martin Central, St. Ann’s East, Arouca/Maloney, Point, tell us. “Not one thing all yuh did in those areas. So when yuh talking about caring, careful what yuh saying.”

Hon. Member: Banga season.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: The People’s National Movement is the caring Government—[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—is the caring Government including Tobago West. “We help you. We help you.”

Dr. Browne: That is why we get 12 seats in Tobago. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I want us to understand that, let we stop de ole talk and let us understand that something serious going on here. And what we are asking here, let us try to deal with the country. You all have been in power for three years and for the two years try and do some good, nah.”

Hon. Member: We are.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Try and do some good. “Yuh worried how the press only talking about—dey ent talking about what all yuh doing, because all yuh ent doing nutten, so dey ent have nuthen to report.” [*Laughter*]

Dr. Browne: Nothing good to report.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: That is always the truth, “you all not doing anything”, so they have nothing to write about.

Hon. Member: Only hosting functions.

Dr. Browne: And emailing.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Right? Mr. Speaker, I will just make one statement with the Judiciary.

Dr. Browne: What has this nation done to deserve this?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: This is taken from *Newsday*, Tuesday, September 18, 2012, and I hope no threat is being issued to Jada Loutoo, but this is what she says, “and she quoting, eh”:

“THERE is governance problem in the country and urgently required are the instruments of control to develop successfully, Chief Justice Ivor Archie has admonished.”

Dr. Browne: Repeat that, repeat that.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “THERE is governance problem in the country and urgently required are the instruments of control to develop successfully, Chief Justice Ivor Archie has admonished.”

Mrs. Mc Intosh: When was that?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: That was September 18, 2012, page 5 of the *Newsday*.

Hon. Member: Opening of the law term.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Opening of the law term.

Hon. Member: There you go. There you go.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: If it is one institution, Mr. Speaker, that should have no problem, it is the Judiciary, and it is sad to hear that the CJ is talking about resources and he mentions:

“Of the 730 contract positions 227 are vacant...”

And of the 1,302 established posts, only 517 are permanent.

5.40 p.m.

“Mr. Speaker, if you want to get the best out of the workers, you have to treat them good. You have to treat them good.”

Dr. Browne: Motivation, motivation!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: “You have to treat them good”, and I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that we have to make sure that the Judiciary is well taken care of. Listen to this, Mr. Speaker—and I am going to page 23:

“...highly experienced and sometimes critical persons who have had the benefit of training and experience within the Judiciary are suddenly plucked from their posts and sent to Ministries and Departments, without consideration of the impact on our organization.”

That is the Chief Justice talking. Undermining is taking place, Mr. Speaker. We have to make sure that the Judiciary is fully staffed; that they have a well-trained staff to perform the role because one of the greatest institutions—most important institution in this country apart from the Parliament, Mr. Speaker—is the Judiciary.

Dr. Browne: Bring back Volney.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And we need to understand, Mr. Speaker—and I wonder if it is not because of that—

Hon. Member: “Doh go there.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I would not go there.

Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Member for St. Joseph made his maiden speech—I would not go into the substance because I think it was unfortunate—he made a statement, and I was shocked at the response of the Prime Minister. After the statement was made, there was no condemnation by the Prime Minister, and it took some days after the legal fraternity and our press started to agitate. And what happened, after many days the Prime Minister, with a little brush on the wrist of the Member for St. Joseph, said, “It was unfortunate and unnecessary”—end of story. You know? “Unfortunate and unnecessary.” [*Gestures with body*]

Mr. Sharma: Show us again. Show us again. [*Laughter*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious thing, whereby you try to impugn something against the Chief Justice and rather than issue outright condemnation, all you say, “It was unfortunate and unnecessary”, and move on. Mr. Speaker, we have to have respect for the Judiciary.

I want to, before I close, congratulate you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday when the sanctity of this Parliament was almost compromised by some of the utterances on the other side, I saw you, Mr. Speaker, stood up and put an end to it and I think you deserve congratulations for your stand in that area.

In closing, I want to ask those opposite that those emails are not to be treated lightly—not to be treated lightly. You may have missing a “t” or a dot or a comma—

Hon. Member: Well it is wrong! It is wrong! [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: They were typewritten.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] it is the substance that you have to consider. Ignore it at your own peril. [*Crosstalk*] Ignore it at your own peril! Laugh! Who laughs last would laugh the best.

Dr. Browne: Investigation time.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: They were cut and paste.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Today is just the second day with this thing, and you watch and see how John Public would react. Many of those people whose names are mentioned in that email would have spoken to other people and you would have had verification. I know that there are Members opposite who really “eh” know about the substance of the email until they were told, but some know, and some know, Mr. Speaker, that “it correct”! [*Desk thumping*] Some know “it correct”! “So those who are innocent, Mr. Speaker, you know, I could empathize with them, but there are some of those opposite who know that the substance of the email accurate.”

Threats were being issued, worries by what is taking place in the country. “Hear what a government, almost like the NAR, coming with plenty, plenty support, serve the people, place everybody—you know, everybody in yellow and so on, and, Mr. Speaker, in the twinkling of an eye, or as the people would say, before you could say Jack Robinson, all the confidence gone; all the popularity gone.”

So, Mr. Speaker, “yuh know what happening”? “They frighten! They frighten because they know they going back to square one, and like the old saying goes, the PNM has started to climb back the stairs to go back [*Desk thumping*] to rescue this country from the decadence of the UNC-led Government.”

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

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, this is the second evening of a debate on a Motion brought—the fourth Motion, in fact—from the Leader of the Opposition within our three-year period of governance as a People’s Partnership Government, and you have to ask what is the intent of these frequent no-confidence Motions coming with such regularity, over the last two years particularly.

If we go back, October 26, 2012, that was a Motion against the Attorney General, and on March 02—before that, sorry, March 02—no confidence in our Government and the Prime Minister, and before that again, on April 26, just a few months ago, a no-confidence Motion again on the Member for Chaguanas, and

today is a no-confidence Motion again—yesterday, May 21, just three, four months after, one after the other—a Motion against the Government in terms of the protection of the sanctity of Parliament and lawfully constituted institutions and public bodies which are fundamental to our democracy and must be protected at all times.

Why have these Motions come about? It was his Prime Minister at the time, when he sat there in government, the Member for Diego Martin West—his Prime Minister told him, “You remember the pact that we made, that we go for the head, and we must decapitate the head.” And they, while they were in government, sought to decapitate the heads of the Opposition and those around them, and this is the same thing he is coming back with now—possibly having learned from his former Prime Minister—that he wants to decapitate the head of the leader of our country and those that he feels that he can do it one after one, and next after next he will weaken the Government and we will crumble and fall. But my dear Member for Diego Martin West, this you will never see.

You will never come back into the annals of governance in this country, whatsoever. The People’s National Movement will never see that and we will work to ensure that you do not come back into government.

[Member for Diego Martin West leaves his seat]

Do not run again. You are running and hiding again? Stand up and listen to what we have to say.

Mr. Speaker, there is another mischief in these Motions. Is it to stultify and stop the Government on its progressive path of working for the people of Trinidad and Today and enacting the laws and legislation which are necessary for our democracy, which they are criticizing us for?

5.50 p.m.

They are trying to criticize us for moving against the fundamentals for the continuation of democracy in our country and the protection at all times, but they are deliberately stultifying the progress and the growth of the Government, and the work that the Government has to do, and has been doing, and will continue to do. But they are making every effort to do that. So they want to destroy the character and assassinate people’s character one by one in this Government, reduce the majority, try to make us weak, and the other, prevent us from doing the work that we are supposed to do, Mr. Speaker.

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The other issues—they know that we have a May 25 third anniversary, and we are going to tell the country on Friday, and many of my colleagues already spoke, and they will continue to tell this country the work that we have been doing as a Government and that we will continue to do. But in no way the 25th is our big day—

Hon. Member: Twenty-fourth.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—May 24, when we will amass thousands of supporters who know that we have been working for them and for the benefit and the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, they will be there in their thousands, as have been on the second anniversary and the first anniversary, when we account to the people for the work that we have done and we continue to do.

But let us come now to this question of the emails, or the purported emails. I picked out the newspaper clipping on the *Express* today, Section 34 email trail, and let me go into it.

Mr. Speaker, these emails are nothing but flagrant or blatant fabrication designed to create mischief, unease and taint the image of this Government and this honourable House and country. The sad fact is that the Member for Diego Martin West and Members opposite are playing on the short-lived fascination of this disgusting, cheap and patently false conspiracy theory at the expense of our country's credibility.

What they do not realize, Mr. Speaker, is that ultimately, as have been proven with every frivolous, cheap, false allegation that they have made, this will backfire on them. It will backfire on the Member for Diego Martin West, Mr. Speaker, and his image will continue to move precipitously down the gutter, and that is the person who is aspiring to be Prime Minister today, to bring false and blatant fabrication designed to create mischief and unease in this country.

While I sat here and heard their unbelievable claims for which they did not even bother to offer proof—no proof was offered, Mr. Speaker—falsifications. Imagine coming to this esteemed House, this sacred place of our democracy, where we are entrusted with the duty, the hallowed duty, to speak the truth under privilege and not bringing a shred of proof for his scandalous, false allegations.

This morning I was looking at television for a short while and I believe, if I am not mistaken, I saw Sen. Faris Al-Rawi this morning on CNC3 say that the Member for Diego Martin West knows who gave him the information. He must tell the country—the Member must tell the country who gave it to him. Did he check it out before coming here to make these statements in Parliament?

Mr. Speaker, remember last year's Motion when they apparently wanted to tell the people someone changed their name by a deed poll? That was the real mischief in last year's Motion. So they had to bring a Motion of no confidence in the Government to do this. Their history of wasting Parliament's time—the same hon. Member claimed that the person who changed their name was hidden away working in a government Ministry. I want to remind this House, the Member for Diego Martin West said that the person was working at a Ministry. Headlines ensued and then it was denied. He offered no proof.

The same Member for Diego Martin West, that is his history, habitual. No proof he offered, but makes wild allegations, uttering frivolous, scandalous fabrication time and time again under the cover of parliamentary privilege. That is the pattern of the Member for Diego Martin, frivolous allegations, scandalous allegations, fabrication time and time again.

Mr. Partap: The DNA

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is in the DNA, total falsehood, deliberate mischief, shameful utterances from the Member for Diego Martin West from a self-styled leader. God help this country, Mr. Speaker, if by a miracle that Member will ever see the reins of power in this Government. God help this country. He brings it under the cloak of parliamentary privilege.

I remember the Attorney General asking him yesterday, confronting him, "take your information that you are bringing to this House today, bring it outside." Let us hear it outside, and I bet you he will never take it outside because he knows it is a fabrication—and when you think that decency should prevail here, the same scandalous trumped up, fiction, fairy story and cock and bull stories time and time again by the same Member. How often must we subject ourselves in this House to that type of scandalous behaviour? For the umpteenth time, Mr. Speaker, they ended up with egg in their face, and again this time it will be the same. Let us examine the reasons for this.

Mr. Speaker, we all live in a most technologically advanced age of any time. In this era we can hack into emails, phones, home phones, we can falsify everything, and the people who introduced these illegal activities to our political landscape, are they the PNM—we ask—the regime of which Members opposite belong to? I am asking the question.

So we know that email addresses can be fabricated, duplicated, hacked into, falsified and anything goes on the Internet. The responsibility thus falls on us as Members of this honourable House, to ensure that when we get information, we

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have evidence that can withstand the test of any probe, investigations or inquiry. I dare ask the question. I am certain and positive that his production here, that he brought into this Parliament, cannot withstand that inquiry and he will be found wanting. The Member will be found wanting.

Mr. Speaker, we all have been Members of Opposition. We exposed a lot of PNM corruptions and ills in this House when we sat opposite, but we always had documents and reports and concrete documents to substantiate what we were saying. We did not go like them, cannot have any proof to anything and making falsehoods and fabrications repeatedly, recurringly.

Many times we got information over the Internet, but we never used them because we know that they cannot be relied on because they cannot be proven as factual or truthful. That can never be proven to be factual or truthful, Mr. Speaker. Why are you trying to fool this country? Why are you trying to fool the people again and again? What is your motive? “Yuh so hungry for power to show that you are Leader of the Opposition and you want to be Prime Minister, but not in that method.” Seek a decent way of doing things, not in a surreptitious manner.

So let us go on to these emails. The Member said he received them from a whistle-blower. I ask him to tell this honourable House in what form did he receive these emails? He never said so. And from whom? And tell it to the police too. He must tell it to the police in their investigations. Because our Prime Minister, not him, not the Member for Diego Martin West, our Prime Minister has taken the initiative to send this to the police for criminal investigation within a short few hours after hearing about it. But he had it there for six months. First of all, he should have gone to the police and reported it.

6.00 p.m.

I ask: in what form did he receive the emails? Because the Member never said if he received them as hard copy printouts or forwarded electronic copies. Which way did he receive them? He did not give the House the answer. If he received them as hard copy printouts, then, of course, they were fabricated and made up. If he received them as forwarded emails, they were also fabricated and made up, and this is where a digital trace can be done easily, Mr. Speaker, which leads me to my other point.

Upon receiving these emails, as mentioned by my colleagues previously, why did he take six months to make them public? He said he wanted to check them out to make sure, but he never said how he checked them out to make sure that they were in fact real. Did he in fact check them out? He must tell the country this. If

you did not check it out, you will bring something to Parliament without checking it? How did he check it? So please tell us how he verified that these falsehoods and fabrications became true. How did he bring these falsehoods and fabrications to make them true? He must tell us that, because it is very easy to pick up on emails. It is so easy to go to the police cyber unit and they will tell you what IP address it came from, but he chose not to do so.

Mr. Speaker, we have so many IT companies in Trinidad. I call on the Member to say if he enlisted any one to verify the IP addresses of these emails. So, the question is: why not give it to the police; and why not run a simple IP trace? Because he knows they are malicious fabrications. They are malicious fabrications and it is a recurring malignancy of fabrications that we are experiencing in this House from the Member for Diego Martin West; Mr. Speaker, time and time again. It is becoming malignant like a cancer, a cancer of fabrications on a regular basis coming from the Member for Diego Martin West—and I will show a little more later—designed to trick the population by a desperate, irrelevant—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Opposition.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—Opposition, who have now resorted and continue to resort to mischief, downright falsifications.

Mr. Speaker, the entire country and the international community know when they were in Government, they resorted to spying and illegal interception of anyone and everyone they perceived as enemies. The country heard when we came into power how Nigel Clement and his team at the SIA were spying on everyone, and documents were collected that they had five million sitting in an office somewhere to help to pay people to spy on others and to bring mischief back to the Prime Minister at that time. The whole country knew it and they ask about something.

“What qualifications Nigel Clement had?” My understanding, he did not have O’levels when he was head of the SIA under their watch; and they want to come and accuse this Government of a number of things. Their own political leader was spying on everybody and the world knows it. They should be ashamed of that, Mr. Speaker, and they want to come and talk about emails, and this is the email that you get, and this is the email we get. What about the thousands of emails that their former Prime Minister received and has in files about everybody? There are files on all of them, probably stored in the home of the Member for San Fernando East. Nigel Clement found guilty and had to be removed.

Miss Hospedales: That is not true.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That not true. The difference now, Mr. Speaker, they cannot spy anymore—they probably do—trying—so they are doing the next best thing: making up, trumping up stories, pieces of fiction, novel fiction. Mr. Speaker, if we read these emails, fake addresses in some instances, I must say it reads like a Hollywood D-style movie.

Mr. Indarsingh: What rating would you give them?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The scripting was unbelievable—

Mr. De Coteau: One star.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—clearly written by an amateur; aspiring moviemaker from that side and has no comprehension of how to write anything resembling fact or even believable, credible fiction; an amateur writer, Mr. Speaker, trying to bring pieces together, linking event and trying to bring together pieces of emails correspondence to match the events, reading the newspaper, seeing what the events of the day were and bringing emails to look at it.

Let me tell you all something. Study the language in these fake, fabricated, malicious falsehoods. I do not want to say “lie”, Mr. Speaker. You call email proof, and hear me once and for all. Nobody on this side, and possibly in Trinidad and Tobago, talks like that, what is on this. Nobody! You want to dance? Then let us strip these emails to the bone. Let us go.

Mr. Speaker, we are brilliant people on this side and my colleagues there, and, unlike their leaders, we do not dissolve Parliament on the eve of any no-confidence Motion. We stand and we say the truth and we defend the truth and the truth will always set us free; no falsehoods. We have done it once, twice, three times, and this is the fourth time we will defend and trump and overcome all these negatives that they are trying to portray on this Government.

Mr. Speaker, hear these words:

“My lady, please relax...

We will soon chat.”

the bad scriptwriter wrote. We call each other to chat. We do not need to go on that—“My lady”. Every one of us on this side here, we do not call the Prime Minister “My lady”. We say “Prime Minister”. We have the respect for our Prime Minister, no matter where we are. It is not a style of anyone here to say “My lady”. So that in itself tells us this is falsehood. We do not announce our intentions in fake British 19th Century language to do so. This is fake British 19th

Century language. You notice the language in these fake documents? They are all proper English; not even the regular abbreviations that everybody else uses—laughable lies, Mr. Speaker; falsehoods. Hear a next lie: “Worry not again.” Who speaks like this? We commonly say: “Doh worry nah. Doh worry.”

Ms. Cox: “[*Inaudible*] doh write dat.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Everybody here in Trinidad and Tobago says this. Hear another one: “I scoff that it is too much.” “Where this English style come from?”

Let me offer a little hint to the bad Hollywood wannabes, the wannabe writers who wrote the script for you all. Who wrote script for you all? People generally write emails and other private correspondence in the same manner in which they speak. No difference! The way you speak, you write your emails, and all of you know that and all of you must appreciate that.

Hon. Member: Not me!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Everybody knows the hon. AG’s style of writing is very well known to the public. Who can ever believe that he speaks like this? “He does not scoff and advises to worry not.” He speaks like a true educated Trini, Mr. Speaker. He is a Trini. [*Crosstalk*] We did not grow up in Jane Austen’s England. We have no reason to write like this. But what is really interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that in the following emails the PNM scriptwriter then diverts from his own tone in the script, British tone, and put some harsh expletives in the same character— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker—[*Inaudible*] There is no PNM scriptwriter, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: This is a debate on a substantive motion. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Member: Very good

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They must know who their scriptwriters are. [*Interruption*] No holds barred. Harsh expletives came following that, in the same character he made up called, anan@gmail.com.

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Mr. Speaker, almost 28 of these emails have anan@gmail.com and my colleague, obviously, alluded to the fact that you have to have six characters before you get an email address from gmail.com. Instead of his proper British English, he then resorts to using curse words—[*Interruption*—cuss words—so, the character has now begun to contradict himself to the point where he now sounds like an extra in some American crime show; no longer like an extra in a British film about Jane Austin, England, more like a bad boy extra in *CISL* or *Law and Order*. From British English to cuss! That is the nature of these emails. Again, to your bad scriptwriter, we on this side sound like “Trinis”.

And the storyline just gets confused, ridiculous and scandalous; and we would laugh at them if this was not such a serious matter. We would laugh at them. We are laughing in our minds, but this is serious matter and we have to expose the “laughability” of their production here; their Hollywood production, yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that the hon. Opposition Leader must tell this House and country why he never saw it fit to report such allegations to the police. Six months and the life of a reporter, you say is threatened, and you do nothing about it. That, by itself, is a serious crime in a democracy. You know somebody’s life is threatened and you sit down on it and you do nothing about it.

For six months he held on to these alleged emails, doing nothing, when all he had to do was send it to the police. You know what is galling and appalling about this? It is the fact that he knew that these emails are false fabrications, malignantly designed recurringly to destabilize the country by a desperate, irrelevant and mischievous Opposition, yet he comes here to this House, declaring that he has something so serious; portraying himself as a man who is concerned about democracy.

Mr. Speaker, if he was so concerned about democracy, and if he truly believed that a person’s life was in danger, why is it that he said nothing or did nothing about it? Is that not a requirement of a democracy and its laws? The first thing a responsible individual would do, in cases like these, is to take such a threat to the police, which he did not do; or at least tell the reporter in question; tell her editors; tell the affected party, under the veil of confidentiality.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, 33(6), I thought this was a debate. The Member is reading.

Mr. Speaker: Member, I will allow Members, if they so desire, to refer to their notes in this debate, because I know Members normally do so.

Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I have to be sure, word by word, of how I carry this debate and I have to refer to my notes. It is not a question of any deviation from what is expected.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West did not even warn the reporter about these so-called evil intents; not for six months. It took our Prime Minister to call the police, within a few hours.

If the hon. Member had done his duty and reported these matters to the reporter, then I am sure the story would have been exposed in the newspaper and the reporters and editors in question would have themselves reported it to the police. None of that happened and he must explain why. Is it that he was willing to let a crime take place to see a person's life snuffed? According to the make-believe world the Opposition has now resorted to living in, as if a decade of their fantasy Hart-built building world was not enough now to live in, but to move to CSI or Law and Order dimensions.

Mr. Speaker, either way, I hope the media personalities in question would take note of this and see the Member for Diego Martin West for who he is really, by his own actions, not a person concerned about the welfare of citizens or the media, but someone who, under the claim of having information that could save a person's life, chose to ignore this and use it six months later to score cheap political points. That is what he has done.

The Member for Diego Martin West is not a saviour, Mr. Speaker. The Member's story is simply too ridiculous and unbelievable and I urge all right-thinking persons in Trinidad and Tobago to ask him these questions. He must not be allowed to fabricate stories like this, and this country and the population, through you, Mr. Speaker, must call upon him for his irresponsible, callous and unforgivable actions and we must say never again must Member of this hallowed House be allowed to make a mockery of our Parliament and all our institutions we hold sacred. Never must he be able to make mockery of a person's life for the sake of cheap, desperate politicking.

Mr. Speaker, all of us know about spoofing. What has occurred with these allegations is that these emails have been spoofed. The whole world knows that. Email spoofing is the forgery of an email header so that the message appears to have originated from someone or somewhere other than the actual source. It is important to note that anyone can spoof an email; anyone can take a genuine email address and make it appear that the emails originated or were sent by that person. And if you go online and you try to get anan@gmail.com it will come

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back as bad; meaning that it never existed and it does not exist; and 28 of these emails had anan@gmail.com. So, where are they going? Where are they going?

In one of this, as well, there is something called SA Western Standard Time. Where did that come from? And another one, the 19th email, had on it, “anand@tstt.co.tt wrote”. It has “wrote”. This is not an email. It has “anand@tstt.co.tt wrote”. So, in other words, somebody is reporting something; is reporting. The person who fabricated all of this tried to report something to them and so he put down “wrote” here; w-r-o-t-e; then he used the expletives in this email, Mr. Speaker. This is the mind of a sicko; a sicko who could come and conjure up all these types of things; and, for them to believe it and want to make the people of this country believe it; it is sad.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 36(5), please. [*Interruption*] Who is a sicko?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think he is referring to a sicko in terms of a Member of Parliament. He is talking about the scriptwriter. So, I overrule. Continue.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The person who wrote it, and gave it to them—the writer, the scriptwriter; the Hollywood writer—

Miss Mc Donald: You said a PNM scriptwriter.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, I want to quote an article on Saturday, November 15, 2008. It says here—from Mr. Keith Rowley, Member for Diego Martin West, when he was responding to his hon. Prime Minister:

“There is somebody or persons who are misleading the Prime Minister...”

That is the time he was being fired.

Mr. Speaker: You want to quote what you are reading?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Saturday, November 15, 2008.

Mr. Speaker: That is the *Guardian*?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: “Gimme culture. Patrick Manning and Keith Rowley, Bobol again and again”.

Mr. Speaker: What is the source? It is an email or something?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: An email source; a blog site. I am always honest in my deliberations in this House, Mr. Speaker.

6.20 p.m.

“There is somebody or persons who are misleading the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister is prepared to be misled.”

That is what Member for Diego Martin West is saying.

“I am saying now that the Prime Minister is in need of proper advice on these and other matters.”

That is when the Prime Minister was firing Member for Diego Martin West. Rowley said, and I quote:

“Whoever is taking the Prime Minister down this road is doing him no favours. I think the Prime Minister’s conduct is disgraceful.”

That is what he said about his Prime Minister then. Quote again:

“I call on the Prime Minister to cease and desist. Somebody should advise the Prime Minister when you are in a hole and you want to get out, the first thing you have to do, is stop digging.”

I want to advise the Member for Diego Martin West, as he is in his hole, he must stop digging a hole more for himself because soon he will—he is already falling into it and he would be buried by an avalanche. Same advice he gave to his Prime Minister then, same advice he has to be given now.

We have gone through this. When the same person, Member for Diego Martin West, time and time again, makes statements that he cannot verify and turn out to be falsehoods, as—I want to read the article from *Newsday* by Sean Douglas on Saturday, May 14, 2011:

“House Speaker Wade Mark yesterday sent Opposition Leader Dr. Keith Rowley to the Privileges Committee of the Lower House...complained of Rowley’s allegations against Attorney General Anand Ramlogan...”—when he—“alleged that TT’s foreign service staff in New York had complained to him that Ramlogan told them that he wanted to alter the ethnic composition of the staff. Saying Ramlogan’s record of travel showed he never visited New York...”

Ramlogan never visited New York.

“‘Besides misleading the House, the Member for Diego Martin West also sought to discredit the Attorney General with an ethnic agenda with no evidence...’ Rowley cannot offer evidence by relying on something that someone somewhere had told him sometime.”

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Then the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a:

“...second letter, dated May 9, was to Ministry of Foreign Affairs permanent secretary, Margaret Parillon, signed by Foreign Service Officer II Nireen Jasper, and written on the letterhead of the Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago at 125 Maiden Lane, 4th Floor, New York...”—et cetera.

“Jasper’s letter said, I wish to state that neither the Honourable Anand Ramlogan, Attorney General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago nor Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Leader of the Opposition, visited the Consulate General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago”—at so and so address—“or met with members of staff at the Consulate during my tenure April 28, 2010 to May 2011.

Jasper added, ‘I wish to state for the record that I did not meet with Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley nor am I aware that any member of staff met with him at any time during the aforementioned period’.”

Here it is that Member for Diego Martin West had said that the people in New York whom he met had told him what Anand Ramlogan had said. Another falsification, Mr. Speaker, another deliberate and mischievous plot. Why is this Member doing this on a regular basis and making accusations about people and about things when he knows they are false, when he knows they are fabrications? Is that something that we have to look at?

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: What have I said?

Miss Mc Donald:—again, 36(5).

Hon. Member: What is it now!

Miss Mc Donald: How can you say that he knows?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You are creating—[*Laughter*]

Miss Mc Donald: Then you are saying that he is misleading this House.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Of course he has!

Hon. Sharma: Of course!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Of course he has misled.

Mr. Speaker: No, you cannot say a Member is misleading the House.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right, okay, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: You cannot do that. That is a separate matter.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Right, sure.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, but I think that you have made your point in that area, that matter has been addressed already by other Members, so I think you should come with something, you know, new.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I move on to another one, Saturday, November 12, 2011 by Oprah Francis:

“...following a stinging to the Judiciary less than twenty four hours after he was criticized for statements he made about the extradition matter involving businessmen”—so and so—“Opposition leader, Dr. Keith Rowley issues an apology to the Judiciary and Justice Ronnie Boodoosingh.”

So here he was again making statements again telling—making falsifications and having to come and apologize again. Apology after—falsification after falsification, falsification upon falsehood and apology upon apology and apology. Soon we will hear that the Member for Diego Martin West will have to come and apologize again, probably brought to the privileges committee. He even reported the Prime Minister to the Integrity Commission and the Integrity Commission in a flash said that it was frivolous, there is nothing to be thing about the Prime Minister. So is this deliberate mischief from time to time, deliberate mischief, Mr. Speaker?

I want to read another one: March 28, 2011 by Gerry Kangalee. It is sad they would write the—the article says: “...Stuck in the typewriter age by Cecil Paul” and it goes on to say:

“Patrick Manning is no longer the PNM’s Political leader but he still determines the policies of the PNM.”

That is 2011.

“Even though he was absent from the Convention Manning was able to defeat Rowley, the new, unopposed Leader on two major policy issues, critical to the image and future of the party.

By ‘influencing’ his San Fernando East Constituency, Patrick Manning has shown he is still the real PNM leader”—although he is ill.

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So they must know who their leader is still. [*Crosstalk and interruption*] They have one there, they have another one there, they have another one there, Mr. Speaker. They have about four leaders in the PNM.

Hon. Member: No, no, one!

Dr. Browne: “Boastin dey get rid ah Jack, eh!”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:

“...Patrick Manning has shown he is still the real PNM leader. He has defeated one of Keith Rowley’s major democratic modernization policies - one member - one vote and to rub salt in the wound, his constituency abstained from voting at the convention.”

This is the challenge that the Member for Diego Martin West still faces and he faces the challenge, my understanding that there might be—I do not know if I am wrong, I ask the question, I have been told—whether there is a Motion of no confidence coming from the PNM on the Member for Diego Martin West himself.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Nooooo!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: There is a Member—whether there is a—my understanding is there is one. My understanding is that the Women’s Convention, we had Ms. Penelope Beckles outstanding to the forefront and the Member for Diego Martin West was afraid to go to the meeting and he stayed back. He stayed back. He did not go.

So there is another front coming from that side, Mr. Speaker, so that is why we believe that the Member for Diego Martin West is trying to trump up these fabrications, and trying to see how he could make himself outstanding to face what may be coming at him: a question of—

Mr. De Coteau: Leadership!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—leadership and a question of no confidence in he himself.

Hon. Member: He is being challenged!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: He is being challenged. He is very lucky to be here, because if Mr. Robert Riley had accepted Mr. Manning’s invitation to him to go and fight Diego Martin West, which he refused—

Mr. De Coteau: “He woulda be history.”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—Diego Martin West would have been history. He would have been history. To tell you, when he went to visit the hon. Prime Minister at that time at his sick bed, he was refused; he was not able to see him.

It is the same Member for Diego Martin West—one of the pledges of the People's Partnership Government in our manifesto that we will lay the Bill on procurement within the first 30 days of coming into Government.

6.30 p.m.

The Prime Minister ensured that we laid the Bill within the first 30 days and we moved on to discuss the procurement Bill and we worked feverishly for a year. When the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for Diego Martin North/East saw that we were moving towards the conclusion of the entire documentation and bringing a Bill forward, they refused to cooperate and they said they are not coming to the meetings and they will not sit with the committee anymore. So, they never came to the meeting to try and let the whole thing lapse and the Opposition Leader had to be counselled by business organizations for him to reconsider.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Caroni East. Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Education has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Joint Consultative Council for the Construction Industry made several attempts by four prominent business organizations for them to reconsider their working on the procurement piece of legislation. And they made a joint call for the Opposition Leader, Dr. Keith Rowley, to return to the Joint Select Committee of Parliament on procurement and here it is, today we are having to debate a Motion by him on the democracy and he was obstructing the democratic processes of which we in this Parliament have been moving with, to bring the appropriate legislation to deal with the issues which we consider to be foremost and outstanding. So, for the first 30 days in government, the hon. Prime Minister made sure that we laid the procurement piece of legislation.

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Mr. Speaker, I will not bother to go into saying what one of their own longstanding members, one of their first members, Ferdie Ferreira, spoke about. In the *Newsday*, there was an article, Sunday, November 14, 2010:

“People’s National Movement...founding member Ferdie Ferreira believes that Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar’s revelations of a secret surveillance exercise, carried out under the former Government,”—that is Patrick Manning government—“will have an adverse effect on the party during its rebuilding process.”

and so on and he felt ashamed of what went on.

Mr. Speaker, part of this Motion deals with the question of the Judiciary and the Executive. Mr. Speaker, we are the Executive, the Government, and we, both sides, consist of the Parliament, making laws, and the People’s Partnership is being accused of conspiracy to attack and undermine key institutions of the State and it is, therefore, useful to objectively review Government’s use and actions in this Parliament.

Since coming into office in 2010, the Government has not been wasting valuable parliamentary time. Never before in the history of Parliament has any government brought so much revolutionary legislation to transform the lives of citizens. Laws have been passed by us and the Parliament in true democratic traditions.

- Reform our criminal justice system and facilitate the fight against crime.
- Protect and improve the lives of our most vulnerable of our senior citizens, women and children.
- Put in place the basic framework to maximize the use of information communication technology in the delivery of Government’s goods and services.

Let us look at reform of the criminal justice system. We brought in the Anti-Gang Act to facilitate the fight against the emergence of criminal gangs; the Bail (Amdt.) Act to deny the granting of bail to repeat offenders; the Interception of Communications Act to provide for the legal interception of communications amongst criminals and lawbreakers; the Trafficking in Persons Act; the Anti-terrorism Act; the Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (Amdt.) Act to combat white-collar crime; the Legal Aid and Advice (Amdt.) Act to ensure that those who need it can have legal aid, all democratic processes and legislation to work for the people; the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Act to

expedite the hearings of preliminary enquiries and ease the growing backlog of cases; the Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Act to provide a system to assist the rehabilitation offenders; the Administration of Justice (DNA) Act to provide a modern scientific tool to investigate crime.

We worked to bring laws for the protection and improvement of the lives of our most vulnerable citizens, as the Member for Caroni Central knows as Minister of the People and Social Development;

Mr. Sharma: Well said, well said.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Senior Citizens' Grant Act; the National Insurance (Benefits) (Amdt.) Regulations to increase the minimum national insurance pension to \$3,000.

Mr. Sharma: Good point, good point.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Children's Life Fund Act, to provide support for sick children or parents who cannot provide for them. Today, more than 20 children have been prevented from dying as a result of the Children's Life Fund; the Children Act, to protect all of our children against abuse and exploitation; the Maternity Protection Act to repeal the Masters and Servants Ordinance by the Minister of Labour, to provide increased benefits to mothers who have given—and repeal archaic legislation. We also did the Electronic Transactions Act; the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Speaker, what about parliamentary accountability and oversight?

Dr. Ramadharsingh: "Top ah de line."

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The People's Partnership Government has committed itself to the use of the committee system to improve and enhance parliamentary oversight and scrutiny to improve governance of ministries, municipal corporations, statutory authorities, state enterprises and service commissions. These joint select committees now are chaired by Independent Senators, not Government Members, in the true traditions of democracy. Like under the PNM and their sittings, we are carried live on TV now.

Unlike the PNM, this Government has replied to nearly all the questions to Ministers filed by the Opposition. The Government has responded to all matters raised on the Motion for the Adjournment. We have made ministerial statements outlining Government's policy initiatives and they have now reached a stage, the Opposition—my understanding in the Senate is that they were begging the

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Government not to answer questions which they asked themselves. They asked questions in the Senate and they were begging the Government not to answer them. What a shame!

Dr. Ramadharsingh: A state of confusion!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: What a shame and disgrace. A state of confusion in their ranks is what is happening there.

My colleague spoke about the seven years they took to bring on the equal opportunity legislation. Seven years they took to bring that on. And when our hon. Prime Minister was Leader of the Opposition, she demanded that the Government at that time account for human rights practices because they were not complying with the State's obligations under the Conventions related to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by submitting required state reports to two UN Human Rights Committees: the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. These are the areas where their regime was found lacking. They were weak and they now want to criticize our Government about democracy and the rule of law and lawfully constituted institutions.

They passed the legislation on the Children's Authority and took years before they set up the Children's Authority—callousness. We ask the question: were they encouraging our children to have problems? The Member for Diego Martin Central knows that, that after we passed the Children Bill, the Children's Authority was not set up for a long time.

Dr. Browne: Would you give way, Minister?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Hold on, hold on.

6.40 p.m.

Then we have the Police Service Commission. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Diego Martin Central, I expect better from you.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: There was the then Prime Minister—this is, we are speaking about democracy, Mr. Speaker, and they are accusing us. The Motion is speaking about “conspired to undermine key institutions”. “The Judiciary” and talking about the institutions and other public bodies fundamental to our democracy, a simple situation of a police service commission. The hon. Prime Minister at that that time was supposed to supply names for the members of the Police Service Commission to the President. He did not, Mr. Speaker.

For a long time, the legislation dealing with the Police Service Commission was brought to this House since November 08, 2002 when they came into Government. They had been thinking about the Police Service Commission since then, 2002 it was passed; 2003 came and went; 2004 came and went; 2005, the same thing; 2006, legislation passed and still no recommendations; three months in 2007 were passed and they were still looking; 53 months had passed and they were still trying to convince the country about appointments to the Police Service Commission—53 months to appoint people to the Police Service Commission. Is that not an institution? Is that not an institution of the State? The PNM stands accused of this.

What about the Heritage and Stabilization Fund, Mr. Speaker? In 2001, it was a UNC Government that brought together, the Revenue Stabilization Fund, and it was not until five years later, the PNM Government at that time brought in the Heritage and Stabilization Fund. In 2001, the Revenue Stabilization Fund was established and passed. Five years later they took to bring on the Heritage and Stabilization Fund for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. They had closed down live broadcast of the Public Accounts Committee which oversees how Government spends public funds, and they suspended that pending independent legal advice on the issue.

So here it is I am giving the scenario in terms of the PNM's dealing with public institutions and the democratic processes in the management of our country. Police Service Commission, five years; Children's Authority, a few years to bring on; equal opportunity, seven years to bring on; and here it is live sittings of the House, they went against it and, at that time, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant was part of that committee, when you and others argued that live broadcasts of the meeting were illegal and contravened the House Standing Orders. You did not want that—

Miss Cox: Not me.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Not Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West. Yes, Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Illegal?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, you said so then, that was December 24, 2008 it was reported by—

Mr. Hypolite: December 24?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Two thousand and eight, on *Newsday*, it was reported.

Miss Cox: “Nah well it was not me”—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: By Andre Bago.

Mr. Hypolite: “Yuh” sure it was not December 25?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Indarsingh: “Yuh denying what he said?”

Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—interference with judicial appointments and appointments in the Office of the DPP. This is what they asked about. For a Motion like this to succeed, on the ground that there is a Government conspiracy to undermine the Judiciary and Office of the DPP, one would expect that the allegations of interference with the appointment of judges or legal officers in the Office of the DPP, that they would have brought some proof of that. There is not a shred of evidence to substantiate their statements to suggest that this is happening with the Government. Several appointments have been made during our tenure without any interference by the Government, Mr. Speaker.

They tell us there are allegations of interference with the appointment of judges or legal officers in the Office of the DPP, and there is not a shred of evidence to substantiate that. But this is what happened under our watch, no interference. The Judicial and Legal Service Commission, Mr. Roger Hamel-Smith and Mr. David Patrick were appointed; President of the Industrial Court, Deborah Thomas-Felix was appointed; new judicial appointments under the PP Government 2010/2011; High Court judges, six were appointed. Justice Aboud, Justice Douglas, Justice Harris, Justice Rahim, Mr. Frank Seepersad and Miss Maria Wilson. Registrars and marshals were appointed; Chief Magistrate, Mrs. Marcia Ayers-Caesar was appointed; assistant registrars and marshals were appointed, about six of them Ms. Lonette Diamond, Ms. Nazeera Ali, Miss Marissa Ramdass, Miss Tricia Bhagwandeem-Sadho, Miss Kerri Ann Oliverie and Vigel Paul.

Mr. Speaker, any interference by this People’s Partnership Government on the appointment of JLSC, absolutely not. So what they are proffering is absolutely wrong, not tenuous at all, absolutely a movement forward in true democratic traditions, no interference with the judicial process of Trinidad and Tobago by this People’s Partnership Government. All these appointments went on easy, absolutely easy.

Mr. Speaker, I “doh” think I need to go back on all the areas that went through the High Courts and the Privy Council for people to seek redress against the ills of

the past administration of the PNM, and everybody knows about the unfair and contrary to the principles of justice, when the hon. Prime Minister at that time blocked the appointment of Permanent Secretary, Miss Ramjohn and so on to the top post in the embassy, and then the Maha Sabha radio licence and so on.

What is even more revealing, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

Mr. Speaker: You have till 7.01.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you. I read from an article by Juhel Browne in the *Trinidad Express* and the headline was: “Allum: He should resign”.

I move further down into the article that said:

“Theodore Guerra, SC, told the Express when he left the meeting yesterday that his position was ‘the AG has no right to trespass upon the preserves of the DPP.’”

And the AG at that time was John Jeremie.

“Allum indicated to a group of reporters that he told his fellow attorneys yesterday, ‘I felt that if we were dealing with a more sensitive attorney general, perhaps he would resign, but that was too much to expect from this particular attorney general.’”

That is the PNM Attorney General—the head of the Criminal Bar Association saying that about their Attorney General at that time, Mr. Speaker, saying that he should resign because of a number of things that happened. And here it is they want to come and accuse this Government of not moving with democratic principles and processes.

I want to read what *Newsday* had on July 20, 2008:

“Investigate John Jeremie”

In their Motion, they talk about:

“WHEREAS by a series of actions, the UNC-led Government of Trinidad and Tobago...has attacked and conspired to undermine key institutions...”

“The Judiciary;”

which I spoke about already, that we have allowed the Judiciary to flourish on its own without any interference absolutely.

“The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions;”

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The Attorney General works beautifully with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, no interference from the Attorney General. How they could accuse us of this? But under their watch in 2008, *Newsday*:

“Investigate John Jeremie

Desmond Allum, the President of the Criminal Bar Association, has written to the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr. Geoffrey A Henderson, calling on him to conduct an investigation into whether former Attorney General John Jeremie attempted to pervert the course of public justice or misbehaved in public office arising out of his reported involvement in the re-purchase of land at Millennium Park owned by Chief Magistrate Sherman Mc Nicolls.”

6.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that was the time they were trying to frame up the Chief Justice at that time and Mr. John Jeremie was the Attorney General and Desmond Allum was the President of the Criminal Bar Association and this is what he had to say. He called on Geoffrey Henderson:

“...to conduct an investigation into whether former Attorney General...attempted to pervert the course of public justice or misbehaved in public office arising out of his reported involvement in the re-purchase of land at Millennium Park owned by Chief Magistrate Sherman Mc Nicholls.”

They tied up everything, Mr. Speaker, in massive corruption, massive, complex type of scandalous movements to hound the Chief Justice out of office at that time. This was their move. The Attorney General at that time was on the warpath, Mr. Speaker, and this is what, on Monday, June 07, 2010, *Newsday*, this is what—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I am getting some static across there.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you have my protection. Members!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: This is what the President of the Bar Association said then:

“In the case of John Jeremie, his role in political conspiracy to force a sitting Chief Justice out of office is well documented. The findings and comments of Lord Mustill in the Mustill Report will forever mark the career of the worst Attorney General of all times, one who was influenced by his political leader to subvert the constitution”—they talking about we? [*sic*] That is them, Mr. Speaker—“to undermine the independence of the Judiciary.”

When they brought that Motion, they brought the Motion against themselves, not against us. [*Desk thumping*] It is against themselves.

“I myself have filed a complaint against him before the Integrity Commission which is now being investigated.”

I want to read this again about their performance and they want to say that we attacking the Judiciary and the DPP and so on? This is what they did, Mr. Speaker.

“In the case of John Jeremie, his role in political conspiracy to force a sitting Chief Justice out of office is well documented.”—It is written—“The findings and comments of Lord Mustill in the Mustill Report will forever mark the career of the worst Attorney General of all times, one who was influenced by his political leader to subvert the constitution to undermine the independence of the Judiciary.”

That is what happened under their reign and their watch—collusion between the Prime Minister and the Attorney General to force the Chief Justice to resign.

Hear what was Sat Sharma’s statement, Mr. Speaker:

I believe that the rule of law is under threat and our democratic system is in crisis.

That is them and they want to accuse us?

In this situation, the population is entitled to nothing less than full transparency.

And in his closing paragraph, he said:

I wish to assure the national community that I stand firm and resolute in defence of the independence of the Judiciary and will continue to do so. “I refuse to be hounded out of office or bullied by the Executive into resigning, when there is absolutely no justification for doing so. I hope and pray”—that—“the national community will not stand idly by and allow”—the—“democracy to be threatened.”

Those were the words of Chief Justice Sat Sharma at that time, and we can go on to all the cases that they lost: the Trinity Cross, the radio licence and so on, Guyapersad Kisoorn, Feroza Ramjohn, Marlene Coudray, Devant Maharaj and even our own colleague, Chandresh Sharma.

Mr. Sharma was successful in numerous cases against the PNM administration, ranging from failure to file integrity declarations, compliance with the reporting

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requirements of the Freedom of Information Act regarding the laying of an annual report in Parliament and the assignment of Ministers with responsibility for various state entities under the Act and the famous *Cooper v Balbosa* case.

The Privy Council ruled that the Cabinet, the PNM Cabinet, acted unlawfully when it appointed, since independence, the examination board for the Police Service Commission that would conduct promotion examinations in the police service and Their Lordships stated:

“Where then is the line to be drawn between the proper exercise by the Cabinet of its powers under section 75(1) of the Constitution and the improper exercise of political influence on the making of appointments by the commissions in general and the Police Service Commission in particular?”

Even their own Cabinet did wrong things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my contribution to this debate, I want to offer those on the other side some serious words of advice. As elected MPs, you have a sacred duty to your constituents and the members of the public to work in their interest and to better their lives. You do not fulfil that sacred obligation by coming here to waste precious national time with falsehoods, character attacks and pure nonsense. You can learn so much from our honourable leader, the Member for Siparia and the Prime Minister.

They want to attack our Prime Minister, who has for over 20 years sat in this House and been nothing short of a paragon of grace, virtue, efficiency, honesty and truly an exemplar of a model MP and a representative of the people. [*Desk thumping*]

Kamla Persad-Bissessar is not a person whose footsteps any of you here can even begin to walk in. History will record her as one of the most remarkable political leaders ever to come out of the Caribbean region. It was not by accident that she became the first woman to achieve the greatest and highest political office of this land. She did not do this overnight, as Members opposite would have the population believe. Her life has been one of service, devotion, dedication, intelligent service to the people of this country and we can all learn from that.

This is a woman who came out of rural Penal at a time when women were destined to stay at home and tend to their families. She defied colonialism, discrimination and poverty to seek higher education in England. She chose to come back to this country and blaze a trail in politics where no woman and indeed

no man had gone before. She came here and by actions and examples she fought for equality of women and children and the poor rural people she represented at every political level. She walked in the trenches; she fought in Government and Opposition until she became the politician and leader that truly represented the hopes and dreams of a country and its people.

She became the representation of their unity, diversity, the promise of betterment, the diligence, innovation and talent of a people who were tired of being divided along ethnic and social lines. Look at the composition of our Members of Parliament here today, Mr. Speaker. That is a reflection of the Prime Minister—close to 25 years. She has even created a Ministry of Diversity.

She laboured in the political vineyards. She won the confidence of the people of this country by her dedication to bettering their lives. Nearly half a million people, voters confidently supported her and still continue to do so. That is why she would go down as one of our country's most revered leaders that no one could question the integrity of our Prime Minister and political leader.

She knows from experience that leadership is a matter of having people look at you and gain confidence and, by her heroic actions, by her sheer determination to never give up when the odds were stacked against her, she taught the people of this country that anything is possible and we can truly attain nothing but the best once we have the will.

Mr. Speaker, she won the respect, admiration and support of us here on this side, of all different parties and backgrounds because of these traits and believe me, Mr. Speaker, she still has all of them. So today, when you come here and the PNM speaks about our Prime Minister, let me remind them to know who they are talking about and then thank God for her, for, without her, Trinidad and Tobago would be a lesser place and country.

7.00 p.m.

You know, we in the Government had described this Motion from the hon. Member as vexatious, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to tell you, I call on this honourable House today to reject unreservedly this ridiculous Motion [*Desk thumping*] and my advice to those on the other side who, misguided—I had the adjective for it but I would not say it. I stay clean, Mr. Speaker—chased every car they see.

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The words of Pope John the XXIII—let me give it to you:

“Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do.”

Mr. Speaker, Groucho Marx once said: “Only one man in a thousand is a leader of men, the other 999”—sensible ones—“follow women”. We are all proud to be following this woman, and I say she will always have all our confidence, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the course of my debate, I analyzed this Motion limb by limb to show how this Motion is vacuous, misconceived, empty, hollow, vexatious, null and void and a complete waste of precious parliamentary time.

I wish to end by a quote from Gerald Ford:

“It’s the quality of the ordinary, the straight, the square, that accounts for the great stability and success of our nation. It’s a quality to be proud of. But it’s a quality that many people seem to have neglected.”

Possibly the Member for Diego Martin West. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Any Member of the Opposition to speak? The hon. Member for Couva North. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of State in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (Hon. Ramona Ramdial): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stand to speak on this Motion of no confidence in our Prime Minister and Government, all I can say is that I think this is the way that the PNM Opposition wishes the People’s Partnership Government happy third anniversary in Government [*Desk thumping*] because I think to date this has been their third Motion.

Hon. Member: Fourth!

Hon. R. Ramdial:—fourth, sorry. So, every year they come with a Motion of no confidence and have us sit here in Parliament on Motions that waste Parliament time, of course, and give us the availability of speaking time to espouse our good work as Members of Parliament and Ministers in Government

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate three years in Government we have a lot to be proud of, and I speak of the achievements of Government. We have stayed fast to our manifesto objectives, especially that of ensuring that the country’s resources reach down to the individual citizen.

The PNM Opposition has found no fault in us as MPs and Ministers with respect to our work, how we represent our constituents and how we carry about our daily business in our Ministries. Instead, they bring a Motion on a couple of emails they claim came from the AG, the Prime Minister on section 34. There has been no validation of the authenticity of these emails, and they speak of corruption, Mr. Speaker, but where is the evidence? Where is the investigation that the hon. Prime Minister herself had to put to the Commissioner of Police as of yesterday?

I want to quote from her press release that was sent out yesterday that the People's Partnership Government categorically refutes any authorship in the series of printouts—[*Audio disruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I would have to institute a ban possibly on cellphones. If Members continue to have their cellphones on vibrate and near to the speakers, the microphone, you are disturbing the proceedings. I just want to advise Members to take their cellphones off; put it on silent. Continue, hon. Member, please.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the Prime Minister's release with respect to sending these allegations to the Commissioner of Police to be investigated. It is just a summary of what was said where it is that the People's Partnership Government refutes any authorship in the series of printouts of alleged electronic mails between Members of the Government during a period of September 2012.

She went on to say, Mr. Speaker, that:

“The people of Trinidad and Tobago should take note that in this era of technology it is easy to forge email accounts or to create accounts that are either very similar or appears to be an authentic existing email.”

Mr. Speaker, it went on to say that:

“...the allegations made during the debate by Members of the Opposition are malicious, false, misleading, scandalous. It amounts to misleading the House and may even amount to a contempt of Parliament.”

So based on this, the hon. Prime Minister saw it fit in her capacity to, of course, send all of these allegations to the Commissioner of Police so that an investigation can be launched.

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And at the end of the press release, Mr. Speaker, it is stated that the correspondence purporting to be email exchanges between government officeholders alleges serious criminal conduct.

“I hereby request that you cause an investigation into these very serious allegations and ascertain authenticity of those emails and take such action as is required according to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Mr. Speaker, if this is not evidence enough to show that our Prime Minister is very cognizant of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago—we are very cognizant of the different arms of governance and Government in Trinidad and Tobago and we respect the separation of powers. On this side of the Government, we have been very respectful of our State arms and, therefore, this vote of no-confidence Motion that the Opposition has brought to Parliament in itself refutes, by our own actions, that this Motion of no confidence should—as the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East said earlier—be null and void in this House, Mr. Speaker.

However, on further analysis, when you look at the presentation the Leader of the Opposition made yesterday in his opening with respect to this Motion of no confidence, you realize that this viewpoint and his so-called allegations came from a PNM Opposition, biased presentation. When I speak about political bias a little later on, we see that there is a connection with respect to political bias influencing media bias. So what the Leader of the Opposition sought to do yesterday was to give a biased side of his story and his presentation in order to influence media bias on his part in his favour. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote from some studies done by learned journalists, and one such has mentioned that:

“There is no such thing as an objective point of view.

No matter how much we may try to ignore it, human communication always takes place in a context, through a medium, and among individuals and groups who are situated historically, politically, economically, and socially. This state of affairs is neither bad nor good. It simply is. Bias is a small word that identifies the collective influences of the entire context of a message.

Politicians”—like ourselves—“are certainly biased and overtly so. They belong to parties and espouse policies and ideologies. And while they may think their individual ideologies are simply common sense, they understand that they speak from political positions.”

This is exactly what we are seeing with the Leader of the Opposition as yesterday when he sought to bring this bombshell into the House. He spoke from a political position as Leader of the Opposition. He spoke from a biased point of view where he sought to influence a biased media in terms of supporting his so-called allegations. Mr. Speaker, and this is a very, very, serious modus operandi by the Opposition that I am speaking of.

In the study, as I have learnt, they have said that—“for citizens and information consumers...it is important to develop the skill of detecting bias.”—And they are saying that—“Bias does not suggest that a message is false or unfair”—and, therefore, there is a list of questions that should be asked especially when you are talking from a political standpoint.

Mr. Sharma: Very good point.

Hon. R. Ramdial: The first one is:

- “1. What is the author’s/speaker’s socio-political position? With what social, political, or professional groups is the speaker identified?
2. Does the speaker have anything to gain personally from delivering the message?

7.10 p.m.

3. Who is paying for the message? Where does the message appear? What is the bias of the medium? Who stands to gain?
4. What sources does the speaker use, and how credible are they? Does the speaker cite statistics? If so, how were the data gathered, who gathered the data, and are the data being presented fully?
5. How does the speaker present arguments? Is the message one-sided, or does it include alternative points of view? Does the speaker fairly present alternative arguments? Does the speaker ignore obviously conflicting arguments?
6. If the message includes alternative points of view, how are those views characterized? Does the speaker use positive words and images to describe his/her point of view and negative words and images to describe other points of view? Does the speaker ascribe positive motivations to his/her point of view, and negative motivations to alternative points of view?”

And, Mr. Speaker, this is just a list of questions that can be asked when you are detecting an obvious bias. And in this case, by extension, if we want to

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analyze the Leader of the Opposition, if we were to answer these questions based on the Leader of the Opposition's diatribe, then one must conclude that his information is clearly—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I take—yes, 36(5), you cannot call the work “diatribe”; come on.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I think your language could be more elegant, please. Yes, more elegant language, please.

Hon. R. Ramdial: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I take that back.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, his information is clearly one-sided and intended to create a media bias in his favour. The facts before us are clear and apparent. If what the Leader of the Opposition says is true and that he got this file six months ago, then he had ample time to submit all of this so-called evidence to the police to be investigated, to ensure the validation of the emails that he is speaking of. He did not do so, Mr. Speaker. Why? That is the question that arises, why did he not do this?

Hon. Member: Because he is dishonest.

Hon. R. Ramdial: He instead waited for a time period to lapse, thinking to drop the bombshell right before a by-election and a local government election. So, obviously, [*Crosstalk*] one can assume, one can assume, Mr. Speaker, [*Crosstalk*] that it is a political strategy to discredit the Government, once again, by bringing a Motion right before a local government election and, of course, by bringing this Motion to discredit the Government and the leader of the Government in order to score political points—just an assumption.

Mr. Speaker: Member for [*Inaudible*]—your back is towards us. And, secondly, you are carrying on a commentary, virtually, with your colleague, and you are disturbing the proceedings. I am hearing you, I am hearing you, and you are disturbing the proceedings. So I ask if you can hold your fire and allow the Member to speak, and everyone can follow.

Continue, hon. Member for Couva North.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my opening is all about this political bias that is being created by the Leader of the Opposition to influence a media bias, so that the Opposition can be supported in their allegations with respect to discrediting the Government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a serious thing because in the event that the investigations—at the end of the investigations it turns out that this is not true, what are going to be the consequences to the Opposition? How are they going to look in the faces of the public? How are they going to face their constituents? How are they going to explain their actions?

So, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day I think the Prime Minister did the correct thing, in that of sending this file or folder that she requested from the Leader of the Opposition to the Commissioner of Police. And as much as they claim that it is an Acting Commissioner of Police, I think that the Commissioner of Police in Trinidad and Tobago is an upright and upstanding citizen. He is a man of duty and, therefore, he would carry about his duties in a proper manner. So there is no way under parliamentary privilege that we can even assume that the Commissioner of Police would not carry out his duties effectively and in a right and independent manner. So, Mr. Speaker, that is something that we need to take note of.

I also want to mention that we sat here since yesterday and we listened to all of the Opposition MPs speak of not getting resources from the Government for their respective constituencies. And I see that the Members for La Brea, Diego Martin Central, Point Fortin and a couple of others are out of the House, but it is my duty, Mr. Speaker, both as an MP and a Minister of State, to correct those wrongs, especially the statements made by these MPs that since 2010 they have not been getting resources in their particular constituencies to carry out their work, and this is so false.

I want to make reference to that of La Brea and Point Fortin, Mr. Speaker, the Members of Parliament who stood here, who got up, who spoke and complained and whined about not getting the resources.

[MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

And I just want to say Mr.—well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that WASA, which now falls under the ambit of the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, has been doing a lot of work all across Trinidad and Tobago. My fellow colleagues can attest to this and today we are going to set the record straight for our Opposition colleagues to also attest to this.

I want to make mention, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in Point Fortin, WASA installed a 16-inch main from Point Fortin to Labidco.

Hon. Member: Serious.

Hon. R. Ramdial: The Point Fortin desalination plant is to start next month, Madam Deputy Speaker. The La Fortune water treatment plant is also on its way to being started, Mr. Speaker [*sic*]. In La Brea, they have gotten the acquisition of the Chatham wells, and a main from Point D'or junction to La Brea is being installed as I speak right now, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, for these MPs to come to this House and sit here and complain and mislead and say that they are not getting the resources that they so need to represent effectively is totally false, erroneous; yes it is.

It is an attempt, again, Madam Deputy Speaker, by the Opposition to create a political bias in their favour. That is all that they are trying to do here. They have nothing else to lambaste us on, not our good work, and I will continue to talk about the resources that we have given to the Opposition area.

The MPs from the Diego Martin area, they have also been complaining yesterday and in previous Motions. And I want to say that in the Diego Martin area we have installed under WASA a main at Majuba Crossing; Cavie Crescent, a 600-metre pipe, Morne Coco Road, Stoer Drive, a one-kilometre pipe; Cocorite Terrace, 250 metres of pipeline for a pipe-borne supply of water; Scott Farm, acquisition for a new well; Pioneer Drive, an installation of a new booster station. And from 2010 till now, Madam Deputy Speaker, WASA has spent over \$378 million benefiting at least 98,000 residents of the Diego Martin area. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, tell me what it is, when we have the facts before us, that gives the Opposition MPs the right to come in here in this House and abuse parliamentary privilege and accuse us of not delivering and sharing our resources equitably across the board? And I am sure that my colleague, the Member for Oropouche West, and my other colleagues can also attest, the Minister of Local Government will later on or probably tomorrow let us know what he is doing in the Opposition-held constituencies.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, where it is unfair that their comments are, you know, we are practising—we are not practising what we preach, they were the ones, when they were in power, who refused to give even their own constituents resources.

Hon. Member: That is correct.

Hon. R. Ramdial: So for the Member for La Brea to come here and stand up, and the Member for Diego Martin Central, and other Members—Point Fortin—they were in Government for nine years before we took Government. They had

the economic power and the resources to bring, so that they can lend resources to the individuals on the ground to ensure a better quality of life, and nothing. *[Interruption]* So now you come here and from 2010 till now, every vote, no-confidence Motion that you come here and you lay in Parliament, you get up and you talk about no resources when this is totally untrue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to make reference to other arms under the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, and, of course, the good work that has been happening, and I will continue with that of WASA.

7.20 p.m.

We have a number of water projects across Trinidad and Tobago. WASA has undertaken a number of key projects to improve water transmission, the replacement of the 28 kilometres of the Navet trunk main, the installation of pipelines in Union and Bristol Village in Mayaro and Brasso Venado, Tabaquite, construction of a new booster pumping station at south Oropouche, installation of new transmission pipelines between Courland and Buccoo in Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we also continue to attempt to expand our water grid to ensure that every household has a pipe-borne supply of water, and therefore we have seen the construction of water treatment facilities with respect to ensuring a better standard of water security. So we have water treatment facilities at La Fillette, Talparo, Penal, Matura; first-time installation in a number of communities under the NSDP programme. We have spent in excess of \$450 million on the water infrastructure upgrade programme from 2010 till now, and we have continued with the replacement of 44 kilometres of the aged Hollis trunk main between Port of Spain and Valencia.

We continue with the upgrade of the transmission system in Tobago, with the installation of a new transmission main between Bacolet and Signal Hill. We have continued the purchase of pipes for the installation of a 44-inch diameter dual Caroni south trunk main, and work on the first phase entails the installation of 28 kilometres of pipe between Caroni water treatment plant and Couva. The commencement of the works to increase potable water production, transmission, storage and distribution capacities begins very soon.

With respect to wastewater, Madam Deputy Speaker, you would have been privy to—and all of us in this House would have been privy of course to—the largest IDB loan signing in the western hemisphere with respect to the water sector in Trinidad and Tobago, and, of course, we signed the loan agreement with the

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Inter-American Development Bank for a US \$546.5 million, loan for the development of the waste water sector. And, of course, as I said before, this loan is the largest of its kind in the English speaking western hemisphere.

Trinidad and Tobago will be privy to the first \$246.5 million in the first component of the multi-phased loan to undertake works at Malabar and San Fernando. So the wastewater rehabilitation programme entails the integration of eight wastewater systems in Maloney, the integration of two wastewater systems in Cunupia, and the expansion of collection systems and treatment facilities at Malabar and San Fernando.

We will also be rehabilitating the Scarborough wastewater treatment plant, the sewerage of the southwest Tobago, with treatment to be effected at waste stabilization ponds at Bon Accord and Samaan Grove, the installation of new sewers along Scott Street in San Fernando and several streets in Port of Spain; rehabilitation of a number of wastewater treatment plants at Maracas, St. Joseph, Acono, Arima and San Fernando.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, from the evidence that I have and the statistics that I have before me, how can the Opposition MPs come to this House and claim that our resources are not being distributed equitably across the board? How can they do that? And I speak not only of the water sector, I speak of roads and bridges, I speak of farming and agriculture, I speak of housing. Just this morning the hon. Minister of Housing and the Environment gave out 500 plots of land for Land for the Landless Programme, and that is something to be commended for. [*Desk thumping*]

As we know, there is a shortage of housing in Trinidad and Tobago, and, of course the HDC has been developing its housing developments, but also, at the same time, we have to be cognizant of the fact that there are more people applying now for houses than before, and, therefore, a strategy was needed to deal with the influx of applications for homes, and because it would take longer to construct a housing development, the goodly Minister saw it fit in his wisdom to, of course, distribute lands that were available for residential purposes.

In this respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, the young people of Trinidad and Tobago now have options. The young professional can now choose whether or not they want a home from HDC or they want land. Am I to understand, Member for Oropouche East, it is 10,000 plots of land you will be distributing?

Dr. Moonilal: Over a three-year period.

Miss R. Ramdial: Over a three-year period. [*Desk thumping*] So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is highly commendable.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The first 500 given out this morning.

Miss R. Ramdial: Exactly.

Mr. Seemungal: First 500.

Miss R. Ramdial: And that is what I mentioned earlier, and this is what the People's Partnership Government is all about. We are all about providing basic amenities for our citizens—basic amenities: water, lights, roads, bridges. You know, the Opposition come here and they laugh about box drains and how many box drains we are going to construct, but at the end of the day, if you come to central, you would realize that there is a need for box drains because box drains assist and alleviate flooding in certain areas. It is not a permanent solution, but at the end of the day it is a measure which can be implemented to alleviate flooding.

So for the Opposition MPs to come here and sit and, you know, whine about not getting resources, it is very, very disturbing, because as a young Member of Parliament, since 2010 till now I have been privy to the amount of works that our Ministers and our individual MPs have been doing across Trinidad and Tobago, and this is something to be very wary of.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will continue with WASA of course, and WASA is also moving towards financial viability, so during the years 2011 to 2012, we achieved the highest ever annual collection of rates that amounted to \$756.3 million—[*Desk thumping*—]—and of course with State agencies that are responsible for generating their own revenue, this is a way forward, so that WASA does not have to come to the Government coffers every time for moneys.

We have been undertaking an aggressive collection strategy. We have also increased the water rate effective January 01, 2012, whereby industrial customers in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate pay \$12 per cubic metre compared to the \$7.50 per cubic metre they paid previously. So, again, we are all about generating revenue via our government agencies and not only spending as the Opposition MPs like to come and accuse us of.

The new revenue generation that WASA has undertaken is the refurbishment of infrastructure for the Estate Management and Building Development Company Limited, the installation of piping at St. Ann's Hospital and the cleaning of drains in the Port of Spain and Couva areas. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is one

innovative way of generating revenue as a state agency, where it is you lend your capabilities to other state agencies in order to generate revenues so that you can sustain the agency.

As you know, water is a very important, if not, most important basic amenity, and therefore it is something that affects us daily. I mean, I get calls, texts, emails, every day, you know, from some constituent or from one of my fellow colleagues asking, “Well, you know, this area, there is no water. How can you help? There is a truck-borne supply required”, or “they have not had water for a number of days”, and therefore our water sector is very, very important.

I want to make reference to La Brea, because he got up here and he said, “Since 2010 till now, if you were to be asked if you are in a better position what would you say?” And I want to make reference to something that I learnt on one of my trips, because he also made reference to the trips these Ministers were undertaking. I attended a water conference in Holland not very long ago, and it was amazing to learn that in countries like India and Africa we still have women who are responsible for collecting water on a daily basis, that they walk to wells, miles away from their home for three hours daily, and they go to the well, they collect water with their younger female children and they come back, and that takes three hours every day. It is daily ritual.

It is very disheartening when you look at this and you realize that here in Trinidad and Tobago we are so fortunate and we have developed so much over the years, and we continue to be now, even more so. When you compare the status of our women and girls with that of the status of women and girls in India and Africa, they have been devoid of employment and education because of this particular tradition of being the collectors of water for their household.

7.30 p.m.

This is something that is very, very important. It was an eye-opener for me. I came back and was talking to my colleagues, and some of them were very, very surprised. So, we have been trying to improve the water sector, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is the point I am trying to make. We are trying to improve sectors in this country that lend to a better quality of life on a daily basis. We are fixing the water sector. We have invested heavily in the water sector, and I think by 2015 we would realize a lot of successes in the water sector.

I also want to make mention that the customer satisfaction rating of WASA went up. In the last MORI Poll conducted in May/June of 2011, a 67 per cent customer satisfaction rating was achieved, an improvement of 30 per cent from

the previous poll. [*Desk thumping*] Having undertaken 206 projects, the authority will continue implementing measures in 2013 and beyond, towards improving the service to customers in both water and wastewater.

We have also understood the need for cost optimization within the water sector. In terms of that, a major initiative has been the introduction of a lot of systems that would help in the cost optimization of WASA. In addition, Madam Deputy Speaker, WASA has been having an aggressive public outreach programme. We have held two national secondary school quizzes on the themes of water and wastewater respectively, in 2011 and 2012. We launched another installment on adopt-a-river on January 16, 2013, and we also introduced customer outreach caravan in Tobago in 2011, which is a similar service to be extended to rural communities in Trinidad in 2013. We have been also, as part of the water sector, ensuring sustainability of the resources that we have.

This is just WASA, which is one agency under the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. I can speak much more of WASA, but it is all detailed information which I am willing to give to the Members of this House later on, and distribute so that they could be well informed of the facts.

Hon. Member: Educate them.

Hon. R. Ramdial: I want to move on to that of the Drainage Division under the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. Again, the Members for La Brea, Diego Martin Central, Point Fortin and others get up and complain about drainage. I just want to highlight some of the works in their areas that have been going on over the past year. What we have done: the Maraval River, downstream of the La Seiva RC School, there is construction of a retaining wall at a cost of \$1.2 million. That is 100 per cent completed, and that project took four months. The St. Ann's River of St. Ann's, construction of another retaining wall at a cost of \$1.8 million, and that also took four months. That is a project totally completed. The La Seiva ravine behind No. 20—21 La Seiva Road, Maraval, construction of another retaining wall, and that project has also been completed.

I continue, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Blue Basin River—improvement works were undertaken there, and that is 100 per cent complete. Fairways main drain in Maraval, another Opposition held constituency—improvement works were done to the main drain. Construction of a retaining wall also done, which has been 100 per cent completed. The Maraval River—rehabilitation of 300 cubic metres of the Maraval River was undertaken and completed. The St. Francois

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Valley Road, Morvant No. 2—another improvement work to the St. Francois Valley Road; construction of a retaining wall that was also completed in four months' time.

I go on—and this is all in Opposition held constituencies. The Santa Cruz River, Saddle Road, Santa Cruz—improvement works, the construction of a retaining wall that was completed in December 2012. La Canoa Road, Santa Cruz, Morne Coco ravine, Maraval, Maraval River, St. Andrews Golf Course, the St. Francois Valley Road again—and it continues, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The thing about it is that the Opposition MPs do not like to sit here and hear the facts, at the end of the day. They come and make spurious allegations on all sorts of things and then they want us to reply. Here I am replying. I know the Member for Point Fortin yesterday said, “What new policies and plans do you have?” I also remember taking a look at my *Hansard* where she was asking me what was the plan or the policy for the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. I want to educate her a little tonight by letting her know that the Environmental Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources has gotten Cabinet approval for the following policies. I know the Member for Point Fortin will be listening very keenly to this.

We got Cabinet approval for the National Forest Policy; the National Protected Areas Policy and the National Climate Change Policy. We have been developing a draft wildlife policy and hosting a stakeholders consultation across Trinidad and Tobago. We have also gotten approval to launch the HCFC Phase Out Management Plan for Trinidad and Tobago, for the period 2013—2020. One of our other policies is the Climate Change Reduction Initiative. This is the commencement of a project to develop a carbon reduction strategy in the transport power generation and industrial sectors.

There has also been collaboration with the IADB on the development of a technical cooperation agreement to develop an implementation strategy for the National Climate Change Policy. We have also been involved in the commencement of the development of the National Implementation Plan under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. We have hosted the second national and sectoral capacity building workshop for the clean development mechanism under climate change. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is just part of what the Environmental Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources has been involved in.

We have also been working on the Beverage Container Bill which is presently being debated in the Senate. We have hosted the main meeting of the Ozone Action Networks of Latin America and the Caribbean. We have implemented many projects. We are in the process of compiling a database of designated multilateral environmental agreements, focal points in Ministries, government agencies, academic institutions, industries and NGOs, and we have also completed and published a pocket guide to the Environmental Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

So when the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin comes here and ask us, “What are your plans and policies”, it is my duty and obligation to inform her of exactly what we are doing at this Ministry, hoping that the next time she gets up to speak, she would not attack us so vehemently as she did yesterday.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to make reference to the EMA. They have been doing a lot of good work also. They have been in the process of the draft Air Pollution Rules 2010/2012. They were accepted by Cabinet on January 13, 2013, and they are to be laid in Parliament. This is part of our legislative agenda. I remember coming to this House and Opposition MPs getting up and asking, “What is your legislative agenda?” “What are you doing?” “How are you carrying us forward with respect to the legislation?” [*Interruption*] Exactly. Well, it is all here.

So we have been, under the EMA, looking at the Air Pollution Rules. We have been installing a second ambient air quality monitoring station. We have been involved in the installation of solar street lights, designation of environmentally sensitive species and, of course, we are in the final stages of the Waste Management Rules 2011/2012, where the EMA is developing solid waste rules and completing the hazardous waste rules.

The EMA has also been involved in an aggressive public outreach programme, so they have targeted primary schools across the nation. They have been educating our children with respect to wetlands. The EMA bus visited schools in the borough of Chaguanas and of course other areas on its community outreach pilot programme.

The EMA has also successfully concluded its secondary school eco-song competition that so many of us are aware of, and they have gone into schools and set up environmental clubs. They have also been involved in the publication of the *Green Business Magazine*, and, of course, have launched in 2012 the EMA noise campaign because, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, in Trinidad and

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Tobago, we are now faced with an increasing problem of noise pollution, especially in urban and suburban areas. [*Desk thumping*] So the EMA has really been on the ground targeting the needs of the population at this stage.

7.40 p.m.

So, at the end of the day, the Opposition MPs come here and they sit and all they do, of course, is attack us and make allegations and say that we are not working and we are all about rallies and Monday night meetings and we are not really working, but at the end of the day we have the stats.

Dr. Rambachan: We are communicating with the people.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Exactly; we are well connected with our people. And where it is you have the Leader of the Opposition trying to create a political bias in his favour, I think he should come with more stats in this House so that we can further educate the population via the media on exactly what we are doing as MPs and as Ministers.

With respect to the Institution of Marine Affairs, they also exist now under the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, and they have been very, very active in many areas. One such is that of the award of IDB to IMA as an executing agency for funds amounting to US \$600,000 for the integration of coastal zone management and climate change adaptation in south-west Tobago. And, of course, they also act as that academic arm to the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources in giving us information and know-how as to deal with the turtles and the Grand Riviere Beach and what whole turtle nesting season that we just came out of. So the IMA has been doing its very good work also.

We also have another agency that falls under the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources and that is that of the Green Fund, and the Green Fund has been the topic of many discussions across different sectors in Trinidad and Tobago. Just what the Green Fund has been up to lately, firstly, they were the ones who funded the SanCity Green Expo 2013, which we all know was a huge success in the southland. We had a lot of our young people visiting and, of course, a lot of booths that would have been set up there to encourage a green environment and how to go about with cost-saving energy-reducing mechanics and strategies. So they were the main funder for the SanCity Green Expo.

They have also given funding to the IMA for the experimentation into the feasibility of a hatchery management programme for the leatherback turtles and changes in fishing operations to reduce negative impacts on offshore foraging

adults. So what we are seeing here, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not know if you would remember, a couple days ago we would have had a report in the media citing that leatherback turtles were washed up dead on the beach.

One of the reasons for that was, of course, the fishing methods which are utilized by our fishermen with respect to the type of nets that they use. So when they get their catch and they pull in their catch, the leatherback turtles, they get tangled in and they come up on shore dead. So what we have been doing is using Green Fund funding in order for IMA to go out there and educate and to adopt strategies that would assist fishermen in using the proper nets and proper methodologies with respect to fishing so that we can save our leather back turtles at the end of the day.

I know the Turtle Village Trust has also been given funding for the National Sea Turtle Conservation Project. And I remember the Opposition Chief Whip mentioning yesterday “we killing the turtles off”, but here are the facts that we are lending to her so that she can correct it for the future. We have also, Madam Deputy Speaker, partnered with UTT and funded a programme there for the anthropogenic hydrocarbon pollution impact of coastal areas along the west and east coast of Trinidad and Tobago. So it is very, very unfair—and I will keep saying it over and over—it is very unfair for Opposition MPs to come in this House and attack us with respect to not getting resources and not doing our work and not lending to the national development plan of Trinidad and Tobago.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, what I want to say also is that this vote of no confidence in the Government and, of course, in the Prime Minister, based on our interaction with different arms of Government is totally unfounded.

Hon. Member: It is baseless.

Hon. R. Ramdial: It is baseless. At the end of the day, where is the evidence for such? What are you doing to validate your claims at the end of the day?

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is so much more that we can speak about, and I want to go about to, again, the political bias that I spoke about because it is very, very disturbing when you sit here and you look at the Leader of the Opposition and how he speaks and how he carries about his presentation in trying to persuade certain arms of Government, one being the media, in that what he says and what the Opposition says here is so totally true, that that is the end of you us as a Government. And many studies have been conducted, and as I was mentioning earlier, I spoke about the questions for detecting a bias, and I made reference to how we can connect via these questions.

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What I also want to speak about, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the largest democracy in the world is that of the American Government, of course, or the American nation, the USA. And, of course, you have the right wings and the left wings and, of course, what they have shown is that media bias is affected by estimating the effect--

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time for the hon. Member for Couva North and Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Resources has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before the hon. Member goes back on her feet to continue the debate, at this time I want to call on the Leader of Government Business as regards a procedural motion if the House continues to sit after 8.00 p.m.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Mr. Moonilal): Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 10 (11), I beg to move that the House continue to sit to facilitate the debate on the motion under consideration.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Member for Couva North, you may continue. [*Desk thumping*]

PRIME MINISTER AND GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN)

Hon. R. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would not be very long on this theory of political bias which then influenced a media bias, but I also want to extend on this theory by saying that data shows that the media bias is greater in media markets where the election is more competitive, which implies that media bias comes primarily from the desire to affect the election outcome.

And I said earlier, when I spoke of the impending Local Government elections and, of course, the slant that the Opposition was taking with respect to these

allegations that they come to the House under the cloak of parliamentary privilege and expose, and this is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition wants or what he is seeking to do. It is in their best interest to be the source of influence in a media bias in their favour in the light of an election, a by-election and a local government election. And I think that they are drawing from their success of, of course, Tobago in the last election, and they are thinking that they can come here with the same set of propaganda, the same sets of attacks and, of course, that will work in their favour.

7.50. p.m.

Now, at the end of day, as a politician myself, I have no problems with that because we all adopt political strategies in order to win an election, but when you base it on something as frivolous as this Motion—because when you look at it, they are saying that we are attacking the Judiciary, we are attacking the media and we are attacking another arm of the Government, and this is totally untrue. We would have heard earlier on when the AG spoke, when the hon. Member for Caroni East spoke, when the hon. Member for Oropouche East spoke and other Members here, where it is that they gave by example that there was no way that we can be identified as attacking the Judiciary.

When you compare what they did in their term of Government and their attacks on the Judiciary and the media, it is very overwhelmingly clear that at the end of the day, the People's Partnership Government will not ever attack States or agencies of the Government in such a manner. [*Desk thumping*] And therefore, these allegations that they are bringing, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it is just fodder for the public to feed on for a period of time, to further discredit us in eyes of the public.

As I said before, it is a little bit of the political bias and the slant that the Leader of the Opposition takes to influence a media bias in his favour, but at the end of the day, the media of Trinidad and Tobago is very fair in their reporting. As a young Member of Government, I want to say that I want to actually commend the media for assisting and for, of course, distributing all of my media releases that I send via the Couva North constituency office. We would have all seen this in all of the newsprint, and therefore I want to say that the media is much smarter than we think them to be, and at the end of the day they would pick sense from nonsense and they would be able to, of course, judge and see what a story means as compared to other stories.

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Madam Deputy Speaker, in the essence of time I want to go to my constituency of Couva North at this stage, and I have been very, very humbled since 2010 till now in representing the constituency of Couva North. When we get up here and speak as MPs and Ministers, you always hear us speaking of rural neglect and you wonder what is rural neglect. But even in the constituencies of Couva North and even that of Couva South, one would identify that it is not really a rural area, but more of a residential, suburban area. It is a town in itself.

When the Member for La Brea got up to speak about the Point Lisas Industrial Estate that was put in this area, and, of course, the generation that works there and the generating of income and revenue for the Government, what he failed to say was that to make Point Lisas Industrial Estate and the environs of Couva sustainable, that is where they failed as a Government in their tenure.

So they set up a big industry and then you have people that grow, that come around to live because, of course, of the geographic location to their workplaces and so on, but over the nine years that they were in power, there was severe neglect even of these suburban areas and residential areas by the Government, the then previous Government, the PNM-led Government.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. R. Ramdial: So me [*sic*] and others, going into Government and having to represent these areas, we saw first-hand the level of neglect in these areas, and I make no jokes about this. It is clear and apparent. In areas of Carli Bay, in Waterloo, there were still residents, after 20/30 years of settlement with no pipe-borne supply of water.

Of course, as I mentioned earlier, this is a basic amenity. [*Crosstalk*] In other areas, roads that were never rehabilitated, ever since its initial existence, only took place under this People's Partnership Government.

Mr. Sharma: Sad. Sad.

Hon. R. Ramdial: And at the end of the day, this is something that we as a Government need to be recognized for because I remember in a 2009 budget presentation, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, in his then function as a Minister, said in no uncertain terms—and I would not quote directly, Madam Deputy Speaker, but as I remembered, he said—“Why is it that we are spending money as a Government on tall buildings and waterfront complexes and other major developmental projects and not looking at the impact of development on the

average individual?” He was asking his own Prime Minister at that point in time, “Why can we not spend money on water, on roads, on bridges, on lights?” He was asking his own Prime Minister that in 2009 when he was a backbencher.

So to now come here and attack the Government and say that we are not serving the people—and you know the Member for La Brea is very theatrical, so he would make a big hue and a cry “serve the people, serve the people”—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Seemungal: And when he was there he was lazy. *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. R. Ramdial: Go ahead!

Mr. Sharma: Are you saying he was a clown? That is wrong.

Hon. R. Ramdial: At the end of the day, Madam Deputy Speaker, the same thing that the Leader of the Opposition was fighting for in 2009, is the same thing that the People’s Partnership Government identified *[Desk thumping]* and we are now rectifying that problem because the people of Trinidad and Tobago voted the then PNM Government out of power because it disregarded the basic amenities to its own people.

Hon. Member: What is she talking about?

Hon. R. Ramdial: So, moneys were distributed for large national developmental projects, moneys were syphoned out, corruption, Calder Hart, et cetera, et cetera, and at the end of the day the basic, average individual was neglected.

So now you have a new Government, new blood, young people who come in here to want to make a difference—I am sure that the Member for Caroni Central will agree with me because he is doing wonderful work in the Ministry of the People and Social Development *[Crosstalk]* and we are here really and truly to work to the best of our abilities to represent our constituents.

I know for a fact that when I go walking in the constituency of Couva North for the local government election, that I am going to get more than the 16,000 initial votes for the general election, and many of my colleagues *[Desk thumping]* are also going to get an increase in their voter turnout. This is because we have been listening, we have been representing and we have been trying to ensure a better quality of life for our constituents and residents.

This is what the PNM Opposition is afraid of because they know that when they were in power they were totally inaccessible. Their own constituents could

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not get through to them, and it was very, very hard. We MPs on this side of the Government, we are very accessible, we work very long, hard hours, we can all attest to this, and at the end of the day, we go to our constituency offices on a weekly basis. We sit, we listen, we take the complaints, you know, because it is not everybody we can satisfy at the end of the day. Our resources are very limited, and we have to share it across the board for everyone, even the Opposition constituencies which they have been accusing us of not doing which I, of course, mentioned in my statement.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, all in all, I think that, as the Prime Minister mentioned last Sunday at her home, we would give this People's Partnership Government a passing grade, after three years in power. We have really been working as MPs representing in all manner possible. We have a lot of Ministers who are doing a lot of good work, and of course, we are all here to work together as a team and work with the collective responsibility of really and truly ensuring human development first and foremost. And, of course, later on we will deal with some of the other bigger projects that the other Ministers are carrying about with.

But at the end of the day we are very people-centred, we are very driven, and we all about securing a sustainable, efficient, productive environment for our future generations.

So with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say that this Motion is nonsensical. It is, of course, a waste of parliamentary time, and I also want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving us this avenue to talk about our good work—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Yeah.

Hon. R. Ramdial:—because we all intend to speak of our good work as MPs and Ministers, and at the end of the day I want to say that the Opposition PNM will remain where it is for quite a number of years to come because we do not intend to give up easily. We intend to fight the fight as we are being led by a fighter herself in the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that for now we are faced with a lot of challenges from the Opposition PNM with their propaganda and their allegations, but in time the people of Trinidad and Tobago will see that our work will speak for itself. With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Well done.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Any Member on the Opposition wishes to speak? Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Alicia Hospedales (*Arouca/Maloney*): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am here to—I want to say thank you firstly for the opportunity to speak in this Motion on:

“WHEREAS the sanctity of the Parliament and lawfully constituted institutions and other public bodies are fundamental to our democracy and must be protected at all times; and

WHEREAS by a series of actions, the UNC-led Government of Trinidad and Tobago under the leadership of the Prime Minister, has attacked and conspired to undermine key institutions of State, namely:

- The Judiciary;
- The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- The Parliamentary Opposition; and
- The Media; and

WHEREAS other Members of the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, specifically, the Attorney General and the Minister of Local Government have also participated in such attacks against these important institutions of our democracy:

BE IT RESOLVED that this House confirms its loss of confidence in the Prime Minister and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.”

8.00 p.m.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our Opposition Leader highlighted yesterday several emails that exposed the section 34 conspiracy, implicating Members of the Government, and they were all named in the emails.

Dr. Rambachan: Say it outside.

Miss A. Hospedales: Madam Deputy Speaker, what occurred yesterday was shock waves going through the entire country, the region, internationally. I even listened [*Laughter*—you know, they are laughing. [*Interruption*] I listened to the radio this morning and someone called in from Boston expressing his disgust on the events of the—the information that was revealed from the Parliament yesterday.

I took my time this morning and I listened to the feedback from individuals who called in to the various programmes, et cetera, and some of the concerns that

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were raised in their discussions with respect to the emails that were sent by S-U-R-A-J-R-A-M-B-A-C-H-A-N@hotmail.com; A-N-A-N-D@tsstt.net.tt—

Dr. Browne: Repeat that.

Miss A. Hospedales:—K-A-M-L-A-P-B-1@gmail.com and C-A-P-T-A-I-N-G-A-R-Y-G-R-I-F-F-I-T-H@hotmail.com.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these members of the public, and even persons who called in from overseas, et cetera, they said that it is a very serious matter and we all agree. It is a very, very serious matter that must be investigated. [*Desk thumping*] I would like to agree with the Member for St. Joseph, an independent body must be set up to investigate this issue. [*Desk thumping*]

They said the Government looked as though they are caught off guard yesterday. I saw a picture of the Member for Oropouche East sitting in his seat and with his hand over his mouth, almost as though, you know, he is in shock. [*Desk thumping*] The Members of the Government—some of these Members were in shock. We looked at their faces and they were in disbelief. [*Interruption*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, another member of the public asked, “How does our country look in the international eyes? How does our country look with this kind of information coming out that senior government officials have conspired, you know, have been caught in a conspiracy?” I would say that this particular issue is sinister and someone must be held accountable. Even after I sat here, I honestly thought that the Member for Couva North was going through her old notes on the budget debate—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: This is new notes.

Miss A. Hospedales:—going over her old notes and I began to feel exhausted because of the fact that she went on about water and went on about drains, et cetera, but that is not the issue before us today.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss A. Hospedales: That is not the issue. They have not answered the questions; they have not provided a proper defence regarding the issues that have been aired in this House.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: We want the Prime Minister to act.

Miss A. Hospedales: So, after I have listened to the defence of the UNC-led Government, we have to conclude that their arguments are baseless, they are senseless. [*Desk thumping*] Their arguments reflect a Government who is fixed on

evading the truth, who is fixed on even hiding information from the general public. They are fixed and they are set in their ways to continually evade being transparent and accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the arguments put forward by the Members on the other side are as follows: the email address for the AG is not correct. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am asking, is the email address A-N-A-N-D@tstt.net.tt an accurate email? Is it an accurate email? The Attorney General stood here yesterday and he said that is his email. So we want to know, are you saying that anand@tstt.net.tt is not an accurate email? I also heard the argument that the subject of the email was, one, “high details”; and another one was, “money owed”, that the subject of the email is too overt and as a result of that it is not from the originators of the—well you said emails, the Members of the particular Government.

I am saying that this is so untrue. Normally, people tend to be a little relaxed when they are sending emails to friends. Right? So, if I am sending an email to a friend I would tend to put a subject heading that relates to the information that is in the body of the email. So I want to know, how does the subject of the email indicate that the source of the email is not true? It just does not make sense and I sometimes wonder where is the intelligence of the Members of the other side?

Hon. Member: Where is the logic?

Miss A. Hospedales: Where is the logic? Where is their thinking originating from? It cannot be from the source of intellectualism, you know. It really cannot be.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the other argument they put forward is that there were typographical errors and I was nearly bowled off my seat this morning, you know, when I heard that, typographical errors in the email. All of us write emails and when you read it back you say, “Oh gosh, there was no subject-verb agreement”. Say, for example, I heard a Member saying that the word “loose” “L-O-O-S-E” was a wrong word and it was supposed to be “L-O-S-E”. I mean, I found that to be so nonsensical. What do typographical errors have to do with the source or the origination of an email? [*Desk thumping*] What does that have to do? It just does not make any sense. It makes no sense to me.

You know, the Member for Couva North asked, “Where is the evidence?”, “Where is the evidence?” Madam Deputy Speaker, what they need to know—and I wish she was sitting in her seat—is that what she needs to know is that the electrical footprint of the email—

Dr. Browne: Electronic.

Miss A. Hospedales:—the electronic footprint of the email will verify where the email has originated. So, even though they come here and they make all of these claims; the spelling was not correct; the subject heading was not correct; it was too overt; you know, all of these claims; the email address was not correct; whatever it may be, Madam Deputy Speaker, the electronic footprint will verify the source of the email. That is what they need to know today. [*Desk thumping*] So, I want to tell her that. That is where the evidence is.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the other thing is, they are asking about where is the evidence again. I could recall in 2010 where the hon. Prime Minister came in this House and she waved a folder, you know, claiming that all of those were names of people who were spied on, and it caused shock waves throughout the nation. People were—even ordinary citizens were afraid to use their bMobile phones and “plenty” people switched from bMobile to Digicel because they were afraid that they were being spied on; that their conversations were being listened.

I want to ask, where was the evidence? You know what we were told? Two Israeli men came and stole the files. That is the most ridiculous thing that we have ever heard in the history of this country. [*Crosstalk*] Two Israeli men came and stole the file—[*Desk thumping*] so ridiculous that not even the smallest child would have believed that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, she came here and she caused tremors of fear to be placed in the hearts of ordinary citizens, and not only that, she tried to defame the character of the hon. Member for San Fernando East, indicating that he was the one who was spying on people, et cetera. But there was no evidence. Then the other thing she also did is that she lost the case against a senior SAUTT officer who she claimed was spying on her. Madam Deputy Speaker, what happened is that the State had to pay out millions of dollars to this individual, because the claims were baseless—

Mr. Jeffrey: Bogus.

Miss A. Hospedales:—they were bogus.

8.10 p.m.

You know, I just want to say that there is no truth in anything that they say—[*Desk thumping*] and I really want the members of the population to remember the things that they have said to you that were not true. You cannot believe them.

Even the Member for St. Joseph came here, and he said that he did not even want to sit in his seat when he heard the Attorney General begin to speak. He did not even want to sit in his seat, because he said that whatever the Government had to say was indefensible. It was indefensible. [*Desk thumping*] And he also said that some of the emails that were read by our dear Opposition Leader led him to believe that the rest of the emails could also be true. [*Desk thumping*] He noted that in the emails as read by Dr. Rowley, the Attorney General advised the Prime Minister to send him home. He said he was shocked at that, but it has given him a lot of things to think about. He also said he followed the factual matrix, because, for every email there was an event that occurred and that was verified. For every email there was an event that verified the details in the email.

Madam Deputy Speaker, he said that he followed the factual matrix of the emails, and he said that when something has an undesigned coincidence, it becomes conjecture and can carry the circumstantial evidence of fact. He also said that the Attorney General should be sent home until the matter has been thoroughly investigated. [*Desk thumping*] And we agree, we agree, we agree with that as well. And he goes on to say that they have given him, again, food for thought, et cetera, et cetera.

Madam Deputy Speaker, a Member on their bench, a Member on their team has acknowledged this, right. [*Desk thumping*] He said anything that they had to say is indefensible.

Dr. Browne: UNC, UNC.

Mr. Jeffrey: “Is shame they shame.”

Miss A. Hospedales: There was a question that was asked, I think it was by the Attorney General, he said: where in Trinidad and Tobago can a Minister of Government threaten an editor that if they do not pull a story, they can pull ads? I think that was from the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, to be accurate. It sounds like him, yes. And we were also told that they never abused reporters and they never abused anyone in the media. [*Crosstalk*] That is what we were told. But I want to remind them, I want to remind them about September—about July 13, 2010.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the following statement was made by the Prime Minister at the close of a four-day Caricom Heads of Government Summit in

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Jamaica. I have to refer to this in order to connect the dots, right, and what was stated, what was said by the dear Prime Minister was that:

“We cannot continue that Trinidad and Tobago is like an ATM (cash dispenser) card...”

Dr. Browne: Terrible words, terrible words.

Miss A. Hospedales: “One of my officers said to me that Trinidad and Tobago is seen like an ATM card...you come in with the card and you come back out with cash.

It cannot happen anymore. It just cannot happen.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, apart from that, this particular statement caused a number of persons to criticize, you know, what was said, and on September 30, 2010, another statement was issued by the Prime Minister which caused much criticism across the region. Another one again, so the first was the ATM issue, the second one was:

“No help for Caricom countries hit by Tropical Storm Tomas without benefits to Trinidad and Tobago.”

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, she went on to say that:

“We will have to look at ways in which we would be able to assist. But you would recall my comments earlier this year, when I said there must be some way in which Trinidad and Tobago would also benefit.”

What we saw happen a little while after that is something that, you know, a lot of us in this country remained in shock over. Madam Deputy Speaker, Fazeer Mohammed—

Hon. Member: Ohhh.

Miss A. Hospedales:—was asked—asked a question everybody was asking at the time, concerning the Prime Minister’s statements, and he asked whether or not these statements, the one regarding the ATM Card [*Interruption*] and the one regarding Trinidad receiving benefits, whether or not it was said in a diplomatic way. Madam Deputy Speaker, people across the country, across the region, internationally agreed that her statement could have been made differently, and a lot of people said it lacked professionalism, it displayed arrogance, it was irresponsible—[*Desk thumping and interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Was damaging.

Miss A. Hospedales:—was very regrettable, was reckless, as the Member for Point Fortin said, was damaging, and some said that Trinidad and Tobago was embarrassed as a result of her statement.

To date, what would have happened is that during an interview with the Member for Tabaquite, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, there was a little toing and froing going back and forth with respect to the Member for Tabaquite asking the host whether or not he had an issue with the Prime Minister. And Fazeer Mohammed said no, he did not have an issue with the Prime Minister, he was just asking about the diplomacy, whether or not she could have said what she said in a different way, et cetera, et cetera. And there was a lot of toing and froing in that discussion. Madam Deputy Speaker, you know what happened after that? Fazeer Mohammed was fired.

Hon. Members: Ohhh, that is—[*Desk thumping*]

Miss A. Hospedales: Fazeer Mohammed was fired, and they want to say that they do not attack the media.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I wonder who is responsible for that?

Dr. Rambachan: You were responsible for it.

Miss A. Hospedales: So they are friends with the media, they do not attack the media. Fazeer Mohammed was fired.

Dr. Browne: “They did not want to cover Jack meeting this morning.”

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Ask the Member for Tabaquite.

Miss A. Hospedales: Many are still wondering why he was fired. What were the cost-cutting measures that existed at the CNMG at the time he was fired? So many people are still asking these questions and we all know it is none. There were no cost-cutting measures. He was fired because he appeared—there was a perception that he was against the Prime Minister.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Why are we not surprised?

Miss A. Hospedales: Madam Deputy Speaker, we must all connect the dots and we must not forget as a people. We must not forget. I am appealing to the members of the general population, we must not forget. They have told us a lot of untruths and we must not forget. We must all connect the dots. It is evident that this was an attack on the media. This was an attack on the media. There are so many statements and any member of the public can go and Google and we would be able to find story upon story upon story on the issues in the media.

This attack on the media was an attempt to intimidate talk show hosts and journalists. It was to intimidate them, back them against a wall, cause them to be afraid of losing their jobs.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Miss A. Hospedales:—because, I mean, once you have a job, you have security, you are able to, you know, do the things—you purchase things and take out loans, et cetera, so if you lose your job there is that sense of insecurity that comes with it. So a lot of them, through this, may have been intimidated and afraid to talk out.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it was an attack on the media. And you know what they did not want the media to tell us? They did not want them to tell us about the \$47 million contract that was awarded for the airport lighting project by the then Minister of Works and Transport who is no longer a member of the Cabinet and is no longer a Member of this House.

Dr. Browne: He coming back.

Miss A. Hospedales: That is what they did not want the media to report on or even investigate. As a result of the media reports and the constant discussions in the public domain, what had happened is that the contract was reviewed, it was pulled back and there was a review regarding the award of the contract.

8.20 p.m.

That is what happened. So there was a lot—a lot—of discourse in the public domain about that. Madam Deputy Speaker, another thing. They did not want the media to tell us about the SIA and the spy—the falsehood regarding the information that was presented in the House, you know, the folder that was waved and the intimidation that came as a result. Madam Deputy Speaker, they did not want the media to tell us about the SIA, the files that were destroyed by the two Israeli men, according to the Member for St. Joseph. They did not want the media to tell us about that.

Mr. Jeffrey: Yeah! [*Desk thumping*]

Miss A. Hospedales: Madam Deputy Speaker, they also did not want the media to tell us about Resmi Ramnarine and the IT degree that she got from the University of the West Indies—that she claimed, “eh”, she got from the University of the West Indies. They did not want the media to tell us about that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

They also did not want us to know that she never acted as chief of the Telecom Technology and never got permission to list one of her references, Roger Gibson, a senior technician of Research Associates of Trinidad and Tobago as a reference. They did not want us to know that. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister—they also did not want the media to tell us and to tell the population about the role of the Prime Minister in the appointment of Resmi Ramnarine. They did not want the media to tell us.

So they were trying to back the media against a wall, firing a talk show host so that the others will learn, “Hear what, if you all only talk out, we will fire you too.” “Yuh know?”

Mr. Jeffrey: Frightening them.

Miss A. Hospedales: That is what they were doing. Madam Deputy Speaker, up to today we do not know where those SIA files are. We do not know where they are being held. We do not know who were the spies. We do not know what was the real role of the Prime Minister in appointing Resmi Ramnarine. And there is still some evidence—there are still some things that we do not know, you know? So they are always evading the truth; always not accounting to the people of Trinidad and Tobago; not being transparent with the information that they need to provide in order for accountability and transparency to be on the increase in Trinidad and Tobago.

When you look at the issues that the Transparency International has raised, it is regarding lack of accountability, lack of transparency, and the Government continues to demonstrate that they will not be accountable and transparent to the people of this land, and, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a shame.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the media and the members of this population and even the Opposition, we were asked by the Prime Minister to move on—move on from the whole SIA thing. Move on! Move on! It is time to move on! But we still continue to have all these questions hanging over our heads, [*Desk thumping*] wondering exactly why these questions were not answered; why have they evaded the truth; why have they not been transparent, Madam Deputy Speaker. We were asked to move on but there are a lot of questions still to be asked.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the investigative journalists, they have come under heavy fire—heavy fire. It is reported in the media, it is either emails slandering their names, et cetera, et cetera. So the journalists and the talk show hosts, et cetera, they have come under heavy fire from the Government, and, despite all of that, we want to commend them for standing up for truth, for continually exposing the truth.

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Madam Deputy Speaker, you know what they also did not want the media to tell us, was that at the Nicky Minaj concert there was obscene language used, [*Desk thumping*] and, know, the use of obscene language in Trinidad and Tobago, you can get locked up for that—using obscene language. It is against the law. And, you know, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara came here and he denied it, but the investigations again—investigative reporting—brought the truth to light. [*Desk thumping*] Even the Member for Diego Martin Central also brought the truth to light.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as a result of that, the Member came to the House and he apologized because he had no other choice but to acknowledge that it was—he did not tell the truth and as a result of that he had to apologize to everyone for not telling the truth.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another thing they did not want the media to tell us about was that the same Minister, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, crashed a Prado. He crashed an SUV. For months—for months, for months—they tried to hide it, but it eventually came to light.

They also did not want us to know the truth about the grand—the Government tried to hide the truth regarding the so-called theft of the grand piano, and the Attorney General still—he owes [*Desk thumping*] the Member for San Fernando East an apology! He owes the Member for San Fernando East an apology and he owes the nation an apology! He never apologized [*Desk thumping*] for coming to this House and misleading the House and misleading the population, accusing the Member of San Fernando East of theft.

Mr. Jeffrey: “Is a misleading Government!”

Miss A. Hospedales: He has to apologize. That is why I want to agree, again, with the Member for St. Joseph. He has to step down. [*Desk thumping*] The Attorney General has to step down! He has to step down, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they also did not want us to know about the \$5 million cowshed that they built in the Savannah and the lack of procurement procedures in constructing that facility; and also in terms of the allegations of large sums of money being brought into this country by a Cabinet member, facilitating the whole bribery of CONCACAF officials. Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, it is so embarrassing when you think about all the things that they did and they wanted the media to stay silent on.

Mr. Jeffrey: Silent, yeah, yeah, yeah! [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: They wanted to hang the media.

Miss A. Hospedales: We have to—yes, we really commend the media. We really commend all the investigative [*Desk thumping*] reporters, the talk show hosts. We commend them.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Keep the Government in line.

Miss A. Hospedales: We commend them for the work that they have done. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is the media's exposure of the Government's incompetence, failure, deceit, that have been the focus of continuous attacks from Government Ministers.

You know, another thing we did not talk about was the failed state of emergency.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Awwww!

Miss A. Hospedales: The failed state of emergency, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Dr. Browne: Unjustified!

Miss A. Hospedales: You know the *crème de la crème* of all, the section 34 scenario, [*Desk thumping*] the sinister plan, Madam Deputy Speaker, that resulted in numerous attacks on the media officials by Members of the Government—of this UNC-led Government.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Unholy!

Dr. Browne: They leading themselves. “Dey ent ha nobody tuh lead.”

Miss A. Hospedales: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is reported Denyse Renne of the *Trinidad Guardian* and Asha Javeed of the *Trinidad Express* have been the target of public accusations and criticisms by leading Members of the Government. And they are saying that they do not attack the media? I mean, this is crazy.

So we had instances where the then Minister of—and he was, at the time, the Minister of National Security—someone who should be assisting to protect and to serve and to maintain law and order and democracy was attacking the journalists, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jeffrey: “Dah why he outside now.”

Miss A. Hospedales: Not only that, the Attorney General also joined in the attack, attacking the media, indicating that they are PNM; they are conspiring with the PNM to disgrace the Government, et cetera.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: He never has anything good to say.

Miss A. Hospedales: Madam Deputy Speaker, there were a number of individuals who came out against what was taking place. The Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago condemned what it called a smear campaign against Renne and Javeed and declared that personal attacks in response to news reports are not a valid or acceptable means of discrediting the information unearthed by journalists.

So Madam Deputy Speaker, there were a lot of individuals who came out and spoke against these individuals against the Ministers of Government who were constantly attacking the media.

8.30 p.m.

You know, the Attorney General was quoted as saying in the *Guardian* newspaper dated September 29, 2012—he claimed that all the columnists in the *Express* never had anything good to say about the Government.

Dr. Browne: Who said that?

Miss A. Hospedales: That is what he was claiming, the Attorney General. [Crosstalk] The Attorney General made those claims.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah, it comes up with some frequency.

Miss A. Hospedales: He said not one of them had a positive line to write about the Government.

“That kind of imbalance is something that calls for self-analysis and self-introspection by the media itself.”

That is what he was saying.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the same Attorney General who accused Brig. Peter Joseph of not telling the truth. He accused—why was the Attorney General not fired for section 34? [Desk thumping] Why was he not fired for accusing an upstanding member of society and indicating that he was not telling the truth? [Crosstalk]

Madam Deputy Speaker, another thing I want to highlight is the fact that—and it has been in the domain of the media, that the Prime Minister knows nothing.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Never does.

Miss A. Hospedales: She knows nothing about Resmi Ramnarine, knows nothing about section 34, knows nothing about Jack Warner—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Knows nothing.

Miss A. Hospedales:—knows nothing about the SIA files, knows nothing at all. We know that this is far, far, far from the truth. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Deputy Speaker, another thing that they said, they, not attacking the media. They are friends, right? They are friends with the media. They are buddies, bosom buddies with the media. But, you know, they came up with this great theory that they want daily programmes to highlight all their accomplishments and everything like that.

Mr. Jeffrey: What accomplishments?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Imagine that.

Miss A. Hospedales: “I want to ask the Member for La Brea, what accomplishments they really talking about?” What accomplishments?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Lies, lies and more lies.

Miss A. Hospedales: So they want to highlight all their accomplishments and insist that—or they wanted to bully the media into accepting that they must highlight their programmes during the day.

What the article stated, the headline is “Govt wants daily programme on its accomplishments” on September 27, 2012.

“The Government wants one hour per day of State-produced programming on its accomplishments to be aired on local radio and TV stations.”

Hon. Member: “I get dah too.”

Miss A. Hospedales:

“It also wants more local content programming on TV and radio stations operating in Trinidad and Tobago.”

And listen to the threat:

“And if it is unable to persuade media houses to increase local content on the airwaves, Government may consider, as a last resort, introducing new laws to make TV and radio stations broadcast more local programmes”—to bring on more local programmes.

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So, Madam Deputy Speaker, they said—they literally threatened the media, stating, “If you do not comply with our demands, we are going to bring legislation that will ensure that what we want, we get.” This is the kind of bullying tactics they have been using constantly. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Douglas: Bullying tactics? That will be the day.

Miss A. Hospedales: In another issue I want to highlight regarding the Government and their Ministers, in October of 2012, the communications Minister, Jamal Mohammed, came under fire for attacking TV6 and the *Express* in an email, which he had described as a personal and private opinion. He had sent—he said well, basically he sent the email in the capacity of an individual and not in the capacity as a Minister. I do not know he could have separated the two.

Dr. Browne: Oh, that is Jamal? The classic comment.

Miss A. Hospedales: I really do not know he could have separated the two. In the email he accused the TV6 and *Express* of being in cahoots with the Opposition People’s National Movement, just imagine that, because they were highlighting the truth, exposing them, constantly bringing to light the sinister deals or deeds of the Members of the Government. That is what they were doing.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is what the Minister—this is supposed to be the communications Minister—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Of the Cabinet.

Miss A. Hospedales:—for the Government, a member of the Cabinet. This is what he was sending via email in an attempt to destabilize—he said that the *Express* and TV6 were in cahoots with the PNM in an effort to destabilize the Government through biased reporting. Prior to that, the Minister had also sent an email to the *Express* journalist taking issue with an article claiming that it was taken out of context and resulting in doctors calling him to find out if he had thoughts of committing suicide. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the kind of crazy thinking, this is the kind of crazy action—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Crazy! Crazy! [*Desk thumping*]

Miss A. Hospedales:—of the Members of the Government. They have constantly attacked the media. It is not now, it has been from the day they were elected into office. It is a constant attack on the media.

Dr. Browne: They are obsessed with the media.

Miss A. Hospedales: There were numerous individuals and even organizations that came out against this kind of behaviour with respect to the Government's behaviour.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another one again, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara. He announced that he was taking legal action against a *Guardian* journalist. He even went as far as attacking the individual, attacking this particular journalist, attacking her publicly, talking about her personal life, "where she got her vehicle from, where she living, where she get the money to buy it, et cetera."

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: My goodness!

Dr. Browne: We condemn that conduct.

Miss A. Hospedales: I mean, it was really, really really despicable, to hear how this Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara [*Desk thumping*] has been getting on with respect to this particular journalist.

Again, you know, the Attorney General on April 04, 2013 described a T&T *Express* news story as grievous violation of journalistic code of ethics.

Dr. Browne: Anand again.

Miss A. Hospedales: Again, again, in the media, attacking the media constantly—constantly attacking the media. But, guess what, the *crème de la crème* of all the Members of the Government side, the Prime Minister—

Dr. Browne: Oh, yes.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Let us hear. Let us hear.

Miss A. Hospedales: The Prime Minister in one of her statements on one of their Monday night meetings claimed—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: "Is the Monday night Rowley showdown."

Miss A. Hospedales:—declared that there were rogue elements in the media and that was worrisome.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is from the top.

Miss A. Hospedales: Madam Deputy Speaker, just imagine that, not only did the Prime Minister say nothing when the members of her Cabinet were attacking the media, not just—they attacked male and they attacked female. Even though, you know, as a female, you might want to empathize with the female and say "Oh

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gosh, Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, doh rough up de girl so nah", you know, that kind of thing, as a female you empathizing with a female—

Mr. Jeffrey: Right.

Miss A. Hospedales:—you know the Member for Siparia sat there and said nothing and [*Desk thumping*] then came out and attacked—she came out and attacked the media—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Heartless!

Miss A. Hospedales:—by saying that they there are rogue elements in the media. Guess why? She is saying that because they are reporting the truth. [*Desk thumping*] “Because, they reporting the truth constantly, she comes out and attacks them.” It is a very sad, sad, day for Trinidad and Tobago when we can have a leader of the nation attacking the media and coming out and attacking the media in such a way.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in this report on March 27, 2013 it says, the headline “Kamla trying to intimidate media.” In this report, Ms. Suzanne Shepherd from the *Guardian* stated.

“It is very sad at this stage in Trinidad and Tobago’s development where we have a female Prime Minister that women in the media are being subjected to these kinds of attacks...” [*Desk thumping*]

You know, the Member for Oropouche West came here and she stood up and she talked about the Prime Minister being a woman and being caring and all sorts of things.

Dr. Browne: She knows not what she says.

8.40 p.m.

Miss A. Hospedales: Agreed! She knows not what she says, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Prime Minister did not, you know she did not say anything, and basically the women in the media were being subjected to all sorts of attacks and we heard nothing, nothing from the Government, nothing in defence of these women, nothing from their communication Minister; [*Desk thumping*] not one thing!

Dr. Browne: [*Inaudible*] San Fernando West.

Miss A. Hospedales: Nothing from, yes, San Fernando West. Nothing! Nothing! Nothing from Tobago East.

Hon. Members: Silence.

Miss A. Hospedales: We heard nothing, nothing from the Member for Couva North and Oropouche West. We heard nothing from them regarding the attacks—*[Interruption]* Excuse me, Madam?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Go right ahead.

Miss A. Hospedales: “We heard nothing from none of these Members of the Government when their male counterparts attacked the female journalists in the media.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, Miss Shepherd further went on to state:

“I think the Prime Minister’s use of the word rogue elements is perhaps inappropriate.”

It is not perhaps inappropriate, it is inappropriate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is really, really, really, really very sad to see Members of the Government continuously attacking the media over and over and over again, and I just want to highlight one thing. The Deputy Director of the International Press Institute said:

“While the personal attacks and allegations against the Denyse Renne and Asha Javeed are unacceptable in any context, the fact that public officials”—Members of the Government—“are at the forefront of the abuse is particularly troubling.” *[Desk thumping]*

Troubling! That is what they said.

“One critical responsibility of journalism is precisely to investigate the actions of elected governments, and public officials should remember that, in a democracy, the price of power is heightened scrutiny.”

So what they are saying is that the media has a responsibility to investigate—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You must repeat that.

Miss A. Hospedales:— to scrutinize, *[Desk thumping]* to question because it is their job. In a democracy it is their job. We are not living in a communist society. It is the responsibility—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Miss A. Hospedales: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, so, the media has a responsibility in a democratic society to scrutinize, to investigate, to question the Government, to question public officials. So when you see Members of the Government coming out and attacking the media for their job, they are doing their job. It is their responsibility to bring to the fore the issues that are very troubling. To bring to the fore, it is their responsibility. If they had not dug in and investigated the way that they had, a lot of us may have been in the dark regarding section 34 and so many other issues. [*Crosstalk*]

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, again, we really want to commend the media, the members of the media community for the work that they have done, constantly bringing [*Desk thumping*] to light the information, investigating and bringing it to light. So when the Government attacks them it is very, very troubling, but you know what? They attack conveniently some of them and embrace some of them, and I want to take you back to the Sasha Mohammed issue.

Dr. Browne: Oooh!

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Oh, yes!

Miss A. Hospedales: Sasha Mohammed under the name Janice Thomas was sending threatening emails to members of the media. [*Desk thumping*] She was an employee, at the time, in the Office of the Prime Minister, working for the Prime Minister, sending threatening emails to members of the media, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, when the Prime Minister was asked about her knowledge of any of the things that Sasha Mohammed would have done, again, "I doh know". That was her response. "I doh know."

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: In the dark; always in the dark.

Miss A. Hospedales: The thing is, even when the allegations were glaring, basically her response was like, "Well, innocent until proven guilty. You know, the evidence needs to be there", and it is the same response that she had with Jack Warner, the same response. Do you know what she does conveniently? Conveniently treats some a particular way and conveniently [*Desk thumping*] treats others with disdain, [*Desk thumping*] because we have seen in her Government several Members of the Government being fired. Right? [*Desk thumping*] But when it comes to others, she keeps them on a pedestal— [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Especially the women.

Miss A. Hospedales:—in a glass case close to her.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Women are fired.

Miss A. Hospedales: You know it really, really is troubling. Yes, as the Member for Point Fortin indicated, women, a lot of women have been fired from her Government and it is really sad.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the emails that were sent from “Janice Thomas better known in reality as Sasha Mohammed”, you know, were threatening emails to members of the media and that by itself is troubling. A member of the Prime Minister’s staff sending threatening emails to members of the media, and that is how they attack the media. They said they do not attack the media, they are friends with the media, [*Desk thumping*] they pat the media on their backs— [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: When it suits them. Only when it suits them.

Miss A. Hospedales: Madam Deputy Speaker, the evidence says otherwise. The evidence says otherwise.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this evening I really want to commend our Opposition Leader for bringing this Motion. [*Desk thumping*] I really want to commend him because despite the fact that the Government would stand and they would deny the claims and they will try to distance themselves from it and that kind of thing, the reality is that it can be verified. The verification of the emails can be done, and through the electronic footprint. I am sure many, many, many of them would bow their heads in shame and will not be able to lift their heads in Trinidad and Tobago again, because they have brought this nation into shame and disgrace and we are saying to them: “You all who have done this to our nation will be disgraced to the point you cannot lift your head, [*Desk thumping*] not even internationally.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, again I said, it is important that this matter be investigated thoroughly, not by the police commissioner.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Acting.

Miss A. Hospedales: We are still waiting—not by the acting police commissioner. We are still waiting on the final investigation of the Flying Squad. We are still waiting on the evidence. What information they have provided with respect to the then Minister of National Security, Jack Warner? [*Interruption*]

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Where is the evidence? We are still waiting. We would like to agree, let there be an independent body. [*Desk thumping*] Let there be an independent body to investigate this particular issue and bring the information to the members of the population and let them judge.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing I would like to say, if there is no freedom of expression, there is no democracy, and as a people, Trinidad and Tobago, we have gone to 50 years, 51 this year, we must ensure that our democracy is preserved and we must ensure that when we are given the opportunity to come out and vote, that we vote the UNC-led Government out of office. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Very well done.

8.50 p.m.

The Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to begin by congratulating particularly my colleague, the Member for Oropouche West, Minister of State in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, for a very, very good contribution yesterday [*Desk thumping*] and a very supportive Minister in my Ministry, as I congratulate all the Ministers and Members of Parliament who have contributed on my side to this debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am joining this debate on what has been described and what is essentially a vacuous, misconceived, empty, hollow, null and void, frivolous Motion, and one that is a complete waste of precious parliamentary time. It is a Motion that is frivolous, designed to create mischief, sow seeds of mistrust between the Government and the public, and in particular between the Government and the media.

I will demonstrate—contrary to what the Member for Arouca/Maloney is saying—that it is really the PNM who have had the history of attacking the media and degrading the media and debasing the media in this country, whereas we have demonstrated within recent times that it is the People's Partnership that has moved to create ground-breaking efforts on the part of the Government with respect to the laws which govern criminal libel and which can be found in sections 8 and 9 of the Libel and Defamation Act, Chap. 11:16.

You will recall very recently that it is this Government that removed the criminal libel parts of that legislation, thus freeing up the journalists, in fact, to

even, have greater powers and greater freedom in order to carry out their duties as they should carry them out without fear in Trinidad and Tobago, and as they are protected under the Constitution.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a frivolous Motion because my colleagues have shown on this side that the emails alleging conspiracy and criminal conduct or intent are fabrications and have no basis in truth. What is happening here is that the Opposition is trying to create fear on the eve of a local government election, and what they are doing is not very different from the Calcutta ship in January 2013 in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is all! What they are doing is just trying to repeat the same strategy that they tried in Tobago, trying to drive fear—politics by fear or politics through fear.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what happened in Parliament yesterday in terms of the accusations made by the Leader of the Opposition, and the accusations that continue through the lips of all the Members on the Opposition, not only brought the Parliament to a new low, but showed that the Leader of the Opposition is definitely unsuited for leadership of a country, much less leadership of a party. [*Desk thumping*] I will invent a term to describe what happen. He brought his own creditability to a high low. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] “Ah high low! Dats what happened! Ah never see ah low so high.” That is the kind of way that he debased and degenerated in terms of his credibility.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when you cannot be believed, when your credibility is gone, then you cannot be trusted, and therefore, what is happening on that side, we are seeing an Opposition that cannot be trusted with power in this country again, because they are intent upon using untruths in order to bolster their position. How can you trust someone in office with power when they are intent upon using untruths? Madam Deputy Speaker, the Opposition Leader is not in any way suited for the leadership of this country. What a shame.

Hon. Member: What a shame!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: You see, credibility is about the quality of one’s character, and to hear Members of the Opposition Bench speak of these emails as truth leaves a lot to be desired, and it speaks about their lack of other human values which promote decency and integrity in public life. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is one thing, you know, to speak an untruth, but it is another thing when a person begins to believe in those untruths. This makes a danger and it makes a dangerous individual.

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I give warning to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that when people speak untruths and when they begin to believe those untruths, then you have a dangerous individual or dangerous groups of persons in your country. I just want to remind, you know, my colleagues on the Opposition Bench that there is something called bearing false witness against another.

Hon. Member: Ahhh!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And I think, you know, not only in Christianity, but also in my own religion, my own religion, the question is asked: what are the worst sins? The first one that comes up listed: to bear false witness against another.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this brings me to the point where I want to start my contribution, and it has to do with the whole question of ethics in public life. There was an English Jurist by the name of John Fletcher Moulton, and going back to 1924, Fletcher defined ethics as “obedience to the unenforceable”. Fletcher distinguished three important areas of human action: law, free choice and ethics.

Now, what Fletcher was saying is that at one end, there is a law which is the realm of the enforceable, and it is in this area—the law of the enforceable or the realm of the enforceable—where society would be able to impose some form of punishment for disobedience to accepted rules, for example, punishment for unlawful taking of human life. At the other extreme is the arena of human choice where the law does not and ought not to intrude. That arena will include, for example, the freedom to choose one’s spouse, the freedom to choose one’s religion. But between the law of the unenforceable and the law of the enforceable is a wide area, and that area is the area of ethics—the realm of ethics—where the law does not reach and where absolute freedom does not also rule.

In the words of Moulton, which I quote, he said:

“It is the domain of obedience to the unenforceable.”

—that is called ethics.

“That obedience is the obedience of a man to that which he cannot be forced to obey. He is the enforcer of the law upon himself.”

So that, for Moulton, the true test of the worth of a nation—and may I add an individual or an organization like a political organization—lies in the scope of this

ethical middle ground, and the broader it is, the greater is the nation. To quote Moulton again:

“Mere obedience to the law does not measure the greatness of a nation”—because—“[Such obedience] can easily be obtained by a strong executive, and most easily of all by a timorous people. Nor is the license of behaviour which so often accompanies the absence of law, and which is miscalled liberty, a proof of greatness. The true test is the extent to which the individuals composing the nation can be trusted to obey the self-imposed law.”

—and I will explain. [*Desk thumping*]

Because, you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, we can think of Moulton’s definition of ethics in relation to some examples, for example, a worker who feigns illness and the doctor unhesitatingly gives him a certificate, or the doctor who performs an expensive procedure when a simpler and more economical one would have sufficed. But to these, Madam Deputy Speaker, we can add many more, for example, a politician who tries to stretch the truth in order to win power, or makes promises, which he or she knows can never be fulfilled in order to win an election, or an employer who sends out his new worker into a neighbourhood of crime and violence without any warning or words of caution, and we may consider all of these to be ethically unacceptable. But, you know what? They are not easily brought under the realm of the enforceable. So what is the point?

The point here is that there are many aspects of morality which are not covered by the law. I do not want to use the word “lying” but untruthfulness is considered immoral, but the law, you know—it is interesting—the law does not prohibit untruthfulness or lying except in specific cases such as perjury. Another important difference between law and ethics is that while law gives some significance to intention and motive, people are not usually punished simply for having an illegal intention.

9.00 p.m.

It is not possible to legislate against wrong intentions. From an ethical standpoint, intentions are wrong even when there are no rules against them; from an ethical standpoint. So, if I go to a friend’s home with the intention of stealing his jewellery when he leaves the room, and I never get the opportunity to do so, my intentions are morally wrong, even though I cannot be charged with any crime. What happened here yesterday was morally wrong [*Desk thumping*] and

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this nation of Trinidad and Tobago is tonight and since yesterday condemning the moral wrong that has been perpetrated upon this nation by the Leader of the Opposition and all the Members on the other side.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the nation has already begun to judge the moral wrong of the Opposition perpetrated under the protection of the cover of Parliament. That is my first point, Madam Deputy Speaker. That brings me to the point that I think we so—we try to rise in terms of who we want people to believe we are, but yet we come and bear false witness against others and go against the very grain of the traditions which we claim to support and the morality that we claim to uphold to the highest levels.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this brings me to the contribution of the Member for Arouca/Maloney. And you know what? She has proven that if she can go into the business of recycling, she would do very well as a businesswoman; very, very well. [*Desk thumping, laughter and crosstalk*] Every time she speaks in this Parliament, the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney, she recycles the same speech that she did in 2010. She will do very well. I want to encourage her that NEDCO is there, that she can get a loan and go into the business of recycling. It is very, very lucrative indeed. [*Crosstalk*]

But she is also an alarmist and, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier, it is one thing to speak of an untruth, but it is another thing to believe that very untruth. Then you become a dangerous person and dangerous persons must never be allowed into the corridors of power. She speaks about evading transparency and accountability, of this Partnership evading transparency and accountability. “Yeah?” Let me ask the question, one simple thing. What is the record of the Opposition, the PNM, in answering questions that were filed in Parliament when we were in Opposition? What is their record?

Mr. Indarsingh: One year. “They take one year to answer.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Up to one year. What is the record of the People’s Partnership? The hon. Leader of Government Business, Dr. Moonilal, the Member for Oropouche East, will tell you that we have at least a 95 per cent or if not higher record of answering questions in this Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] We have never evaded answering questions. So when you want to talk about transparency and when you want to talk about accountability, talk about the People’s Partnership Government [*Desk thumping*] who have set a track record, who have set new standards for accountability and transparency in this Parliament.

Mr. Indarsingh: We have set the bar.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: What is the record of the Government in debating Motions that are filed in this Parliament? This is what, the fourth Motion like this we are debating? The fourth one. Have we run from them? Have we been afraid to come here and answer to the people? Have we been afraid to do that? But what happened in 2010? The first Motion that was filed against the then Prime Minister and the Government they ran. They ran and called elections.

And what happened? They ran for cover, they fled, and the people of this country saw a bunch of cowards, they saw a bunch of cowards, Madam Deputy Speaker, and they voted against those cowards, and they unceremoniously removed them from office because the citizens rejected not just cowardice but corruption, arrogance, self-serving behaviour, mismanagement, Calder Hart et al.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney talks about the electronic footprint will reveal the truth. Yes, it will reveal the truth, and that is why the Prime Minister immediately yesterday sent it where it was supposed to be sent six months ago [*Desk thumping*] which is to the Acting Commissioner of Police and the cybercrime unit in order to investigate this. For six months—this has been said in the Parliament but it is worth saying it again—for six months the hon. Leader of the Opposition kept that information to himself.

I remember about two months ago, or maybe even more, he stood there and I was here and he said, “I am coming for you”, referring to me, not realizing that he had these emails or what have you, or alleged emails, or contrived emails, six months, and was waiting for a moment to think that he has something big, some bombshell to hit into the population. For six months you kept this information, information in which you alleged that the life of a journalist may have been in jeopardy, but you did nothing with that information.

I wonder, I am not a lawyer, but if you have information that suggests criminal intent, and you withhold that information, is there a fine for that? Is there a fine for that, aiding and abetting? Is there a fine for that? So it may be interesting when the electronic footprint trace is done, what will happen. Because, you see, if you talk about the electronic footprint, when you look at some of these emails that came here—now, when you see an email, you normally see “From”, who is the person sending it, then you might see the date below that, and then you see to whom it is sent, and then you see what, whether—the subject and so on.

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What is interesting about these emails, is, this one says “From: captaingarygriffith@hotmail...” “To: anan@gmail...” and then “a-n-a-n-d@tstt”—I understand you cannot send two emails like that—but then comes the date and just comes two lines. Now, the next one now, look at its construct. It says, “From kamlapb1@gmail...”, then comes the date, then “To” and then “Subject:...Urgent” and then what you go. Then comes the third one, and the third one then puts “Urgent” on top, “Subject” on top, then “To: kamlapb1 from anan@gmail...” and then the date. And each one is constructed differently, cut and paste.

It is so glaring the fabrication that when you go through this you recognize what is happening here, and this is why I say contriving to bear false witness to others is morally wrong, and that has its own punishment in the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, furthermore, the Leader of the Opposition is, in my view, and I say this with due respect, under obligation to reveal to the police, to reveal to this Parliament, do not, the source of the emails. I do not think that handing it over to the Leader of Government Business is sufficient. I think that there are laws in this country against the hacking of emails, and I think a failure to reveal the source by hiding under the cloak of parliamentary privilege is an act of cowardice, and cowardice is not the characteristic of a leader; it is not.

And so you cannot compare the Leader of the Opposition to the Prime Minister, who has always displayed courage in terms of what she is doing and fearlessness in terms of her stint as a Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] That is chalk and cheese. The Prime Minister is a leader who has demonstrated that she leads and she takes decisions where those decisions have to be taken.

You know, if, Leader of the Opposition, you are sure, so sure of the validity of your emails, then name your source or hold your peace. You know, and she talked about transparency, Member for Arouca/Maloney. Where is the transparency regarding the church in Guanapo? Where is prophetess Julia Pena? Why does she not show herself? Why does she not show herself? Why not? Why did Calder Hart leave Trinidad and Tobago and would not return to Trinidad and Tobago?

You know, it is not the People’s Partnership Government who has a history of people running away, you know. John O’Halloran was never a member of the People’s Partnership, you know. Prevatt was never a member of the People’s Partnership, you know, and Ou Wai, you know. And one died in Costa Rica, I believe—[*Interruption*]—or whoever, and the other one, there is the O’Halloran towers we have heard so much about in Canada, and what have you. It is not us,

you know. Go back to your own history and see that it is your people who ran away when the law was after them for corruption, and when you, your then leaders, covered for them in the country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this leads me to ask the question as to what is the strategy of the Opposition with this debate and debates similar to this. My belief is, what is happening here is, as I said, one, there is the intent to try to drive fear into the people, again, with respect to this Government. But you know what? The Prime Minister, despite all of that, continues to have a high credibility in this country. And even today, you know, in the *Trinidad Guardian* of today, there is a poll that is going on by ANSA McAl. And the headline says, “PP gets fair rating on the economy”, but if you read the poll, you would see that 66 per cent of the poll rate the performance of the PP Government from fair to excellent, [*Desk thumping*] and 34 per cent rate it between poor and extremely poor.

9.10 p.m.

Two-thirds of this population is saying that we are doing a fairly good job of the economy. [*Desk thumping*] And you have to understand that in the context of what I am talking where we started \$25 billion hole in terms of Clico; we started with having to pay off debts; we started with the 700 million HCU debt and so on. We, resolved that, and we started off with a number of industrial relations agreements that were left in abeyance and we have settled close to 50 of those, bringing about industrial peace in this country which the former Government—the PNM—refused to deal with and left the people without their back pay and left the people without their due worth.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when my colleagues spoke about a performing Government, this is a performing Government. This is a high-performance Government. Why? Because we have a good leader; a leader with vision; and because we have a mission, which is prosperity for all, and we have been working along those lines in order to create that prosperity.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they talk about attacks upon the institutions of the country. Well, today’s *Trinidad Guardian* has a headline “Judiciary immune from interference says CJ’s office”. I will read it for you, because one of the institutions they say that we have attacked and we are trying to manipulate, undermine or what have you, is the Judiciary. It is a Dereck Achong article.

“The Judiciary is immune from political interference. This was the word from the Judiciary’s information and protocol manager, Jones P Madeira, in a brief telephone interview yesterday. Madeira made the comment in response to

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Opposition Leader Dr. Keith Rowley's contribution to the debate on his motion of no confidence in Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the Government.

In the debate, Rowley referred to e-mails allegedly sent between senior government officials in which Chief Justice Ivor Archie was described as 'usually co-operative' with the government. In a direct response to this, Madeira said: 'Chief Justice Archie and the Judiciary are independent and are not influenced by politics.' Madeira said he had not heard Rowley's entire contribution and...could not comment further.

He noted, however, that Archie's main interactions with politicians was when he chaired an inter-ministerial/justice sector committee which deals with issues affecting the Judiciary and the judicial system."

I continue in this article:

"The e-mails referred to by Rowley also dealt with the possibility that Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Roger Gaspard could be offered a position as a High Court judge so he could be replaced as DPP.

On this, Madeira said: 'Mr. Gaspard has not asked to be a judge, he has not applied...' to be a judge

"...has not been invited by the Judiciary to apply.' Several calls...made to Gaspard's cellphone last evening went unanswered and he did not return calls."

What attack, therefore? Even the Judiciary is saying, "We are independent and immune from political interference." And yet you have an Opposition Bench who is trying to convince the population that we are undermining the Judiciary when, in fact, everything done by this Government is done to support the Judiciary and when Government observes the separation of powers in this country and continues to do so.

Give me instances, Members of the Opposition, where in three years this Government has failed to observe the separation of powers between the Executive, the Judiciary and what have you. Give me examples. You have not come up with one example to suggest that in the country. So the first thing I want to say is that what is happening here is that this is a clearly orchestrated attempt, by Members of the Opposition, to create animosity between the members of the Partnership and between the Government and the media.

It was instructive, you know, that yesterday, when the Member for Port of Spain South spoke, she went to lengths to call out the names of all the members of the COP, asking them to—in my own words—disassociate themselves from the Partnership. Well, today, the hon. Member of Parliament and the Minister of Legal Affairs, the hon. Prakash Ramadhar, answered very eloquently and succinctly about this matter. [*Desk thumping*] I want to congratulate him for what was an excellent, excellent contribution he made to this House. He demolished the attempt to create animosity and division between the Partnership.

Listen, this is a coalition, and in a coalition you will expect differences of opinion, but in the three years we have been together we have been able to act maturely and to rise above those differences and to have one mission, one nation that we are one in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago and all the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago.

The second point and strategy that the Opposition is trying dangerous is to create hate—I said they were dangerous people and you will understand—from the media for Members of the Government. Yes, there have been differences of opinion and views between the media and the Government; it exists all about. You go to London right now—to the UK—and there are differences between the Government and the media, but if there is one Government which respects the media, and which preserves the freedom of the media, in line with the constitutional protection to the media, it is the Government of Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is interesting, you know. When the head of the IPI came to Trinidad a couple weeks ago, the head of the IPI made a very interesting statement about press freedom in Trinidad. It was on May 03, 2013 that the Executive Director of the International Press Institute actually commended freedom of press in Trinidad, saying and I quote her:

“The media here is very vibrant. I think there’s a lot of press freedom in T&T”. She noted that the Government’s move to amend the criminal libel law confirmed the administration’s commitment to a free press. [*Desk thumping*] This is coming from the IPI.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Opposition would want this nation to believe that this Government is somehow at war with the media. I have just quoted for you the International Press Institute which is saying that the media enjoys a productive and harmonious relationship with the Government, but what is the view of press freedom when the PNM were in office as a Government?

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Madam Deputy Speaker, the World Press Freedom Reviews examine the state of media around the world, documenting press freedom violations and major media developments; and, divided into specific regions, each report provides a comprehensive overview of the year's events and may be contrasted with the events of previous years. In 2005 this is what they had to say—"World Press Freedom Review 2005":

Freedom of the media is generally respected, although as in 2004, on certain issues, relations between the PNM Government and the media continued to be strained. A major issue of contention was the Government's draft national broadcasting code designed to deter talk radio stations. The Publishers and Broadcasters Association said the code is unacceptable as it infringes on every citizen's right to freedom of thought, expression and freedom of the press.

The Association of Caribbean Media Workers said it violated the Chapultepec declaration, an international treaty that forbids Governments from suppressing media rights. The then President Wesley Gibbings said this draft code has to be:

"...the most shameless attempt to impose a regime of censorship on the media."

And you talk about attack on the media? You talk about relationship with the media? Let us turn to 2006.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the review in 2006, under the PNM, showed that on certain issues, the relationship between the PNM Government and the media was very strained and the chairman of the Trinidad Media Complaints Council at that time was concerned about the draft Constitution that the PNM was proposing for Trinidad and Tobago at that time, saying that there were sections which made it possible for the State to pass legislation to restrict the operation of a free media. And he was right, because what—the PNM was proposing to include in the draft Constitution which stated that:

"...everyone has the right to freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, [but] this shall not prevent the state from requiring licensing or other forms of regulation of any means of broadcasting or publishing data to the public."

You know what? The report also noted that the PNM Member of Parliament, Lawrence Achong, accused TV6's programme host, Andy Johnson, and other local journalists of being anti-PNM and said that CCN that owns the *Express* Newspaper and TV6 was anti-government.

World Press Freedom Review, 2007: commenting on media freedom, the Review in 2007 noted that a “major issue of contention was ‘the authorities’ interventions in the context of simmering ethnic tensions.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, this review reported the heavily criticized PNM Government’s actions in blocking Mr. Inshan Ishmael’s television programme, and the subsequent charging of Mr. Ishmael under the Anti-Terrorism Act. The same Wesley Gibbings, who spoke so well of this Government on state advertising as a means of reward, stated then that it was his belief that Ishmael was punished for his utterances in clear contravention of his right to free expression. Mr. Gibbings then voiced the fear that the introduction of the anti-terrorism legislation would be used to stifle dissent and silence voices of protest and that those fears were proven to be well founded. Under whom? The PNM.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the media under this Government has no such fears. Since 2010 the media has been vibrant and healthy, and there is continued growth of the press and other forms of media in the country, just to recap, “eh”. The country presently enjoys access to eight television broadcasters in Trinidad; one TV broadcasting service via cable; nine subscription television broadcasters; 37 FM radio broadcasters; one AM radio broadcaster; three national daily newspapers; 10 weekly and specialty newspapers; two Tobago newspapers; two mobile telephone providers; seven internet providers; two landline telephone providers. That is what you enjoy under this Government. We never closed down a radio station. We never closed down a TV station. We have done nothing of that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to do a little comparison of this Government’s approach and the PNM’s approach to freedom of expression by protesters against government policy. I want to remind this House and the Members opposite about the PNM’s treatment of anybody who dared to criticize PNM policy. Let us talk about the PNM’s handling of a protesting David Abdulah on December 18, 2009, during an anti-tax protest in Port of Spain, the same David Abdulah who is today eating at the same table and drinking at the same table. Maybe he has forgotten what they did to him.

Abdulah was leading a people’s democracy protest against the proposed property tax outside the Red House when a confrontation took place between police and the demonstrators. At the same time the House of Representatives was discussing the tax measure. Abdulah told the media police approached him, questioned him about the march and he said they wanted to know under whose name permission was granted to march. It was reported that two police vehicles went on the scene and spoke to Abdulah and Ancil Roget, President General, of

course, of the OWTU, and asked them to get the protesters to keep the noise level down. Roget indicated that the people were not acting illegally and went back to the picketers. Following this discussion, the police intercepted.

9.20 p.m.

Approximately 20 or more officers of the Guard and Emergency Branch began to push the protestors back with their batons. They claimed that they needed to clear the public passageway to the Parliament as the gateway to the Chamber was then locked, and when Abdulah complained about the use of force, he was grabbed by the back of his pants. Batons were pulled out, protestors and police then began pushing each other. The protestors claimed brutality.

The police threw Abdulah into the back seat of a parked police SUV. Women were pushed back. Men were struck with batons and placards were torn and discarded and Abdulah was then taken to the Central Police Station and charged with obstructing the free passageway in violation of section 61 of the Highways Act, Chap. 48:01. He spent more than an hour in police custody before he was released on \$500 bail.

That is how protestors were treated. Tell me, show me, under this Government where any protestor in this country was treated like how Abdulah was treated. The right to freedom of dissent, the right to criticize this Government, is something that has been respected for the three years that we have in office as a People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*]

If I want to go back further, if you want to go back further, remind this country about former Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, 2003/2004 national budget speech in Parliament, whilst the then UNC MP for Chaguanas, Manohar Ramsaran and Caroni Central MP, Dr. Hamza Rafeeq, were appearing along with seven other persons before a Chaguanas Magistrate on charges relating to anti-crime protests in Chaguanas the day before. I was there. There you have honest, law-abiding citizens, Members of Parliament, expressing their right to protest against crime, and what does the then Prime Minister do? The day after the protestors are charged, he stands in Parliament and he says, I quote:

“The Government recognizes that demonstrations are a legitimate expression of dissent in any democratic society. However, the Government wishes to make it absolutely clear that we will not tolerate acts of civil disobedience and will enforce the laws of the country rigidly and fearlessly. Lawlessness will not be tolerated from either the criminals or from any other persons, including Members of Parliament who wish to disrupt the society, no matter how strongly they may feel about their cause.”

And all of them thumped their desks.

“The Riot Squad will be the subject of review and shall be provided with the most modern equipment now used in countries around the world.”

It was not only Dr. Rafeeq and Mr. Ramsaran who were charged. Political analyst and newspaper columnist—and I want to remind him tonight about it because he is sitting at the round table also—Dr. Kirk Meighoo, Boysie Roy, Bisoondath Ramkisson, Geewan Lutchman, Pundit Bisram Siewdath and Abdul Jabroj. Do you know what? The hon. Prime Minister—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Had to defend them.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and Mr. Anand Ramlogan—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Defended them.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—were among the lawyers who stepped forward to defend these innocent citizens and Members of Parliament.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: In defence of democracy.

Mr. De Coteau: Now they hounding down the people who freed them.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Madam Deputy Speaker, do you know what is tragic about that? What is tragic about that is civil society had organized that march. It was the Chaguanas businessmen and women’s group who had gotten together to fight escalating crime in central Trinidad and to make a statement.

Dr. Gopeesingh: March against crime.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Madam Deputy Speaker, compare that to the protesting that took place under environmentalist Dr. Wayne Kublalsingh. He staged a daily protest. Where? Outside the Office of the Prime Minister for three weeks, refusing to eat or drink anything against the advice of the doctors. What did the Prime Minister do? Contrary to what the PNM did, she called on Dr. Kublasingh to end his protest at a public meeting. She said: “I again empathize with Dr. Kublasingh and ask him to reconsider his position in the light of the JCC and Government meeting.” Do you know what that meant? That this Prime Minister tries to seek resolution to conflict in the society so that there is peace and harmony in the society and that people are allowed the expression of their views in this society, contrary to how the PNM dealt with dissent. So he talked about freedom of the media?

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If you want me to go on further, I will, but nobody is going to drive any wedge between the People's Partnership Government and the media of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We are not going to allow that to happen. It is not going to happen.

What exists in this country is a healthy discourse between not only the media and the Government but between the Government and the people, especially through the radio talk shows. Has any radio station been closed down, I ask again? Has any TV station been closed down by this Government?

Madam Deputy Speaker, "yuh know", in my own case, whenever there has been a need to respond to the media, do you know what I do? I will call the editor of the media, or I will send a letter to the editor of the media, and on most occasions my letter will be published, or my article will be published. That is how we deal with it. Media practitioners, if they want to tell the truth, will tell you that I return almost every call that is made to me from a member of the media.

9.30 p.m.

Sometimes they will call, I would not know who called, and I will say in the newsroom, "this is the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite or the Minister of Local Government", and then they will look around for the person. There is only one newsroom I cannot get, which is the *Trinidad Guardian*, because they use a 724 number, I believe, and whenever you call it back, it just cuts off, so sometimes it is difficult to find out. So this is what is happening here.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the third strategy of the Opposition is to try and discredit Members of the Government, especially Members or Ministers whose delivery record is making a tremendous difference to the quality of life in the villages, in the towns, in the cities, [*Desk thumping*] in the institutions, the NGOs and civil society. And, as I said, let me just remind the country that the first modern disability centre that will be built in this country is being built by the Ministry of the People in Carlsen Field right now, you know. [*Desk thumping*]

So when the Member for La Brea talks about caring, go and talk to my good friend and colleague from Caroni Central, Dr. Glenn Ramadharsingh, in terms of what he is doing for the differently abled. [*Desk thumping*] Talk to him about ELDAMO; talk to him about the 27 buses or 29 buses that he brought into this country in order to create movement, freedom of movement, and ease of movement for the specially challenged. Talk to them about that. That is what you

must do. This is why this Government continues to be embraced by the people. This is why the Prime Minister continues to be embraced and loved by the people. [Desk thumping]

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know the Member for La Brea talked about travel, and what, enjoying travel and so on. Hmmm. In 2005 Mr. Manning departed the country 17 times, visited 19 countries and on six of those occasions used private jets; 2006, departed the country 13 times, visited 16 countries, seven private jets; 2007, 13 departures, 15 countries visited, five private jets—

Hon. Member: “Is Marco Polo?”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and now comes 2008, the height of his travel, 15 departures, 24 countries visited, private jets; 2009, 11 departures, 14 countries visited, five private jets, and the little time he had in 2010, two departures—

Hon. Member: “He still gone.” [Laughter]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—two countries visited, two private jets.

Hon. Member: “And then he gone”; and then he had a final departure.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mrs. Bissessar, our Prime Minister, 2010, seven departures, seven countries visited, zero private jet; [Desk thumping] 2011, eight departures, eight countries visited, zero private jet; 2012, five departures, seven countries visited, zero private jet. “So what you talking about travel?”

And you know how our people travel? When our people travel is because they travel on important business. So when Dr. Gopeesingh travels, he travels because he is President of UNESCO in Trinidad and he goes to the UNESCO world meetings. When Dr. Griffith travels, he travels because he holds a very important position as Chairman of the Commonwealth Steering Connects Committee, which was held before that by Minister Fazal Karim. When Mr. Bharath travels, he travels because he goes to the EU where we hold the presidency in terms of the partnership, and so on. Dr. Khan travels because he goes to WHO and when I travel as a foreign minister, I travel because I travel on behalf of this country. And I want to say to the Member for Point Fortin tonight, I produced after two and a half years a book called *Record of Reference*.

Hon. Member: Aha.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and my *Record of Reference*, you can go through it and you will see my achievements under the guidance of the Prime Minister as a foreign minister of this country. [Desk thumping]

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And you will see that the Prime Minister, when she held the Chair in Office of the Commonwealth, she did so well, that I was supported by the foreign minister of Canada, the foreign minister of Australia, who was the former Prime Minister; I was supported by the foreign minister of Bangladesh, the foreign minister of Tanzania and the foreign minister of Jamaica to become the Chairman of CMAG, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group. [*Desk thumping*] And if you read this book, you will understand the role of CMAG. CMAG—

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

Motion made: That the hon. Minister's speaking time be extended by thirty minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. What I want to say is because of the performance of the Prime Minister's Chair in Office of the Commonwealth that the image of Trinidad and Tobago began to rise, rise in 2010, 2011, 2012, and continues in 2013, where we are just about to be visited by the Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, and also by the President of China—[*Desk thumping*]—

Dr. Gopeesingh: To meet with CARICOM.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—to meet with CARICOM. It is taking place in Trinidad. But, Mr. Speaker, when they spoke about—the Member for Point Fortin was speaking about, you know, foreign relations and foreign affairs, I will present her with a copy of this, a *Record of Reference*, and she will see, the hon. Member will see the extent to which the Prime Minister, as chief diplomat, was able to raise the profile of Trinidad and Tobago in the international environment to levels that have never been raised before, and it is all recorded here in this book, a book called the *Record of Reference*.

What the Opposition is trying to do—and by the way, CMAG, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, where, if something happens in a Commonwealth country like it happened in the Maldives—it was I who led that mission to the Maldives as a fact-finding mission, Trinidad and Tobago—

Hon. Member: To settle—

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—to settle it, to find out what had happened and report back to London. That is one of the highest positions that a country can be accorded, and Trinidad and Tobago was accorded that under the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. And you are talking about the Prime Minister not being a good Chief Diplomat?

Madam Deputy—sorry, Mr. Speaker, the strategy of the Opposition is to try to affect the international image of the Government and to undermine it. But you know what? The laughter is on the faces of those who are looking on with disdain on the fabrications of the Opposition in order to achieve that goal. In the last three years the Government has enhanced—the Prime Minister has enhanced the image of Trinidad and Tobago. Hear some examples of what.

The Vice Premier of China visited; the Governor General of Canada visited; the President of Panama visited; and under Ambassador Mervyn Assam, we negotiated a trade agreement, partial scope agreement with Panama as well as one with Guatemala; the Attorney General of the USA visited; the President of Cuba, Raul Castro, visited; an investment mission came here to Trinidad and Tobago from Japan, the first in 19 years under our Government; [*Desk thumping*] several Ministers from India visited; several Ministers from Ghana and Nigeria visited and that has resulted in students from Uganda and Nigeria now being trained in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, you know, I really laugh. I really laugh at when the Member for Point Fortin was talking about the image of Trinidad and Tobago and foreign affairs of Trinidad and Tobago. The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has conducted the foreign affairs of this country with dignity, with dignity.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, as Chief Diplomat, “Joint Statement on Advancing Women’s Political Participation.”—on the margins of the UN 66th General Assembly, the Prime Minister, a year before that, began a campaign for the rights of women to participate more fully in political decision-making, and she got the support of the President of Brazil; the President of Costa Rica, Chinchilla; she got the support of Cherie Blair, that is the wife of Tony Blair, former—by the way, you know I do not boast about things, but I just want to tell my colleagues that my brother, Professor Anantanand Rambachan, was invited by Mr. Tony Blair to sit on his committee, his peace committee, that deals with peace across the world, and he sits on that committee right now. [*Desk thumping*] People do not know that. [*Desk thumping*]

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Mr. Speaker, the Member for Point Fortin was attacking the Prime Minister about women, and how she did not care about women.

Hon. Member: Jealous.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Really jealous.

Hon. Member: True.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: She conveniently forgot that the Prime Minister was the one to address the OAS and was the keynote speaker at the hemispheric meeting on women that took place there at the OAS in 2011, I believe it was. I can go on and on in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has appointed women in several key positions in state companies: the Rural Development Company, headed by Mrs. Haida Mohammed; the Chairman of SWMCOL, Miss Nalini Sooklal; the Chairman of FCB, Mrs. Nyree Alfonso; the Chairman of T&TEC, Mrs. Ramkissoon; the Chairman of the North West Regional Health Authority, Dr Shehenaz Mohammed; the Deputy Chairman of CNMG, Liana Ramsahai. The Deputy Speaker of the House, Member of Parliament, Nela Khan; the Deputy President of the Senate, Lyndira Oudit; three Ministers of State, the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development, Mrs. Marlene Coudray; the Minister of Public Administration, Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan. If you look at all the other boards, there are women on all the boards, and you are talking—

Hon. Member: Minister of Justice.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—Minister of Justice, yes, Miss Moore, and you are talking about this Prime Minister not pushing the agenda of women in society? Hail the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago for that! [*Desk thumping*] There is no doubt about her capacity to do that. Then at the diplomatic level she appointed the High Commissioner to Jamaica, a woman; Consul General, in New York and Toronto, also women. So even at the diplomatic level she has been doing that, appointing.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that, you know, one of the things about the Opposition is that they are trying to attack the delivery Ministers of the Government. They trying to do that. Why? Because the people are beginning to feel, taste, smell and embrace delivery. Now, what is the delivery record? I just want to use my Ministry as an example, just my Ministry. I would not go further

than that. If you look at the 14 regional corporations, Mr. Speaker, it will interest you to know, when I was a Mayor, it used to take me between seven and nine months to get my first drawdown of moneys from the Ministry of Finance. We reorganized the system so well, five weeks after the budget was passed in this Parliament—

Mr. Indarsingh: All.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—all the corporations started to draw down money. And do you know what? At the end six months of the fiscal year 2012—2013, the corporations had finished between 70 and up to 99 per cent of their projects in certain places. [*Desk thumping*] Yes, Mr. Speaker. There were 966 development projects in the 14 corporations. Penal/Debe corporation had finished 99 per cent at the middle of May; and the average finish was between 75 and 85 per cent; finished, of which 342 of those projects were drainage and irrigation and 411 were roads and bridges.

Mr. Speaker, it would interest you to know, and I want to share it with you, that between the Rural Development Company, the Committee Improvement Services Company Limited and Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited, three of which come under me as Minister of Local Government, the following will happen by the end of this fiscal year, plus the Ministry of Local Government. Between bridges already finished, including a bridge called Gowrie Chanka Bridge down in Penal which was broken down for nine years and never repaired and is just about finished, including Chital Road, new bridge built, [*Desk thumping*] including the bridge in Morne Diablo which was broken just before Christmas and “put up back in two months”; including La Pastora Bridge which collapsed and was put back up within a month; 66 bridges, a minimum of 66 bridges will be finished under local government. It never happened before.

Hon. Member: Never.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Sixty-six bridges in a year. Mr. Speaker, if that is not sufficient, right now we are building 31 new pavilions under the Ministry of Local Government—31 new pavilions in one year—[*Desk thumping*] and I have not included there the 31 being built by the Minister of Sport. So this Government is going to deliver 62 new pavilions in one year in Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] 62 recreation grounds. So when you talk about fighting crime and moving people from the crime line to the peace line, and when you say that sports has an important role to play, and community development has an important role to play in the rehabilitation of persons, this Government is walking the talk.

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Mr. Speaker, you know, it does not end there. Already we have begun the programme to pave almost 800 local roads; 200 kilometres of roads. The much maligned URP programme—

Mr. Indarsingh: Tell them about that.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—already for the fiscal year 2012—2013, 173 projects have been completed; there are 239 more being tendered right now and 11 to start. About 470 projects will be completed before the end of this fiscal year. [*Desk thumping*] That is the much maligned URP. How did we turn around the URP programme? We turned around the URP programme because we gave people a connection between what they do and the benefit it brings to people. In other words, we introduced the concept of purpose in what people were doing. This is why you do not hear about a ghosting as much as you used to hear about ghosting, because people are now seeing the importance of their contribution to the human development of their fellow citizens and their communities.

You know what all of this means, colleagues? Mr. Speaker, you know what this means, members of the national community to use a well-chosen word from the Member for San Fernando East, members of the national community? You know what this means? This means that if you add 800 roads, 966 local government projects in the corporations, 66 bridges and 31 pavilions, and there are three more being tendered out so that is 34, and 400 and about 70 projects, you have 2,340 projects which will be done under local government in one year. Two thousand, three hundred and forty communities [*Desk thumping*] would have benefitted from at least one project under local government.

That is performance! That is what you call performance! And performance beats “ole talk” all the time, and performance beats all the alarmist bells that they are ringing on the other side. And what people are going to judge us by is our performance and the way that we are improving the quality of life of the citizens of the country. “And I eh even talk about works and infrastructure yet. [*Laughter*] “Ah left dat” for my colleague, the Member for Oropouche West, who did a very good job yesterday of telling them. [*Desk thumping*] When we reveal our new programme that is going to come very soon, we are going to show the country what we are going to do with the infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I give you all this information because it is stunning. It is stunning for the population to hear this. “Dey say we do not tell de population what we are doing. Dey say we do not communicate”, well, tonight I am communicating. So if it is the jogging track in Mount Stewart, or the jogging track

up here in Westmoorings or the jogging track in Brothers Road, or the pavilion in Kelly Village or the pavilion in Brothers Road, or the pavilions in other parts of the country, like in South Oropouche, like in Spring Trace, Point Fortin; like in Glod Road, Naparima Mayaro Road; like in Soogrim Street, Gulf View; like in Lalbeharry Trace, Barrackpore; Dil Mohammed Trace, Penal and Antilles Trace recreational ground in Oropouche West, all of those people are going to benefit from all of this.

Now, the Member for La Brea talked about he is not getting projects and what have you.

Mr. Indarsingh: “Point Fortin and La Brea, read it out.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Let me disband that. That is so false. I want to know if the Member for La Brea will tell me where the following roads are: Farm Road; Neranther Trace from Boodoosingh Road.

Hon. Members: La Brea!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Neranther Trace from Rousillac.

Hon. Members: La Brea!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Dublin Trace.

Hon. Members: La Brea!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Merrimac Extension.

Hon. Members: La Brea!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Hubert’s Town; Chin Fong Alley Extension.

Hon. Member: La Brea!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Rail Road Avenue.

Hon. Members: La Brea!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Belle Vue No. 2.

Hon. Members: La Brea!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: National Mining Road.

Hon. Member: La Brea!

Mr. Indarsingh: “Buh he is ah stranger to de truth?”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: All of those roads are about to be paved under our programme. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “Right now he only know—[*Inaudible, laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “He not from La Brea.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: “He not from La Brea.” [*Laughter*] How about the Member for Point Fortin? Where is Bridgemohan Street? Cedros? She represents—the Member for Point Fortin is an absentee Member of Parliament. Since she evacuated her house in Point Fortin, “I doh think she has gone back down there at all.” People do not see her at all.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), imputing improper motives, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Overruled. Continue, please. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. St. Marie Street, Cedros; George Street, Cedros; Manmohansingh Street, Cedros; King Street, Cedros. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: “They are strangers to de truth.” [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Ramdial: “Dey doh know dey own area.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: All of those roads are going to be paved. What are they talking about, and they talking about discrimination, that I can bring this and read this, all is going to be done under the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Company Limited.

This is what they fear. They fear that the people are beginning to see the red carpet of performance being rolled out and they are going to walk on it and they are going to celebrate with this Government.

9.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there is another area of interest, you know. When I was a mayor, I used to get difficulty to get what you call unspent balances. I want to tell you that this Minister of Local Government has been getting unspent balances audited and unspent balances into the hands of the corporations. By the way, Mr. Speaker, all these jobs that I have just told you about, under local government, have been done within cost and budget, no cost overruns.

Mr. Speaker, Port of Spain City Corporation, they have a lot of money under unspent balances, you know. The people want to know why Port of Spain had problems. Go and ask the mayor, “How come you have all these unspent balances

and you are not using it”, you know. He applied for \$22,464,339.84 in unspent balances and he applied for the projects: a home for the aged for 3.5 million; homework centre and recreation centre at Harp Place for 1.3 million—good projects—play park equipment, 875,000; upgrading of City Hall auditorium, 10 million; lighting of King George V Park, 2.2 million; upgrading of central market, 1.5 million.

So I said to the mayor, “Mr. Mayor, I have no problems approving, please give me your detailed estimates. I want to see your detailed estimates.” Well, I am still waiting for the detailed estimates.

Sangre Grande Corporation applied for 1.2 million. Tunapuna/Piarco applied for 10 million and with that 10 million, they are paving 40 roads and building a pavilion in La Paille Village. San Fernando City Corporation applied for \$11.5 million; San Juan Regional Corporation, \$1.4 million.

I am giving you all of these figures to show you that the Minister of Local Government and the Ministry have not been holding back anything. So when they cry discrimination, here is the evidence.

Mr. Indarsingh: They are holding back the paperwork.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Here is the evidence. They are holding back their own paper work.

Mr. Indarsingh: And the back pay.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Today, for example, the Amalgamated Trade Union came demonstrating outside the Parliament and when we told them why they did not get their back pay, they were shocked. It is because the Port of Spain City Corporation has not completed the preparation of the wages—

Hon. Member: The pay sheets.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—the calculations—

Mr. Indarsingh: To come to your Ministry.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—to send to my Ministry; it has not come, and then they understood. So they thought the Minister is blocking their back pay. The Minister is not blocking any back pay. We have already approved and paid 11 corporations; three corporations have not submitted, including Port of Spain, “and you wonder why things not right in Port of Spain”. But you see, the problem with the Opposition, they cannot discipline the Mayor of Port of Spain because the Mayor of Port of Spain would put the Opposition in their place. He is it, unto himself.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, imputing improper motives, please, 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: I do not think so. I do not think so. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, so this is what the Opposition is trying to do, trying to discredit the performance of the Government through this Motion, in a very subtle way, and they have failed. I want to repeat today, one of the greatest acts of fabrication is that whole set of emails that have been presented—that whole set of emails—and I have demonstrated that; my colleagues have demonstrated; the Member, particularly for D’Abadie/O’Meara, ripped it apart and showed where it was simply a matter that is a fabrication.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is not afraid of listening to the people. We have discussions on the reform of the Constitution taking place and we have just completed 14 consultations across the country on local government—14 consultations—and you know what is interesting, Mr. Speaker? The three places where they had the lowest number of people attending were San Juan/Laventille, Point Fortin and Port of Spain.

In Point Fortin, the councillors boycotted it. They are interested, you know; they say they are interested in Point Fortin, but they never came to the consultation. One councillor came, which is an NJAC councillor, Miss Maharaj—

Mr. Indarsingh: The Member for Point Fortin was there?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What was that?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: No, the Member for Point Fortin was not there.

Mr. Coteau: N-o-o-o.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Where?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: At the consultation on local government reform.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I was not invited.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: You know, it is interesting. If you are a Member of Parliament and the people do not invite you to come to the constituency, it means to say you would not go? That is representation, “eh”. That is a new definition of representation. That is a new definition of representation. You have to be invited to your constituency. You went and begged people to vote for you, but then they have to invite you for you to come to represent them. What a definition of representation; PNM-style definition of representation, whereas my colleague the

Member for Couva North, reminded us all that every Tuesday and even Saturdays we are in our offices in our constituencies dealing with the business of the people, giving meaning to serve the people, serve the people, serve the people.

Miss Hospedales: How do you all do that?

Mr. Indarsingh: They want to find out.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, it is hurting them, you know; it is hurting them very hard what we are beginning to say here this evening. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, they have come with a Motion hoping to hit out and to get at the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has not even spoken here, but I know— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Point Fortin, could you withdraw that word. That is a word we do not use in this honourable House, and particularly when you are seated.

Mr. Indarsingh: Withdraw it!

Mr. Speaker: You are not speaking, but you are saying that word that you know is unparliamentary.

Mr. Indarsingh: Withdraw it!

Mr. Speaker: We do not say that word here. So could you withdraw that?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Sure, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the word, “lie”.

Mr. Speaker: Continue.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: In closing, there is one more matter that I want to talk about in terms of achievements of this Government. Mr. Speaker, for years people have been killed on the highways by cars crossing the median of the highway and destroying innocent people on the other side.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Cable.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: This Government decided to put cable barriers on the highway and, Mr. Speaker, it will interest you very much to know what has happened in the last couple of months between November 2012 and the end of March 2013.

Mr. Speaker, from Chase Village to Freeport, 11 vehicles have been prevented from going across the median; from Freeport to Preysal, 10 vehicles; from Preysal

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to Claxton Bay, seven vehicles; in Claxton Bay area, 17 vehicles have been prevented, [*Desk thumping*] that is especially where all those accidents took place, going down, you know the hill—

Mr. Indarsingh: Forres Park area.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—Forres Park area; Claxton Bay to Gasparillo, five prevented and in Gasparillo, just outside of Pointe-a-Pierre there going up, 16 prevented.

Mr. Indarsingh: That alone is performance.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: In November, December, January, February, March, five months, 66 vehicles have been prevented from crossing the median. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Yes man, that is performance!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: You know what that means, Mr. Speaker?

Dr. Gopeesingh: “How many lives they save?”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: In 2005, there were some statistics given in the United States where it showed, in terms of injury, it cost US \$68,000 for each injury that took place and for each fatality and serious injury, it cost US \$3.2 million per person. So imagine the amount of not only lives we saved but the economic cost to the country that has been saved by putting up those cable barriers. That also came under this Government—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is the thinking of the people.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and that is the new kind of thinking and that is the change people voted for.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Vision.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: They are seeing the new vision. You see, this Government has a vision, which is the prosperity for all, prosperity for all, and every Member of Parliament on our side and every Minister of Government is working at an incredulous pace in order to ensure that we deliver to the people what the people deserve.

Mr. Speaker, we have one of the best Prime Ministers in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Our Prime Minister has been invited to India, state visit; to China— which she has not gone yet—state visit; state visit to Canada, where she went recently. [*Interruption*] She has been—everywhere she went as chair in the Office

of the Commonwealth, my colleague, Mr. Cadiz will tell you, she brought glory and she brought fame to Trinidad and Tobago. I was particularly proud of this Prime Minister when we went to CHOGM in Perth, Australia and when she stood there on the platform and she was applauded for the stance she took on global issues, but particularly the issues related to women and children. She continues to do that.

Mr. De Coteau: Tell Point Fortin.

Miss Hospedales: What about [*Inaudible*] in a budget debate. What is that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You wait. [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Member: You spoke already.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I want to go back to where I started. What happened in this Parliament yesterday was a moral wrong. I said that there is law, which is the enforceable, and there is ethics, which is the law of the unenforceable and where people must make their own decisions.

10.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, what was done here by the Opposition yesterday in terms of the allegations made, in terms of the false allegations made, in terms of the untruth, to use a very palatable word, Mr. Speaker, was an attack on this Parliament and an abuse of this Parliament. The credibility of the Leader of the Opposition, the credibility came to the lowest. What he did is that he caused himself to be removed from the eyes and minds of the people of Trinidad and Tobago as being a potential leader in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth time that such Motions have been brought before this Parliament. This is amounting in the eyes of the population to an abuse of parliamentary time and parliamentary privilege. Mr. Speaker, the people are saying that there are more important things to debate in this Parliament—

Hon. Member: “That’s true!”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and yet the Opposition continues to waste time.

One of the newspapers in an editorial called upon the Opposition to come with something really good; they have not. They have also asked the Opposition to tell us what are your plans. They have not been able to do that. They cannot present a plan for the future of this country. [*Crosstalk*] They have not been able to do that. They have not been able to do that. If they examine it very carefully, they have

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not brought one policy forward. They have not filed a proper Private Motion that can be turned into legislation; nothing like that! They are vacuous, as vacuous as the Motion that they brought before this Parliament.

Hon. Member: That is true! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the country condemns that moral wrong that they perpetrated upon this country [*Crosstalk*] and the country will surely vote them out again in 2015 and ensure that they do not return to the corridors of power [*Desk thumping*] to perpetrate any such moral wrongs again. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of the People and Social Development (Hon. Dr. Glenn Ramadharsingh): Thank you, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must say that I am very, very, energized by the contribution of my colleague, my ministerial colleague and MP—neighbouring MP for Tabaquite—and I want to congratulate him on a terrific contribution here tonight. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we were a very disappointed group of representatives when this Motion was led off by the hon. Opposition Leader. Lots of us left our constituencies, some who needed landslips, drainage, many were farmers who wanted the attention of the Members of Parliament, many of them needed social support, many of them needed assistance in terms of advice and guidance and some of them needed us to put them in contact with government agencies and Ministries. We left all of that. My colleague, the Member for Moruga/Tableland, left a national event in his constituency, which was the anti-bullying campaign which was launched in a school in Moruga.

Hon. Member: The anti who?

Mr. De Coteau: Anti-bullying!

Hon. Dr. G. Ramdharsingh: The anti-bullying campaign. Did you not see Machel Montano saying that some kids are put at a disadvantage? He had to leave that event. It does not have a lot of national events in his constituency— [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “Girl behaviour yourself, nah?”

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—but on that particular day others left as far as south, the east and we came here expecting something of substance. We thought that, you know, after one strike, two strikes and three strikes that at least the

fourth time they would give us something that is worth our attention and value because the Motion is a Motion that purports to say that:

“Be it resolved that this House confirms its loss of confidence in the Prime Minister...”—after it gives all the other breakdowns of the things that it wants to point out.

Section 77(1) of our Constitution provides that the:

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

This is something that happened in Barbados with Prime Minister Sandiford and it happened in Grenada. We thought that when you bring a Motion like this with the gravity, one that affects the Constitution—not a Motion about the organization of the private security in the country or one about food prices or inflation—but one that goes to the very heart of our democratic process, the Constitution of our country, we expected something solid. But we know and we know now that the Motion was defeated from its very genesis, its creation and, indeed, its fabrication.

One would have expected that the Opposition would have given an objective, unbiased examination of the issues affecting the country and would have told us what are their policy positions. We have produced a manifesto, and if this manifesto after three years is a multiple-choice exam, Mr. Speaker, we will just begin ticking, ticking, done, done, done, because as you go through this manifesto you will see the People’s Partnership at work, and all the leaders, despite what they say—and they have this cunning phrase, the UNC-led Government—all the partners are still strong, powerful and united under the Kamla Persad-Bissessar prime-ministership. The partnership is holding strong and we are getting stronger than ever, especially with the vacuous contributions that we have heard tonight.

You could see the level of disinterest by the presence of the Opposition. One would have thought that they would have been excited about this Motion. They seem all shaking their heads and nodding away and clamouring when the leader is around, but as soon as you do not have that type of supervisory activity, they dwindle away and they whisk away into corners throughout the parliamentary floor—

Hon. Member: The whom?

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—showing their true level of interest as they have done with the local government consultations, and as they are doing with the constitutional reform consultations. It seems as if they want to come and just engage in the bacchanalia, in the imbroglio, in debates of no substance, but when it comes to dealing with real issues, with people issues, with policy positions, they are absent and scurrying away in the distance.

Mr. Indarsingh: Where is the Member for Diego Martin Central?

Hon. Dr. G. Ramdaharsingh: We thought that some of the Members would have come here and say, “Look, yuh know, we have been at the wheel for three years, let us paint a picture of what we could do. Let us dispassionately look at the interest, the interest groups in the country; let us talk about the energy sector; let us talk about moving away, diversification of the economy”; nothing like that. Hear what? Next vote of no confidence. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, this Motion was nothing of substance. It was almost like a bunch of email cartoon characters. In fact, some of the email addresses lacked the required number of characters to be a real email anyway. Therefore, the Motion, as some of my colleagues pointed out, is frivolous, vexatious, baseless, lacking in substance, ill-conceived, spurious, null and void and of no effect.

Hon. Member: Whatsoever.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramdharsingh: This is not about a Prime Minister sending emails in any conspiracy. This is a Prime Minister who gave 55,000 laptops to the children of Trinidad and Tobago in the last three successive years, so that they can visit the Internet; they can visit the websites. Whether their father is a wacker man or a taxi driver or has no job at all, they can go on the Internet and send emails, constructive ones, to their friends and their schoolmates. That is what this Prime Minister is about.

10.10 p.m.

The Member for Diego Martin West has once again disappointed the right-thinking members of the national community.

Hon. Member: The PNM has to remove him now.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: He has gone from bombshells to eggshells to “e-tales”, but we are not surprised. When we peruse what is the parliamentary record of Trinidad and Tobago and we gloss through the *Hansard*, we recall what

his own Mayor had to say of his efforts on March 02, 2012, when he wrote the party that he belongs to and said:

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

He continues:

As I look at the party limping along in the Parliament, it has much to do with Dr. Rowley’s credibility as he is unable to take risk in the development of the party.

And he goes on to say:

We may take a beating, the Landate matter surely could be rekindled, and given the weak PNM team within the Parliament, he expects that we would be outmatched and outgunned.

Well, from his own Mayor who he seems to want to go away, but who I have had a very cordial relationship with, I am sure you have noticed that from within the party there is a vote of no confidence in the leadership of the PNM, and it is emboldened by his lacklustre performance in the Parliament here by his fourth Motion of no confidence.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion speaks to a series of actions by the UNC-led Government. In fact, it starts off by saying:

“Whereas the sanctity of Parliament and lawfully constituted institutions and other public bodies are fundamental to our democracy, and must be protected at all times...”

and went on to say that the Government is attacking the institutions, but it was the PNM Government. It was the PNM Government, Mr. Speaker, who failed to pay the Opposition Members of Parliament when there was the 18/18 tie in the country, and the Members of Parliament came to this Parliament, they being in the seat of leadership, refused to give a salary to their own colleagues.

Now what was the intention? What was the *raison d’etre* of that? It was to so frustrate Members of Parliament who are Opposition MPs, or, for all intents and purposes, to frustrate them in the pursuit of their duty to represent the people. If

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that is not an attack on the Parliament, what else is? It had to take a Member of Parliament with courage, MP Chandresh Sharma and others—the matter was *Chandresh Sharma and Others v. the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago*. Those MPs had to seek recourse to the courts because the coercive machinery of the State was being used to deny them an income to represent the people of different parts of Trinidad and Tobago.

The then Privy Council, Appeal No. 73 of 2006, established the principle. The Privy Council had to tell this PNM that a Member of Parliament has a right to receive a salary. That is the kind of victimization, that is the kind of marginalization and that is the kind of destruction that took place at the level of the Parliament where persons were entitled to a salary.

The Privy Council ruled that in the sixth Parliament there are three requirements; one is that the MP must be present at the sitting of the House, the MP must be willing to take the parliamentary oath and the MP must be denied the opportunity to take the oath. The Privy Council ruled that the MPs had satisfied two out of the three, and, therefore, gave the money that was denied by the PNM, who were victimizing the MPs and trying to subdue them, the monies that were owed to them.

But soon after—they take away the money from the MPs in 2006—the Tobago election we see, immediately, someone who said he was tired, who was going to rest and retire, trying to be hired for \$60,000 a month, and total silence by the People's National Movement—refusing to pay the duly elected MPs of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, but surreptitiously bringing in a friend and colleague for \$60,000 as an advisor. Those are the types of actions that the people of Trinidad and Tobago have true distrust about.

Mr. Speaker, there is a very troubling part of this whole affair, and many speakers have hit on it, and I want to touch on it in a different way. The Leader of the Opposition told us, among his many revelations and among his interjecting events and trying to show how they coincide and create this whole web of conspiracy, he said that a particular reporter's life was in danger. He spent a lot of time describing the attacks that were put out on Facebook against this particular reporter. But what was very instructive is that this information was lodged at an office where he left it and not anywhere else did he seek, knowing these emails, believing them to be true, in his own words important enough to bring to the attention of this House, but not informing the relevant authorities.

Mr. Speaker, in Pennsylvania, USA, shooter George Sodini posted details of his murders and of his exit plan on his Internet blog before opening fire in an open gym where he killed three persons and wounded nine. Many debate whether this could have been prevented by someone who looked at the blog site, but in this case we are seeing a situation where the Leader of the Opposition, by his own admission, says for six months he lodged this at a particular office and did not take any other action except to come and bring a vote of no confidence to remove the Government.

Is it that there was no due regard to the life and safety of this person? Wikipedia tells us that to be an accessory one must generally be proved to have actual knowledge that a crime was going to be or had been committed. The accessory knew that his or her action or inaction was helping the criminals to commit the crime, or evade detection or escape. However, those are legal angles by which this definition—and I concur with my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite. There are some things that are legally right and legally wrong. There is something else that we are all guided by, and even in the legal profession, you know, we had a Minister of Finance, Karen Nunez-Tesheira, who was a lecturer in ethics in law, and we all know we had to question some of her actions because of that, but even in law and medicine and engineering, there are ethics by which people are guided the conduct of their service is guided and indeed in the end by which they are judged.

10.20 p.m.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about keeping that information and lodging it at an office for the pursuit of political action, and then after no action to it, coming here for political action and seeking to remove the Government, as I had described, by the Constitution, without due regard to the person.

I want to quote from Peter Singer in his book *Humility Kills*:

“...if you are living comfortably while others are hungry or dying from easily preventable diseases, and you are doing nothing about it, there is something wrong with your behavior.

...the failure of people in the rich nations to make any significant sacrifices in order to assist people who are dying from poverty-related causes is ethically indefensible.”

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In another book, the same author, in 2002 writes:

“It is not simply the absence of charity, let alone of moral saintliness: It is wrong, and one cannot claim to be a morally decent person unless one is doing far more than the typical comfortably-off person does.”

Therefore, whether there is any legal culpability in this matter, certainly ethically, if he really felt that there was imminent danger to this journalist, he should have reported it to the authorities. That is an indefensible conclusion that one can come to, looking at the facts.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion also says that the UNC-led Government has attacked and conspired to undermine the key institutions of State, namely the Judiciary, but we have heard and seen where the Attorney General was able to debunk this, and many of the other speakers enjoined their voices, when we saw the hounding out of office of former Chief Justice, Sat Sharma, by the then Patrick Manning, when twice they vetoed the Judicial and Legal Service Commission recommendations for DPP, and the Office of the DPP is stated here as another office that was sought to be undermined by the actions of the UNC-led Government.

We saw the evidence in the attempt by a former PNM Attorney General to clean up the mess in relation to the former matter with Chief Magistrate Sherman McNicholls, now deceased, a key witness in the proceedings against Sharma. Evidence was apparent at attempts to deal with the messy land deal in a meeting between Jeremie, McNicholls, the former PNM treasurer and a CL Financial boss. Jeremie declined to present himself to be cross-examined at the Mustill Enquiry.

Several judicial and legal positions under the PNM were absent for years: the Integrity Commission, the Firearms Appeal Board, the police commissioner, the Police Claims Authority, the Solicitor General and the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. Persons were persecuted who were holding public office. They were threatened to move or be fired. You remember the names: Devant Maharaj, Fareeza Ramjohn, Marlene Coudray. This is the legacy of the People’s National Movement that shall not go away.

Mr. Speaker, in any event, if one were to look on the Internet and do some research, you would see that with technology and with the Internet, there are not only good people who use the Internet. The Internet, like the Constitution, is used by all persons and therefore you have good, you have bad, you have indifferent and you have those in between. Therefore we have to put safeguards on things.

Just as recently in the North West Regional Health Authority, one would have seen where someone forged the signature of the hon. Prime Minister. As they can do it with a hard copy, so too now with the technology, you have called email spoofing. Email spoofing is an activity in which the sender's address and other parts of the email header are altered to appear as though the email originated from a different source.

I can go on and on. The country is intelligible, we can all use the Internet and Google, "email spoofing" and see all the different kinds of ways that your email can be penetrated, it can be altered and it can be used for illegal activities. Certainly, here today, from all the aberrations that have been described by different Members, this certainly sums up to be some kind of con job by someone who understands how to use the technology.

Like many of my colleagues, the Motion has been defeated—

Mr. Sharma: Very good point.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—by the firepower of the People's Partnership representatives, over the last two days. Certainly we can see the defeat in the faces of the Opposition, and we can see that they have resigned themselves to start thinking about another Motion that they could bring in three months' time. *[Laughter]* We know that the population will judge this matter on the scales of political justice and realize that the Motion really flopped before even coming here.

Mr. Speaker, I have to respond, because many of the agencies of government and the services of government that they alluded to as being under threat, I have the opportunity to work with. I can tell you that I feel very proud when the household and budgetary survey can tell us that poverty has dropped from some 21 per cent to 14.8 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

Miss Hospedales: Where? *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Those are not our statistics and facts, that is information coming from the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and the CSO. The people can feel it and sense it throughout the country, because it is not only the Ministry of the People and Social Development that is creating the difference. It is the 55,000 laptops that are given by the Ministry of Education under our dear Prime Minister. It is the work of the Ministry of Health; it is the work of the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Public Utilities, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, by giving clean water to families. That is the fight against poverty.

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It is a multidisciplinary approach to getting at the etiology of poverty that had so consumed this society that was being run by a government bereft of ideas and unwilling to take the risk, unwilling to walk the talk and go down into the nooks and crannies of Trinidad and Tobago, examine the reality that confronted them and engage the processes and policies that were existent in the Ministry to so combat the ills of poverty.

The Director General of the ILO, Juan Somavia, said that:

“Through war and peace, depression and economic growth, governments, workers and employers have continued to come together in dialogue around our” shared table of ideas and values—“that work must be a source of dignity; that labour is not a commodity; and that poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere.”

Mr. Sharma: Very significant.

10.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we are guided by our manifesto. Our manifesto that we live religiously by speaks to Pillar 2, the Poverty Eradication and Social Justice, to create opportunities for the upwardly mobile, especially the vulnerable persons in society. In this regard, we have developed innovative programmes and policies to combat the poverty and create the social justice in our society. We believe in going for the highest mission of society which is the development of our citizens.

In 2010, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago made a crucial decision that they would change the face of governance and governing forever. They elected an administration that believed in partnership, that promised transparency and pledged an undying obligation to keep the people at the centre of development, at the centre of procedures and at the centre of policies and at the centre of their mind every time they sit down at the table of dialogue.

Mr. Sharma: The centre is very important.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Our leader, the hon. Prime Minister, made it her duty to implement services that embraced new opportunities and gave potential for human development and people involvement. [*Crosstalk*] In keeping this promise a new approach to service was engaged to fulfil the mandate. There is a saying, law *res ipsa loquitur*, “let the facts speak for themselves”— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—and to those who have taken our hard work for granted I say to you, numbers do not tell any tales.

From 2010, we believe in our Ministry that hunger cannot be postponed, but it seem as if the PNM believed that hunger could have been postponed [*Desk thumping*] because what obtained in that administration is that a poor man would have lost his job, his wife may have been undergoing some medical condition or surgery, and he goes to the Member of Parliament's office, says, "Listen, I really need some help with food support." The MP would be in a position to say, "Listen, check meh back in about six weeks, ah I will get the food card people to come and talk to all yuh." He say, Well, I suffering. I doh have any food to eat." "Check meh back. Ah cyar do nothing."

Today a Member of Parliament, not only the partnership, but we have extended it to all Members of Parliament, can give to that person a temporary food card, the best social innovation in the Caribbean and Latin America, indeed in this part of the western hemisphere. It is the greatest social innovation—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: "It look like Marlene using de card." [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—that empowers the Member of Parliament in a way that never existed before.

Mr. De Coteau: Tell them, my brother!

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: The Member of Parliament can say to that poor man or woman who is suffering—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: Tell them, my brother!

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—"I have the power", and give them the support that they need.

Mr. De Coteau: Tell them, my brother. "Yuh preaching".

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: And we gave it to all. We gave the ability to access same.

Mr. De Coteau: Preach, my brother, preach!

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: All MP's offices were given the opportunity to send representatives to be trained—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: This is a power mint people.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—and many of them are accessing the programmes. [*Crosstalk*]

Indeed, no system will ever be perfect and we will continue to have review programmes so that the Member of Parliament's offices that are not benefiting in the way, we will guide them as to how to access this type of support because we believe that you cannot postpone hunger.

Mr. De Coteau: At all!

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: And therefore, while we would have been able and we would have had to have taken away 7,000 food cards from persons who were not deserving at all—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Big shots.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—I am proud to say that we have extended the number and now 40,000 people from Icacos to Toco—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Well said. Well said.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—from Port of Spain to Arima—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: To Moruga.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—down all the way to Moruga, back up to Princes Town, 40,000 people benefit from the food card programme in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

We see the food card as a ticket, as an entrance into a race to get out of poverty, and, therefore, we have the conditionalities that are applied to it that the persons do send their children to school; that they ensure that their children have their birth certificate; that they are properly immunized; that if the parent does not have a job, that he is seeking employment, that he is seeking to be retrained and reskilled, and that is the RISE UP part of the programme; the rights of the individual to social and economic security, universal protection for all. So they will be able to rise up and in that RISE UP Programme we ensure that—and we are going to be flexible with the conditionalities.

We are going to include the HEAL element, Healthy Eating, Active Lifestyles, so that we will have active people in the food card programme, who are not only benefiting from the State through handouts, but who are showing that they have a hand up, and they are willing to be part of community exercise programmes, that

they are willing to be part of culinary retraining so that we can broaden their spectrum with regard to dietary intake which we now know has a direct correlation to the lifestyle diseases of hypertension and diabetes. My erstwhile colleague, the Member for Caroni East, can speak to that with great authority.

Mr. Sharma: Marlene looks like she is using the card. She looks healthy. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Mr. Speaker, you would recall the day when you picked up the *Express* and you saw a pensioner crying because they lost their pension cheque. [Crosstalk] Many a Member of Parliament has had to endure the cries of the pensioner coming to their office and they lost their pension cheque. [Crosstalk] Do you know what are the consequences of that, Mr. Speaker? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Indarsingh: Buy them tomorrow. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Hypolite: One hundred and five and [Inaudible]

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: I am speaking. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Sharma: “Wha yuh want? A sugarcake?”

Hon. Member: “Oh God, oh!”

Mr. Speaker: Members! Members, allow the Member to speak in silence.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: You are breaking my trend now— [Interruption]

Mr. De Coteau: Concentrate.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—I will come back to the URP social programme in a bit. You know what the consequences of a pensioner were before we came into office, Mr. Speaker? For six months that pensioner cannot get a cent from that cheque that was lost. And you know how that cheque was lost? It could be stolen. It could be mutilated. It could be destroyed. It could have been tried to be cashed—but mostly importantly, before it even reaches the pensioner, of no fault of his or her own—of no fault at all—but just the delivery man was held up or the cheque was lost because somebody stole it before it got there, that pensioner would not be able to get that money, that \$3,000, for six months. Mr. Speaker, in the first year in the Finance Bill we wrote it in—[Interruption]

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—that that period should never be more than one month, that pensioner should have to do without that. But you know, we went further than that. A people without a vision perish, and those who have eyes to see will see, and those who have—*[Interruption]*

Mr. De Coteau: Ears to hear.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—ears to hear will hear.

Mr. De Coteau: Let them hear.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: What we did is that is that we anticipated down the road that we could have done something revolutionary to prevent those poor persons, elderly persons, who are vulnerable from that suffering and pain.

We said, listen what about these 78,000 pensioners? “Why can we not put the money directly into their account so that they doh have to worry about cheque, they could take their bank card and go shopping in the grocery, and they could go in the pharmacy; swiping card and not carrying around cash, and being a victim and a target?” *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Sharma: A retina scan?

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: No, no. I will go to that just now. Why can we not give them that safety and security? And they said—the technocrats came, they brought all the law books from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. I said, listen, we are going to do this unless you show me the law that prevents us from doing it. They brought all the technical books and all the law books from Ministry of Finance and the Economy and social welfare, and they could not find a law; and I said, well, let us do it. And we brought in people to help us. They said it is going to take us 18 months to get this project down the road. I said, well 18 months is wait the worth—worth the wait.

Mr. Sharma: That is right.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: And we began the process a year and a half ago. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that direct deposit is now a reality for every single pensioner, all 80,000 of them, in Trinidad and Tobago, where their money goes directly to the bank. The pension cheque will wither away very soon as a thing of past, as an archaic document that may not ever be necessary, and when we go biometric, which is where the fingerprint and the retinal scan will come in, it will have even more safety features—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh sure Amery Browne want it?”

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—and we will be able to even protect our elderly. And all— if even that elderly person has a pension, public assistance and our food card, they will get all of that support on a multiple application card that will have their electronic fingerprint unique to their own identification built into that card. There is where we are going. This is not the finish line, the future is the finish line, and the Partnership is about the better future for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. De Coteau: Tell them, my brother.

10.40 p.m.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: So, where are we today? Out of the 80,000 pensioners, more than 50,000 of them get their pension money directly into their bank accounts. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: Paula, soon you would get your money in the bank.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Nobody could claim them.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: No. Over 600 indigent persons received substantial support to repair their homes and some of them have received entire homes under the URP social project.

Mr. Speaker, during the financial year 2014, the Penal/Debe corporation has been able to get five acres of sou-sou land for us to partner, to build for the first time in south Trinidad, through the Division of Ageing of the Ministry of the People and Social Development, an assisted live-in facility for 60 elderly persons in Trinidad and Tobago. It will be a pilot project that we would continue to roll out throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

On Saturday, June 15, the Ministry of the People and Social Development officially plans to commemorate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day with a walk-a-thon from Independence Square to the grand savannah, where display booths will be operated by health-related NGOs, private sector agencies and entertainment for our elderly.

Following on the success of our two—we have had seminars. This is not only about quantitative work; this is about qualitative work; this is about the development of the minds of our people. [*Desk thumping*] We have had two successful seminars for the elderly on human rights for the elderly, teaching them how to make wills, about their medical services that they can access from the Ministry of Health, and we will be hosting the third at Signature Hall in Chaguanas, in the constituency of Chaguanas East.

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

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Mr. Speaker, the first two were conducted in March and May at the Centre of Excellence and at the Magdalena Grand Resort in Tobago, which attracted audiences of more than 700 persons. Legal and technical experts shared information on constitutional human rights, will preparation, estate management, implications on the population for ageing, elderly abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of information to share, but I think I have succeeded in both debunking the fact that the Motion fell flat. It flopped, if not flip-flopped. I have also shown that whereas we had people presiding over agencies and Ministries, we now have people prevailing over them and ensuring that they work for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ours is the greatest Prime Minister that we have known. She is a very compassionate leader. She has led from example. It was her idea and her vision to create a Ministry of the People and Social Development—

Mr. Sharma: That is right!

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh:—and that is a Ministry that sees about the needs of the vulnerable. If we think about Trinidad and Tobago as a chain; if you have a chain, a chain can only be as strong as its weakest link.

Hon. Member: Yes. Yes.

Hon. Dr. G. Ramadharsingh: Therefore, the Ministry of the People and Social Development will go after the weak links and strengthen them, so we will have a strong Trinidad and Tobago under our great Prime Minister, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: All right, the hon. Member for La Horquetta/Talparo.

Minister of State in the Ministry of Food Production (Hon. Jairam Seemungal): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to participate in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here this evening with a great sense of sadness; with a great sense of demoralization to be a Member of Parliament participating in this debate. This debate—this Motion in itself is baseless and without foundation. While other Parliaments in other jurisdictions are using their Parliament to discuss new issues, to discuss Motions that would benefit its people and to discuss

opportunities for its citizens, we are here in this Parliament discussing a non-issue, a baseless issue, and one that is aimed to undermine the very integrity of this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, we were summoned here in this Parliament by the Leader of the Opposition to discuss and debate a Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister and the Government of this country. I had in my constituency several meetings planned for days, three days. [*Desk thumping*] I want to apologize to the young people and the farmers of Joseph Lewis Trace in Talparo. I want to apologize to the people of Wallerfield where I was supposed to have held a meeting this afternoon and a walkabout to look at their area. I want to apologize to the people of Lantana Court in La Horquetta where they assembled at seven o'clock expecting me to be there. I want to apologize to the young men who I would have been meeting tomorrow at the La Horquetta Regional Complex.

But we are summoned to this Parliament by the Leader of the Opposition and the entire PNM to discuss one of the most wasteful, one of the most baseless pieces of Motion, the fourth of its kind over a period of two years at this House. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, one wonders if they have learnt anything over the last three years. Their entire debate was based on a fabricated email. My six-year-old daughter—[*Laughter*]—Standard 1, very bright young girl—

Mr. Sharma: “She smarter than Paula.”

Hon. J. Seemungal: “She smarter than nearly all ah dem on that side”—[*Laughter*]—took up this piece of document that they have produced to this Parliament and looked at it and said, “Dad, come here. Come and let me set up an email account for you”—an email account on gmail. So she said, “Let us type in a-n-a-n”, and what happens? Mr. Speaker, you type in a-n-a-n in the block that says “Choose your user name”, and this is what happened. “Please use between six and 30 characters.”

Now, I thought I may be wrong or she may be telling me something that I “doh” know, so I decide, all right, let us try my own name; J-A-I-R, “Please choose between six and 30 characters.” Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the students who were here in Parliament yesterday, to sit and listen to the Leader of the Opposition carry us down a road and lead us into a direction that was misleading to the population and misleading to the students who came all way from Cumuto.

Hon. Member: Lower Cumuto.

Hon. J. Seemungal:—lower Cumuto High School—

Mr. Partap: I would have to personally apologize.

Hon. J. Seemungal:—into this Parliament for the very first time, and were punished by the degree of the debate that we are now entering into, led by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at other areas of that same email and you look at one of the emails which was sent from anan@gmail.com, and then on the same line from anand@tsstt.net, even a six-year-old child would tell you, you cannot send two emails—one email with two domains and two different domains, that is, you know; gmail and tsstt—on the same line at the same time on the same day.

10.50 p.m.

So, Mr. Speaker, they came here to mislead this House. They came here to mislead all of us. They brought us, all 41 Members of this Parliament, dragged us into Chamber, three days, three days we will be spending here to discuss a baseless and nonsensical debate. Mr. Speaker, it is such a sad day indeed. It is such a sad day for this House, it is such a sad day for Members of the Opposition to have degraded this Parliament to such a low level.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague, the Member for Caroni Central, and he was right. If you want to fabricate an email, and I will advise you, you just go and forward an email to anybody else. You can then, while forwarding, doctor every single thing on that email. You can change up every line on that email. But, unfortunately, the person who doctored this one could not even spell half of it and did not even understand that you need between six and 30 characters to form an email address under Gmail. Such a sad day, Mr. Speaker.

And they come here with a Motion that this is the big bombshell, the big bombshell with a Motion that we have a no confidence Motion against the Prime Minister and her Government, to feel that this fabricated document is sufficient enough to remove the Attorney General from office, to remove the Prime Minister from office and to call an election. That is why you use the Motion of no confidence, Mr. Speaker. You use it when you have something of substance. And it is a sad day that we all had to reschedule every single thing, especially that we are elected Members of Parliament, business to the people, business to our constituents, some of them who have been waiting in line to see us, and then we have to come here, summoned three days, at this ungodly hour to debate a baseless and nonsensical Motion.

Mr. Speaker, and it is probably a good thing they asked us to come here so that we can all tell them what we have been doing as a Government. Because, you see, they sit in their own little cocoon and they feel that a constituency was born yesterday. The Member for La Brea, for instance, comes every single time that they have the opportunity to speak in this House and makes the entire country believe that the constituency of La Brea was formed three years ago; and they all come with the same thing, every single time they speak in this House, that their constituency was put together by some miraculous means three years ago.

Every single thing they want, they did not get it under their watch, seven years in Government, Mr. Speaker, they could not get anything, but they feel that this Government will deliver. But we will deliver, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] We have been delivering and we will continue to deliver for every single citizen of this country, including all the Members of this Opposition as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, they come here crying every single week and whined every single week, and now they start chastising around and using their hands, throwing up in the air and saying that we do not deliver to them, and we only deliver to our people, and we do not know where La Brea is. And my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, has outlined when they went in the Parliament, they choose sometimes to be in the Parliament, so they—but you can go back and look and read the *Hansard*, and you will see all the projects that we have been doing in your constituencies as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I join this debate really, after all my colleagues have gone through the failure of the Opposition to bring forward a case of no confidence, to outline some of the achievements and some of things that we have been doing in the Ministry of Food Production to help them, and to ensure that their constituents are fed and can go to the market and see cheaper prices.

The Ministry of Food Production and agriculture, on the whole, have been neglected by the PNM administration. Over the years they did not have a clue as to what to do to assist in food production and to move food prices and food security to a level that this country can feel comfortable. Mr. Speaker, I will just outline a couple small projects that we have started, and in my limited time. One of these projects is the revival of the rice industry in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, under their watch the rice industry had gone nearly to extinction, and over the last two years we have been vigorously striving to revive that industry. The consumption of rice in this country is some 28,000 tonnes. That amounts to some \$108 million by way of import.

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Over the last two years, we have managed to bring farmers into production, and by September of this year we would have close to 5,000 acres of rice under cultivation. [*Desk thumping*] That 5,000 acres of rice, Mr. Speaker, will provide some 11,000 tonnes of rice that can be consumed locally. But we are not building these industries in isolation and building these industries as a government-run industry, because we have grown over the years accustomed to things like subsidy. But our approach in these industries, Mr. Speaker, is to make it a private sector/public sector run industry.

The poultry industry, as we know, has been one of the most successful private sector/public sector run industries in this country. We are moving in a very similar vein in the rice industry. We have held talks with private entrepreneurs who are willing to invest in rice mills, and these rice mills will then operate as a cooperative that will allow the farmer to access equipment, rice harvesters, ploughs, rice seeds, fertilizer, and then these mills will then purchase the rice at world market price.

World market price, Mr. Speaker, right now for rice paddy is some \$3.25, and our subsidy maximum at this point in time is \$3.00. So the private sector/public sector relationship will then bring farmers into a position where they can access better price for their seed.

Mr. Speaker, we are also going to set up our rice research facility where we will be producing our own seed for the farmers. Some 200 acres have been identified to produce rice seed, and these will be high-quality rice seed, Mr. Speaker. We have also the technology to produce aromatic rice. [*Desk thumping*] We will be introducing aromatic rice over the next year into the rice sector.

So that, Mr. Speaker, these high-grade and high-quality rice will be introduced to our shelves, and we are hoping by the year 2015 that we will be moving to about 75 per cent of local rice consumption in this country. [*Desk thumping*] So, Mr. Speaker, that is one, only one of the initiatives of this Government towards the food security.

11.00 p.m.

The fruit industry under their watch has dwindled again to extinction. Mr. Speaker, they have allowed under their watch for the entire Todd's Road and the entire Mura citrus estates to go under and to be wiped out. They have allowed the Mappa farm project in my colleague, the Cumuto/Manzanilla to—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Partap: To completely go extinct.

Hon. J. Seemungal:—completely deteriorate to an extent that they had—how much, one worker, two workers—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Partap: Two workers.

Hon. J. Seemungal:—maximum—a security and one other worker to take care of the 92-acre estate, and that is an estate which has over 2,100 varieties of cocoa. We have two in the world and it is called a gene pool: One is in Mappa and the second one is in La Reunion in Trinidad. This station has cocoa from every single corner of the world, where the University of the West Indies and other institutions continue to research on these better varieties of cocoa over the years.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, we have started reviving that station and reconstructing the entire infrastructure in that station, and we have close to 25,000 plants *[Desk thumping]* being propagated right now at that station. At our St. Augustine station we have close to 50,000 plants and over the next month we are going to propagate another 150,000 plants that will assist the citrus industry. *[Desk thumping]*

Dr. Ramadharsingh: Rice like that.

Hon. J. Seemungal: That is what we are going to do with the fruit industry so that we can then start supplying our local fruit processors with citrus.

One of the other main initiatives that we are undertaking at this time is restructuring of the NAMDEVCO marketing system. Mr. Speaker, they have allowed NAMDEVCO to deteriorate over the years. They have not funded NAMDEVCO, they have also allowed for most of the qualified workers in NAMDEVCO to move out of the system.

What we are going to do, Mr. Speaker, is to invest in NAMDEVCO in what is call a commodity stabilization fund. It was alluded to in the budget earlier, and this programme will allow NAMDEVCO to purchase directly from the farmers, process these vegetables and then make it available to suppliers. Now, Trinidad has the ability to produce most of the foods that we can eat.

Hon. Member: True.

Hon. J. Seemungal: For instance, tomatoes, we can produce all the tomatoes that we can eat in Trinidad and consume in Trinidad. Our problem is moving the tomato from the farmer to the processing plant to the consumer is where we lack over the years.

And, Mr. Speaker, for instance, if Subway purchased about a million pounds of tomato a week, but they require that million pounds and they require that million pounds in a certain format as well, you have to box it and you have to make sure that it is readily available. So they do not have a problem in purchasing from you, but you must guarantee that you can have it when it is required. That is the system we are moving to, so our farmers will be educated, certified, and be able to supply to the NAMDEVCO processing plants.

Next week we are going to turn the sod in Tabaquite to start that processing plant. We have one in Brickfield, the other one right now is operating out of Piarco, and these processing plants will then allow us to move the crop from the field to the processing plant, packaged, in the temperature and the state in which the consumers require it and then move it to them.

We have in Trinidad some of the biggest markets for vegetables. The army for instance, the army is one of the biggest consumers of vegetables, but again, they want it in a format and they want it available at the time in which they require it. The School Feeding Programme—we have taken advantage of these institutions, the hospitals and the prisons. These are all institutions that consume a lot of vegetables and we are taking advantage of these institutions by setting up these strategically located processing plants so that we can move the vegetables from the field to the plant, directly to the consumer, cutting out the middle man so that the farmer can benefit by way of higher prices and a secure market for his products.

Mr. Speaker, the fish industry is something that we are looking very feverishly to as well. Right now we are in the process of constructing a fish processing plant—

Hon. Member: Very good.

Hon. J. Seemungal:—the biggest one in the Caribbean. This fish processing plant will be able—*[Interruption]*

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, 36(1).

Hon. Member: Wha!?

Mr. Sharma: “Ohhh lawd.”

Mr. Partap: Oh gosh.

Miss Ramdial: “Come nah man.”

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh wake up”?

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

Hon. J. Seemungal: Mr. Speaker, my friend, the Member for Arouca/Maloney, does not want to listen to the truth. They brought a nonsensical debate in this Parliament and had us here for a day and a half listening, speaker after speaker, the same thing that they have been saying, one speaker apparently passing their notes on and everybody else following or the ones that do not, they really regurgitated their notes from months ago.

Miss Hospedales: “What the Motion have to do with agriculture?”

Hon. J. Seemungal: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what agriculture has to do with the Motion if you want to know. The Motion is about undermining the institutions of the State. The Ministry of Food Production is one of the main institutions of the State and providing for the farmers. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me continue, because I do not want to take much longer. We have my colleagues who will state a little bit of what is happening with them, but with respect to the fish industry, and I will stop at this one, the fish processing plants will be equipped to handle some 1,000 acres of fish. Now the problem—

Dr. Rowley: “Ah thousan’ acres ah fish?” [*Laughter*]

Hon. J. Seemungal: Thousand acres. “Ah” thousand acres of fish ponds. You want me to give you the numbers? One acre will grow some 50,000 kilogrammes of fish.

Mr. Partap: Ahhh, that is it.

Hon. J. Seemungal: You want to get more numbers? I can give you more.

Hon. Member: Give him some more.

Hon. J. Seemungal: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, this is what happens. The problem in this country with respect to agriculture is the market. A lot of persons have tried to set up a fish industry but the fish industry requires an adequate and ready market before farmers can go into it.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing here is setting up the processing plant, the processing plant that will be able to move the fish from the farmer pond into the processing plant, package it in a format again that is required by the restaurants, the groceries, PriceSmart and all these various stakeholders, and we will be creating an artificial market whereby the farmer can feel comfortable to invest in the ponds.

Mr. Speaker, when we set up the processing plant, and we expect that it will be commissioned by September of this year, the plants then will now be ready to access fish. What we have started doing is started training the farmers and sensitizing farmers as to this possibility of going into fish farming—aquaculture—as a part of their agriculture business.

So the aim of the Ministry is to move farmers away from subsistent type farming into seeing farming as a business, creating that employment so that the farmer can be able to employ persons on a permanent basis. That is the problem with persons who are seeking jobs in agriculture. It is because farmers are continuing to see farming as a subsistent type business and when the worker works one or two days and they go back to the farmer the third and fourth day, if rain is falling, for instance, they are told, “Well we do not have anything to do today, so go back home and come back tomorrow.” But that same worker has children to feed, groceries to buy. So what we are looking at here is to set up a business type operation where the farmer will know exactly what his income is and what his expense will be and how he can employ this individual on a permanent and fixed basis.

11.10 p.m.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on, on what the Ministry of Food Production can do and what we are doing. But I will wrap up here, and I want to apologize, again, to my constituents of La Horquetta/Talparo. This is a constituency which was held by the PNM. It was not a constituency, like Member for La Brea said, “All yuh” constituency and we won when they were in power. This was a “we won when they were in power”, Mr. Speaker! This is La Horquetta/Talparo! It was in the heart of the PNM constituency, and the most neglected one.

Mr. Speaker, in this constituency, it did not have a ground with any lights on it. The pavilion, if it was not for the Minister of Local Government, no pavilion being constructed. The roads in the constituency were the most neglected. And listen, water, Mr. Speaker, three-quarters of this constituency did not have water. In Todd’s Road, Mr. Speaker—Todd’s Road is an area where the only access to water was the river. As I said in some contribution gone by, to get water you have to hold baby in hand and go down to the river with a bucket in some of these areas.

That was happening in Trinidad, Mr. Speaker. I heard my colleague say that was happening in India and places in Africa. That was happening in Trinidad.

You have to walk three and four miles to get a bucket of water. You have to make sure and walk with the clothes and walk with the baby and put them down on the bank and wash your clothes and then take the baby and come back home.

Dr. Rambachan: “De lady walk ah mile and ah half.”

Hon. J. Seemungal: Mr. Speaker, it is such a sad day when we could have been seeing about our constituents’ business and this Leader of the Opposition has summoned his troops to debate a matter that has no merit. And the evidence he produced has no merit also. That is why the Prime Minister will feel comfortable to send it anywhere because it has no merit.

Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day when 41 Members of Parliament who were elected to see about the people’s business, who were elected to go into the constituency—you have a Minister who is sitting here with two Ministries to run; the Minister of Transport has to be sitting here as well; all the other Ministers have to be sitting here for three days—three days—to deliberate on a matter that is a waste of time.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words—and my apologies to my constituents of La Horquetta/Talparo once again—I thank you very much.

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

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Tobago West, Minister of Tobago Development.

The Minister of Tobago Development (Hon. Vernella Alleyne-Toppin): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. De Coteau: Take my time too. [*Laughter*]

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: It is my pleasure to speak in this honourable House tonight—

Mr. Sharma: And our pleasure to listen to you.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:—and I want to cut straight to the chase because we want to get home.

Mr. Speaker, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West continues to use the advantage of parliamentary privilege in this honourable House to sully the character of every Member of the Government Benches.

Mr. Speaker, let us journey backward into the track record of the Member for Diego Martin West. He has attacked and denigrated every Member of this

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honourable House who is not a Member of the PNM and who comes from the beautiful sister island of Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West waded into the good character of the hon. Pamela Nicholson. He made the most uncomplimentary statements about “Sister Pam”, using the personal medical challenges of that honourable woman, in whose shoes he could never step, to ridicule that hard-working, indefatigable Member of Parliament.

[*Mr. Hypolite stands*]

Mr. Sharma: What is your point of order?

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, 36(5).

Mr. Sharma: “Right. Siddong now!” [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. Please, please, please. Do not order anybody to sit here, except the Speaker, please, please.

Now, Member for Tobago East, I am trying to follow you very carefully, in terms of where you are going, but if you can link what you are saying to the Motion, I will appreciate it. I, myself, am a bit lost, as you proceeded earlier. So I will give you a chance to connect your points and let me see where you are going.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am guided. You see, we are talking about no confidence in the Government and I am talking— [*Interruption*—we are debating a Motion of no confidence in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—

Mr. Sharma: [*Inaudible*] “Doh worry, you talk.”

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:—so I am bringing points in support of that—in support of my Government. I am bringing the character of all of us here into question because this is what the Motion is about. We are bringing the character of this House and of the Members of this House, who are on the Government Benches, into question. So I have sat here and I have listened over the two days and people have gone very wide and far on how—what our stewardship is all about. So, Mr. Speaker, as I go, permit me.

He waded into the hon. Morgan Job, whose words of 25 years ago now ring so true in the social fabric of Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Job read for us all the writing on the wall, as Trinidad and Tobago lost its innocence and sank steadily into crime and lawlessness.

He sought to destroy the hon. Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson, Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. He ridiculed his ancestry and mine, laughing in the face of that great hero who he called “Olun Koon Koon”, who was honoured in Africa—who he ridiculed for that. He lambasted Mr. Robinson for building the Scarborough deep water harbour. He called that a duck pond. He called the then Crown Point airport a cowshed.

This is what has been the modus operandi of the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West. I sat here and listened to him on several occasions—four different occasions: no confidence motion in the Prime Minister; no confidence motion—four different motions. Somebody said he has motion sickness. He needs some Graval.

Hon. Member: Graval. Give him some! Give him some Graval!

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Speaker, on every occasion where a Tobagonian has held high office in this honourable Parliament, our own Tobago boy has come out in ridicule of such a person. And every time anybody has stepped anywhere near to the precincts of being Prime Minister, he has sought to pull them down.

Hon. Member: Jealousy!

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: He sprinkles every contribution with untruths, half-truths and innuendo, inferences, open-ended questions, misleading suggestions. Mr. Speaker, the Member spews tripe, downright mischief and malice aforethought.

I, myself, went on the Internet this morning and tried to construct an email:anan@gmail.com, and I read the same thing that my colleague here showed us. You cannot construct a Gmail account with less than six letters and not more than 30 characters.

So when you come before this House and you are reading all of that, with a gallery full of young students—primary school students—and reading those emails and reading into the *Hansard* words that are obscene, Mr. Speaker, and suggestive too—I do applaud you, Mr. Speaker, for your attention in expunging those words from the *Hansard* yesterday. We have to be very careful when we talk in this Parliament because when we talk in this Parliament we are talking to the world.

Mr. Speaker, I just came from a conference in Suriname, a conference called “Women in Power”, a conference with parliamentarians. Paula went too. We were there in Suriname together—Member for Point Fortin. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I forgot. We had a good time. [*Laughter*] We shared a lot.

11.20 p.m.

But I will tell you something, somebody out of St. Lucia was able to recount the whole story about myself and a credit card, and the whole story that Dr. Rowley brought to this House—sorry, the Member for Diego Martin West—and to follow every account and to explain where in the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill somebody who was teaching law brought a whole class, a whole lecture, about credit card fraud and used me, my good self, used me—[*Laughter*—and, you see, that is what he is laughing at.

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: So, let me explain what is happening here. You drop a little lie, sorry, untruth, half-truth, you drop it somewhere in a place as this honourable House, you drop it on the Prime Minister’s head, you drop it on the Attorney General’s head, you drop it everywhere and it takes root.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful, especially with the advent of social media and the Internet, about the things we do, because—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Just a minute. Members on the Front Bench of the Opposition, I am listening to the Member for Tobago East and I would like to do that in silence. Hon. Member, you can continue, please.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Thank you. Why I am saying all of this, it is the same reason for which he brought these emails to this honourable House. I am saying that all over the world where these emails go, and where the Internet goes, everybody is looking and listening the entire world. The world is now very small. So you have a global village rather than something that, you know, we had to take a pigeon or something, or some horse or something to carry the mail.

So what I am saying is that when you cast aspersions on the character of people, you are stealing from them, not their purse, which is trash, but you are stealing their character, their good name, and you are stealing from them something which cannot enrich you and will make them very poor indeed. So, I am talking specifically about what we do when we sit in this Parliament and cast aspersions on the character bringing our Members of Parliament into odium.

Perhaps we do not listen when we come in on afternoons, to you, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we do not listen to the prayer that you say at the beginning. So perhaps we are taking ourselves down a path where we think maybe we will not go.

But, I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, a story, because I do not want to talk for a long time. I want to tell you a story.

Hon. Member: Talk! Talk!

Dr. Gopeesingh: Go ahead.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Once upon a time, in a village called Charlotteville—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Seemungal: Charlotteville.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:—in Tobago—once a upon a time, a man, a teacher, a dean of discipline who was in the habit of violating students, took that violation to the point where one day, when a young girl was bringing the lunch for him that her aunt had cooked, because he was a boarder, he kidnapped her, kept her hostage for four hours and raped her.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Oh my.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Now, I am staying all of this—it is a story, it is a story. You could have it on an email if you want—raped her. That rape produced a son. That child, when she started to show, was thrown out by her father, by her family, by the village, and some people went and begged the father to keep her in the house. He never spoke to her throughout the pregnancy and she suffered untold psychological damage—untold, as did her family.

Hon. Member: That is an email?

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: It is an email. It is a story. When the village realized what was going on, the village decided they would kill the man —it is a story, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Partap: I like that story.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: But the village—the man found out and the man got a pick-up to come in and move out his belongings in the middle of the night. That woman went on, the people sent her to Trinidad, hide her away and so on, and then they sent her away further afield to hide her away. But, the moral of my story is this. It is a story. You drop that story on the head of somebody, just drop it, just say, “This is what so and so did, at so and so time, to so and so body.”

Loss of Confidence in the Government
[HON. V. ALLEYNE-TOPPIN]

Tuesday, May 21, 2013

The man came later in life, much later, much later in life and say, “Okay, I cyah doubt that that is my child, look like me, and give the child ah piece of land.” Watch me. Listen. The child went to the man, the father, and he said, “Help me to study”, and he said to him, “Go and work and study. I had to go and work and study.” Mr. Speaker, I am telling you a story.

Mr. Indarsingh: Listening.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(1). [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: This is in relation to the emails.

Mr. Speaker: I am trying to—I myself am trying to connect the dots here. So, if you could relate this story to the matter before us, I will appreciate it.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an email story. It is a story that I have seen by letter. It is a story that I have seen by email. It is a story that I have seen in the newspapers. It is a story that I have been told over and over in the village. It is a story that people tell—you understand.

Miss Cox: Mr. Speaker, 36(1). It is late and I feel it is time that she links the story to the Motion, please.

Mr. Member: No, no.

Hon. Speaker: I am trying to—if you could relate your submission or your story, as you call it, to the matter before the honourable House, I am trying to follow you myself, but try to connect it with the matter before this House. Please?

Dr. Rowley: Donna—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, this is to show how damaging an email can be.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. Seemungal: Yeah.

Hon. Member: That is correct.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: A simple email could be just so damaging. [*Desk thumping*] Now, Mr. Speaker, I could have brought emails like that to this House, because I have—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Send me that story.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:—but I cannot do that, because although the story that I am telling you is a proven story and parliamentary privilege will protect me, I will not tell the story, I will not bring it. You understand? So, I am saying, we have to be careful how we knock each down.

Dr. Douglas: That is right.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: And we have to uphold the good practices of democracy in this House.

Dr. Douglas: Sanctity of Parliament.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: We cannot leave our people to be destroyed. We cannot leave a reporter to be killed knowing that somebody trying to “lick them up” and we have the information and we are not doing anything about it. We have to be much more humane than that.

Mr. Seemungal: “Cyah be misleading.”

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Speaker, would you then say that you could have the full confidence in this individual, in the story, the man, were he to become a Member of Parliament? How could you now have confidence in him? Mr. Speaker, were he now to become a person in the Parliament who is striving to be a Prime Minister, could you then have confidence in that person?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Miss Ramdial: What!

Hon. Member: What!

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Therefore—

Miss Ramdial: Come on!

Mr. Partap: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Seemungal: After hearing that story.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Therefore, whatever,

Mr. Seemungal: Lord my God, after hearing that story.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:—whatever the story is about a person, we are all human, we will all have stories. [*Crosstalk*] This Motion, Mr. Speaker, is a story, is an email story. There are many aspects of that email story that seem to be in question. Many aspects seem to be in question.

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: I want to submit that we should be talking about no confidence as we go along in the Tobago House of Assembly—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:—\$500 million missing after the 2003, 2004 and 2005 Auditor General Reports and no no confidence Motion brought against them. The PNM-led THA coalition, no matter of no confidence in this House, nobody is talking in this House against them except, perhaps, “must be Delmon and me”, the Member for Tobago West and myself.

11.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, where is the equity? This Motion is frivolous, vexatious, and I want to say in the story there is a part of the story that is very, very special. The story really impacts on the fact that the statute of limitations does not run out on paedophilia.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that this is a—in Charlotteville itself, again, at this point, the THA is building a colossus on the waterfront; no EMA approval; no Town and Country approval. No no confidence Motion is being brought against those people. The courts last week stopped the construction of the place. The PNM-led THA is building the structure with no Town and Country approval—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Lawless.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:—with no EMA approval.

Mr. Seemungal: That is how they operate.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Even when courts stopped them—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Seemungal: Law among themselves.

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin:—they continued to build for about five days after.

Hon. Member: Vote TOP.

Mr. Seemungal: What TOP? “Da’ is PNM.”

Hon. V. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up, I want to say that I have full confidence in the Government, the Government that is led by Kamal Persad-Bissessar, full confidence, and I want to say I thank you. I want to say thank you very much for your allowing me to join this debate.

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

Adjournment

Tuesday, May 21, 2013

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Tourism (Hon. Stephen Cadiz): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow, Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at 11.00 a.m., where we will continue the Motion.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 11.33 p.m.